# Farmers and Farmworkers in the Global Apple Value Chain: A Study of Selected Commercial Apple Farms in the Langkloof Valley of the Eastern Cape, 2018-2022

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by

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# DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my late mother, Mrs Nombeko Princess Pandora Ntikinca.

**03/08/1941 – 17/01/2021**

*Wena usisithunywa seZulu.*

*Ilanga elakhanyisa ubomi bam.*

*Ngaphandle kwakho, Manzaba, andiyonto.*

*Imithandazo yakho indomelezile.*

*Uthando lwakho lundikhusele kwintshaba zam.*

*Ndiyabulela ngento yonke ondenzele yona, Mama.*

*Intliziyo yam izohlala ikuthanda ngonaphakade.*

*Lala Ngoxolo Manzaba.*

*Sobonana ngaphesheya.*

# ABSTRACT

This study uses the case of selected commercial apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley to determine whether a profit-driven trading arrangement, such as a global apple value chain, can produce inclusive developmental outcomes. Mainstream global commodity chain (GCC) and global value chain (GVC) discourse, which is mainly inspired by a neoliberal approach to development, presents global chains (GCs) as ideal conduits for facilitating economic and social upgrading for suppliers/producers and their employees from developing countries such as South Africa. Economic upgrading in GCs takes place when a firm improves its processes, product offerings, functions and trade relations along a given value chain. Social upgrading in GCs, by contrast, is underpinned by the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Decent Work Agenda, which rests on four key pillars: employment creation, rights at work, social security and social dialogue.

Global production network (GPN) scholars argue that GCs produce inequality and various forms of exploitation rather than inclusive economic and social upgrading for participants. Conversely, most GCC and GVC scholars narrowly attribute these negative outcomes in GCs to governance deficits and do not pay much attention to the vertical and horizontal profit maximization activities that induce these outcomes in GCs. Nevertheless, in this study, the GCC, GVC and GPN theories are collectively referred to as the global chain framework (GCF). The GCF primarily focuses on the sphere of trade exchange and is limited in its analysis of the spheres of production and social reproduction in GCs; hence, the addition of labour process theory (LPT) and the sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA) to the theoretical framework that informs this study.

In this study, the combination of the GCF, LPT and SLA is termed a 'trilogy theoretical framework', which covers the three spheres mentioned above. This study is not solely concerned with the surface outcomes of the selected commercial apple farmers and farm workers in the global apple value chain (as is the case in many GC studies), but it explores the underlying mechanisms that connect these three spheres and produce visible outcomes. It is for this reason that the study is grounded in a critical realist ontology, which perceives empirical or tangible observations as only a small component (tip of the iceberg) of a deeper reality that is mostly hidden. For instance, Marx (1976) argues that to understand the capitalist production of value, one must descend into the 'hidden abode of production', where surplus value is extracted.

Suwandi (2020) notes that in GCs, the extraction of surplus value materializes across different spheres; hence, this study analyses the interaction in the spheres of production, exchange and reproduction in the global apple value chain. The GCF was founded by Marxist-inspired dependency and world systems scholars, whilst Marx pioneered the LPT. The SLA is not Marxist-inspired; however, it is ideal for analysing the sphere of social reproduction, which Marx (1976) acknowledged as an integral part of capitalist production. This study adopted a qualitative research approach to sampling (using purposive and snowball sampling), data collection (using one-on-one interviews, group interviews, observation and document analysis) and data analysis data through deductive thematic analysis. The findings in this study show that outcomes for the research participants were determined by their positionality and economic class within the global apple value chain.

All the selected commercial apple farmers in this study experienced varying degrees of economic upgrading, which were largely determined by their strategic partnerships and access to other forms of capital (following the SLA definition of capital). The land reform beneficiaries in this study experienced economic upgrading through their reliance on the resources of the more established white commercial apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley. This study shows, however, that inadequate support from the state to land reform beneficiaries indirectly pushes them into unequal "new age sharecropping" type arrangements with their white 'business partners' and mentors. Land reform in the apple industry (especially on the selected commercial apple farms) in the Langkloof Valley is mostly decorative because it has not threatened the racially skewed land ownership patterns and economic dominance of white commercial apple farmers in the region.

Instead, the white commercial apple farmers use the cheap apples that they purchase from the land reform beneficiaries to absorb the cost pressures from global supermarkets in the global apple value chain. This study also shows that a small group of mostly permanently employed (black or coloured) male farm workers experienced social upgrading, whilst the majority of the mostly seasonally employed (black or coloured) female farm workers experienced social downgrading on the selected commercial apple farms that participate in the global apple value chain. The 'hidden abode' of vertical and horizontal profit maximization (or surplus extraction) strategies in the global apple value chain induced rampant non-compliance (on the selected apple farms), governance deficits (from the public, private and social stakeholders) and large-scale exploitation of most of the farm workers who participated in this study.

Interestingly, this study also shows that the low wages of farm workers (regardless of employment status) forced most of them to rely on alternative forms of capital to sustain their livelihoods. This study, therefore, indicates that a capitalist-driven trading arrangement such as the global apple value chain did not produce inclusive outcomes for the selected commercial apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley.

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# LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| ANC | African National Congress |
| BCEA | Basic Conditions of Employment Act |
| BDCC | Buyer-Driven Commodity Chain |
| CA | Controlled Atmosphere |
| CCMA | Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration |
| CEO | Chief Executive Officer |
| COSATU | Congress of South African Trade Unions |
| DAFF | Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries |
| DFID | Department for International Development |
| DALRRD | Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development |
| DEL | Department of Employment and Labour |
| DRDLR | Department of Rural Development and Land Reform |
| ECSECC | Eastern Cape Socio-Economic Consultative Council |
| EOI | Export-Oriented Industrialization |
| ESTA | Extension of Security of Tenure Act |
| EU | European Union |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organisation |
| FAWU | Food and Allied Workers Union |
| GAP | Good Agricultural Practices |
| GATT | General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) |
| GC | Global Chain |
| GCF | Global Chains Framework |
| GCC | Global Commodity Chain |
| GLA | Global Labour Arbitrage |
| GPN | Global Production Network |
| GVC | Global Value Chain |
| HRW | Human Rights Watch |
| ISI | Import Substitution Industrialization |
| LPT | Labour Process Theory |

| | |
|---|---|
| LRA | Labour Relations Act |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| OHSA | Occupational Health and Safety Act |
| PDCC | Producer-Driven Commodity Chain |
| PPECB | Perishable Products Export Control Board |
| PPE | Personal Protective Equipment |
| RDP | Reconstruction and Development Programme |
| SA | South Africa |
| SAHRC | South African Human Rights Commission |
| SAPO | South African Plant Improvement Organisation |
| SCLC | Support Centre for Land Change |
| SD | Sectoral Determination |
| SIZA | Sustainability Initiative of South Africa |
| SLA | Sustainable Livelihoods Approach |
| NSUIF | Unemployment Insurance Fund |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| WB | World Bank |
| WIETA | Wine and Agricultural Ethical Trading Association |
| WST | World-System Theory |
| WTO | World Trade Organization |

# CHAPTER ONE

# LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS: GLOBALIZATION, TRADE AND AGRICULTURE

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Economic globalisation can broadly be defined as the growing integration of world economies through cross-border trade, largely facilitated by technological advancements and changing trade relations between nations (Maswood, 2018). The current global agricultural trading framework is informed by a neoliberal policy perspective which advocates for deregulated trade and limited state intervention in economic affairs (Maswood, 2018; Saad-Filho and Johnston, 2005; Theron et al., 2007; Ying et al., 2014). The World Trade Organization (WTO), which succeeded the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1995, is an international institution that oversees the deregulated (neoliberal) international trade. (Koul, 2005; Matsushita et al., 2015). World Bank (2017:69) asserts that "global value chains (GVCs) have been drivers of growth in developed and emerging economies for many years, perhaps best characterized by China's experience. Export-driven growth is about generating higher overall value-added, employment, and income through more efficient (and, ideally, higher productivity) production. The process of generating higher value added is typically referred to as upgrading".

Mainstream GC (especially contemporary GCC and GVC) scholars who are influenced by modernist and neoliberal logic assume that GCs are ideal channels for facilitating economic and social upgrading for participants from emerging economies in the global South (Barrientos, et al., 2010; Gereffi, 2019; Gereffi and Lee, 2016; Harrison, 1988; Humphrey and Schmitz, 2002a; Rostow, 1959). Economic upgrading in GCs takes place when a firm improves its processes, product offerings, functions and trade relations along a given value chain (Humphrey and Schmitz, 2000). Social upgrading in GCs, by contrast, is underpinned by the International Labour Organization's (ILO's) Decent Work Agenda, which rests on four key pillars: employment creation, rights at work, social security and social dialogue (Selwyn, 2013). The proponents of neoliberalism and many GCC and GVC scholars attribute inequality and exploitation in GCs to governance deficits rather than an endemic predisposition of these value chains (Gereffi and Lee, 2016; World Bank, 2020).

## 1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The fundamental research question informing this study is whether a profit-driven capitalist trading arrangement such as the global apple value chain can produce inclusive development for its participants from the global South. This study adopts a critical realist (CR) research philosophy, which influences the epistemology and 'trilogy theoretical framework' used in this study. Stutchbury (2022:114) contends that critical realism sees reality as an iceberg where most of the reality (the larger structure beneath the ocean water holding up the iceberg) is invisible to the observer. The causal mechanisms exist below the surface and are invisible but give rise to observable or tangible experiences and events. This study adopts a Marxist approach to uncover the underlying profit-driven mechanisms influencing the outcomes of selected apple farmers and farm workers in the global apple value chain.

Clelland (2014:82) argues that the capitalist world economy also takes the form of an iceberg. The most studied part, which appears above the surface, is supported by a huge underlying structure that is out of sight, that is, the hidden abode where the appropriation of surplus value takes place. GCs are central mechanisms for these surplus drains in the world economy because, at each node of the chain, participants seek to appropriate surplus value (Clelland, 2014; Smith, 2016; Suwandi, 2020). This is achieved through the construction of large-scale businesses, the marginalization of smaller businesses, and the employment of a large bulk of workers in the production nodes of GCs (Selwyn and Leyden, 2022). This study adopts a 'trilogy theoretical framework' consisting of the GCF, LPT and SLA.

The GCF was established by Marxist-inspired dependency and world systems theorists, who showed how the surplus (value) drains from the global South to the global North produce uneven development between these respective regions (Wallerstein and Hopkins, 1986). Although GC discourse has evolved and moved away from its Marxist-inspired foundations over the years, this study draws from both its earlier and contemporary concepts to understand the driving mechanisms influencing the outcomes of research participants in the global apple value chain. The LPT was inspired by Marx (1967) whose analysis of the capitalist labour process was furthered by scholars such as Braverman (1974). Although the LPT has also evolved over the years and moved away from its Marxist foundations, this study draws from both its foundational (early) and contemporary concepts to analyse the apple production process and its division of labour on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley.

The SLA is not a Marxist framework, but it is adopted in this study as a conceptual tool for analysing the sphere of social reproduction (outside the factory gates), which Marx (1976) saw as an integral part of the capitalist production process. The SLA completes the 'trilogy theoretical framework' as it shows how the selected apple farmers and farm workers (who come from different economic classes) utilize various assets/capital at their disposal to sustain their participation in the global apple value chain (DFID, 1999; Scoones, 1998). The combination of these three frameworks provides the conceptual tools for uncovering the 'hidden abode where surplus value is extracted' throughout the global apple value chain to understand how it influences the outcomes of the selected apple farms and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley engaged in this value chain. This aligns with the critical realist approach, which seeks to understand the invisible structure (underneath the ocean water) that holds up the visible 'tip of the iceberg'.

## 1.3 BRIEF CONTEXT OF THE APPLE VALUE CHAIN OF SOUTH AFRICA

During the colonial and apartheid eras, the agri-food value chains of South Africa were producer-driven, as the state support boosted the bargaining power of commercial farmers with international buyers (Visser, 2016). During this period, Indigenous people were dispossessed from their land and worked on white commercial farms under exploitative conditions because they were not protected by the law, thus restricting their efforts to organize themselves to agitate their employers for better conditions (Davies, 1990; Ngcukaitobi, 2021). Willoughby and Gore (2018) note that, from the 1980s, neoliberal multilateral agreements such as the Agreement on Agriculture (negotiated under GATT) compelled governments in many countries to scale back subsidies for producers (Willoughby and Gore, 2018).

In South Africa, the 1990s saw the full adoption of neoliberal policies, resulting in the withdrawal of state support from the agricultural sector (Levy, 1999; Matona, 1994; Vink, 2012). These changes were taking place as supermarkets in Europe were consolidating themselves and toppling the commercial farmers from developing countries such as South Africa in the bargaining process, as they became price makers in the now buyer-driven global agri-food value chains (Chen et al., 2016:7; Visser, 2016). The weakened bargaining position of South African farmers in global agri-food value chains has directly impacted farm workers as well (Visser, 2016). Apple production in South Africa and its value chain are focused on the export market, and the product makes a sizeable contribution to national agricultural exports (WWF, 2016).

Apples sold in the export markets generate a greater unit price than that achieved in the local market (WWF, 2016). In essence, the export market represents a very significant distribution channel for South African apples, and they also generate a huge amount of revenue for the South African economy (WWF, 2016). Being an export-dependent industry means that most commercial apple farmers in South Africa participate in the global apple value chain and are thus exposed to the power asymmetries in global agri-food value chains. This is why this study seeks to determine whether a profit-driven trading arrangement such as the global apple value chain can produce inclusive economic and social upgrading outcomes for the selected commercial apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley. DAFF (2020:5) notes that the Langkloof Valley is the largest apple-producing region in the Eastern Cape, which makes it an ideal research site for this study.

## 1.4 THE LANGKLOOF VALLEY IN KOUKAMMA MUNICIPALITY

The Langkloof Valley is a 160km passage nestled between mountains in the Koukamma Municipality, which is situated in the Eastern Cape (Koukamma Municipality, 2019). The Eastern Cape is the second largest province in South Africa, yet most of its population (at 70%) resides in the former homelands, rural commercial agricultural regions and small towns, whilst only 30% resides in the two cities (Gqeberha and East London) (ECDC, 2004; Hamanna and Tuinder, 2012:20). According to the Eastern Cape Socio-Economic Consultative Council (ECSECC) (2022:5), the agricultural sector in the Eastern Cape experienced the most substantial growth (at 18.6%) with 17,290 jobs gained in 2022, even though it is not the largest sector in the province. Farm workers generally come from vulnerable socio-economic contexts and generally have low levels of education due to the poor state of most public schools in the Eastern Cape (ECSECC, 2020; Matric, 2022; Ngcukana, 2021). Figure 1.1 below shows the labour market education status in the Eastern Cape in 2022.

**Figure 1.1: Labour market education status in the Eastern Cape in 2022**

| EDUCATION STATUS | Working population (age 15+) | Labour force / economically active | Employed | Unemployed | Not economically active | Discouraged job seeker |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NO SCHOOLING | 2,1% | 1,1% | 1,0% | 1,3% | 3,2% | 0,4% |
| LESS THAN PRIMARY COMPLETED | 9,3% | 7,6% | 5,9% | 9,8% | 11,1% | 7,5% |
| PRIMARY COMPLETED | 6,8% | 4,7% | 5,0% | 4,4% | 9,1% | 9,1% |
| **SECONDARY NOT COMPLETED** | **51,1%** | **44,9%** | **38,1%** | **54,0%** | **58,1%** | **54,7%** |
| SECONDARY COMPLETED | 22,5% | 27,7% | 30,5% | 24,0% | 16,6% | 26,7% |
| **TERTIARY** | **8,0%** | **13,7%** | **19,1%** | **6,5%** | **1,7%** | **1,3%** |
| OTHER | 0,2% | 0,3% | 0,4% | 0,0% | 0,2% | 0,3% |
| TOTAL | 100,0% | 100,0% | 100,0% | 100,0% | 100,0% | 100,0% |

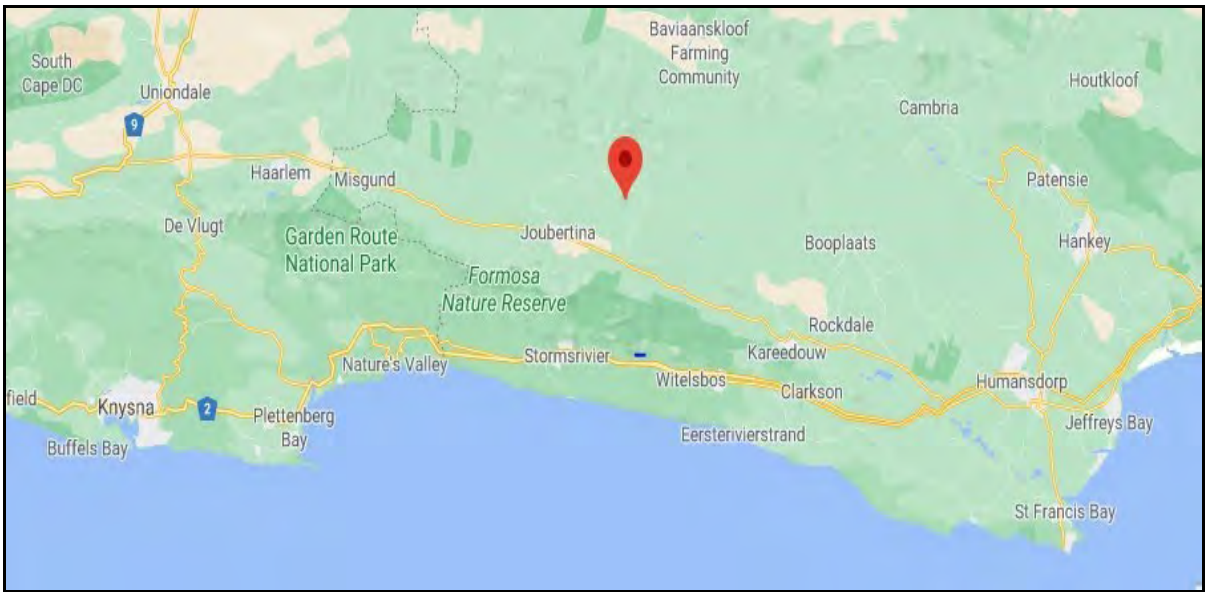
*Source: Statistics South Africa Labour Force Survey, ECSECC calculations 2022*

Source: ECSECC (2022:6).

The figure above shows that in 2022, the majority (58.1%) of the 'not economically active' population in the Eastern Cape had not completed secondary schooling. Another interesting finding from the figure above is that, within the category of employed people in the province, the majority (38.1%) also did not complete secondary education. This is concerning as education still plays a role in determining labour market outcomes, which means that those with less education are the most vulnerable (ECSECC, 2022:6). From an SLA perspective (Chambers and Conway, 1992; DFID, 1999), the socio-economic context of the Eastern Cape (caused by historical and current factors) induces the vulnerability of a large segment of its population, more especially the farm workers who are based in the rural districts of the province.

Within the GC context, it is no surprise that scholars such as Selwyn (2016) contend that lead firms often source commodities from resource-rich geographical territories (in the global South) with an abundance of vulnerable labourers who are willing to work for extremely low wages to survive. The Langkloof Valley is one such place, as it is plagued by many of the challenges confronting the rest of the Eastern Cape. This study covered the following areas of the Langkloof Valley: Joubertina (the commercial centre of Koukamma); Krakeel River, Louterwater, Misgund and Haarlem, which is located at the border between Eastern Cape and the Western Cape (Koukamma Municipality, 2019). Figure 1.2 is an extract of the map showing the location of the Langkloof Valley.

**Figure 1.2: Map of the Langkloof Valley in the Eastern Cape**




Source: Koukamma Municipality (2019).

### 1.4.1 Brief Historical Overview of the Langkloof Valley

The Langkloof was given its name by Isaq Schrijver in 1689, a sergeant of the Dutch East India Company, on his return from a reconnaissance mission in the Eastern Cape (Heawood, 1912). Early travellers were obliged to cross the Outeniqua Mountains near present-day Mossel Bay to avoid the near-impenetrable ravines and forests to the east (Mossop, 1931). At that time, the only way across the mountains was through Attaquas Kloof, named after a chief of the Hessequa Khoikhoi (Mossop, 1931). It was during one of these expeditions that Schrijver named this region the Langkloof Valley. The Dutch expeditions into the interior were an attempt to explore and capture good fertile lands (from the native populations) and place them under the control of the Dutch East India Company (Thompson, 2001). It was under this climate of land dispossession in the 1700s that the Langkloof Valley came under the control of the Dutch East India Company (Swiegers, 1994).

By 1760, the Dutch East India Company had loaned twenty farms (in the Langkloof Valley) to its ex-employees to farm in the area, and that is how the region became populated by white settlers (Swiegers, 1994). Most of the white settlers who controlled the economy in the area were a tight-knit community of relatives and close associates of the second and third generation of white settlers who originally came to the Cape of Good Hope (Swiegers, 1994). The commercial production of deciduous fruit in the Langkloof Valley grew exponentially in the second decade of the 19$^{th}$ century when a railway line was built between the region and Gqeberha (Apple Express Train, 2020). Furthermore, the introduction of refrigeration activities in Union Castle vessels (in 1892) also boosted the export of quality deciduous fruit from the Langkloof Valley to the United Kingdom (Bekker et al., 1982). Figure 1.3 lists the fruits that were produced in the Langkloof Valley in the 1980s.

**Figure 1.3: 1976 Joubertina Magisterial District**

1976: Joubertina Magisterial District

| | Number of Trees | | Percentage under |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Bearing | Not yet Bearing | Irrigation |
| Apples | 863 349 | 298 468 | 94% |
| Pears | 134 831 | 34 322 | 89% |
| Apricots | 111 099 | 44 418 | 49% |
| Peaches | 49 116 | 22 535 | 79% |

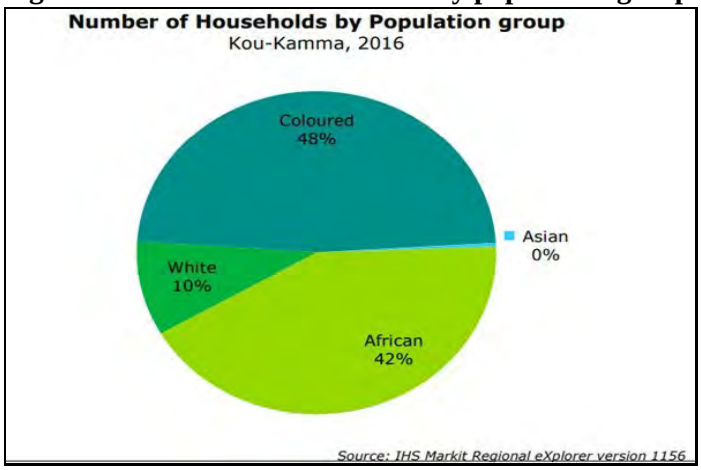
Source: Bekker, Humphries and Meterlerkamp (1982:8).

As the figure above shows, apples were the largest fruit produced in the Langkloof Valley, followed by pears, apricots and peaches. The railway line (Apple Express) became gradually out-phased due to competition from road haulage whilst the production of deciduous fruit continued to increase exponentially as the white farmers increasingly implemented modern agricultural technologies in planting, pruning, irrigation of orchards, pest control, thinning, picking and packing the produce (Bekker et al.,1982). During this period, fruit packing was done in-house or by independent packhouses at a cost (Bekker et al.,1982). This shows that pre-1994, the white farmers in the Langkloof Valley were already undergoing various forms of economic upgrading, as per GC terminology. Pre-1994, white farmers resided in decent houses on the farms, whilst permanently employed male farm workers lived in small farm cottages or makeshift 'houses' (Bekker et al., 1982). The unequal class and racial disparities between white farmers and black and coloured workers were established during the colonial era in the Langkloof Valley.

### 1.4.2 Koukamma Municipality – Post-1994

The Koukamma Municipality is a relatively poor area with high unemployment and low literacy levels (Koukamma Municipality, 2019). This region faces the challenges of infrastructure development and inadequate delivery of public services such as water, electricity, refuse collection and sanitation (among other factors) (Koukamma Municipality, 2019). Population statistics are important because population growth affects economic growth, employment creation, unemployment and per-capita income. Figure 1.4 shows the number of households by population group in the Koukamma municipality in 2016 (ECSECC, 2017).

**Figure 1.4: Number of households by population group in Koukamma, 2016**




Source: ECSECC (2017:18).

The figure above shows that coloured households (48%) constitute the bulk of the households in the Langkloof, followed by black households (42%). White households only make up 10% of the households in the Koukamma municipality, and the economy in the Langkloof Valley is dominated by white capital, which is a clear legacy of colonialism and apartheid.

### 1.4.3 Education Levels, Employment and Unemployment

Education is essential for providing people with diverse employment opportunities in different industries and reduces supply-side factors contributing to unemployment. Figure 1.5 indicates the education levels in the Koukamma municipality in 2016 (ECSECC, 2017).

**Figure 1.5: Educational levels in the Koukamma Municipality, 2016**

| | Kou-Kamma | Sarah Baartman | Eastern Cape | National Total | Kou-Kamma as % of district municipality | Kou-Kamma as % of province | Kou-Kamma as % of national |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No schooling | 871 | 16,800 | 328,000 | 2,380,000 | 5.2% | 0.27% | 0.04% |
| Grade 0-2 | 556 | 9,850 | 123,000 | 712,000 | 5.6% | 0.45% | 0.08% |
| Grade 3-6 | 4,960 | 49,100 | 561,000 | 3,180,000 | 10.1% | 0.88% | 0.16% |
| Grade 7-9 | 8,370 | 79,500 | 934,000 | 6,030,000 | 10.5% | 0.90% | 0.14% |
| Grade 10-11 | 6,940 | 76,200 | 958,000 | 8,140,000 | 9.1% | 0.72% | 0.09% |
| Certificate / diploma without matric | 28 | 771 | 14,500 | 176,000 | 3.6% | 0.19% | 0.02% |
| Matric only | 5,420 | 71,100 | 841,000 | 10,100,000 | 7.6% | 0.64% | 0.05% |
| Matric certificate / diploma | 689 | 11,400 | 184,000 | 1,960,000 | 6.0% | 0.37% | 0.04% |
| Matric Bachelors degree | 610 | 10,200 | 137,000 | 1,600,000 | 6.0% | 0.44% | 0.04% |
| Matric Postgrad degree | 155 | 4,560 | 50,700 | 693,000 | 3.4% | 0.30% | 0.02% |

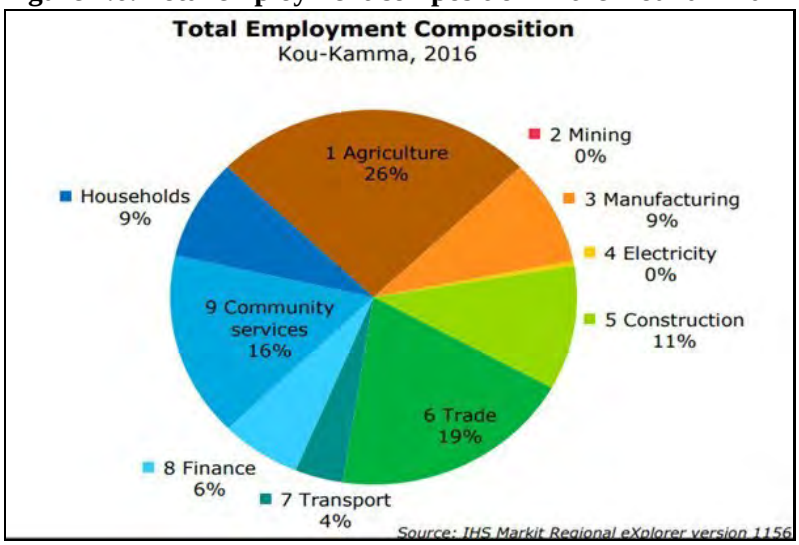
*Source: IHS Markit Regional eXplorer version 1156*

Source: ECSECC (2017:66).

The most interesting finding in the figure above is that 51.7% (more than half) of the people in Koukamma municipality did not exceed grade 12 (ECSECC, 2017:66). This means that over half the population in this municipal district have low levels of education, which according to the SLA (DFID, 1999), places them in a vulnerable position. Low levels of education limit career opportunities outside low-paying work, thus threatening their livelihood stability. The notion of low levels of education in the rural farming districts in South Africa is a legacy of colonialism, apartheid (Christie and Gaganakis, 1989; Davies, 1990) and state failures to provide quality education in these areas post-1994. Low levels of education in these areas channel most of the population into farm work, as there are limited career opportunities outside farm work for people with low levels of education (Visser and Ferrer, 2015:10). This study examines whether these findings are reflected in the sample of farm workers who participated in this study from the Langkloof Valley.

Figure 1.6 shows the total employment per broad economic sector in the Koukamma municipality in 2016 (ECSECC, 2017).

**Figure 1.6: Total employment composition in the Koukamma Municipality, 2016**




Source: ECSECC (2017:43).

The figure above shows that the agricultural sector is the largest (at 25.6%) employer in the Koukamma municipality (ECSECC, 2017). This finding comes as no surprise as figure 8.5 shows that much of the population in this region has low levels of education, which limits their career choices. The agricultural sector does not demand high educational qualifications, which is why it is the largest employer in the Koukamma Municipality. Figure 1.7 shows the unemployment rate (official definition) in the Koukamma municipality in 2016 (ECSECC, 2017).

**Figure 1.7: Unemployment rate in the Koukamma Municipality, 2006-2016**

| | Kou-Kamma | Sarah Baartman | Eastern Cape | National Total | Kou-Kamma as % of district municipality | Kou-Kamma as % of province | Kou-Kamma as % of national |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2006 | 1,600 | 30,100 | 512,000 | 4,510,000 | 5.3% | 0.31% | 0.04% |
| 2007 | 1,660 | 30,300 | 503,000 | 4,460,000 | 5.5% | 0.33% | 0.04% |
| 2008 | 1,650 | 29,600 | 488,000 | 4,350,000 | 5.6% | 0.34% | 0.04% |
| 2009 | 1,700 | 29,700 | 483,000 | 4,370,000 | 5.7% | 0.35% | 0.04% |
| 2010 | 1,780 | 30,000 | 480,000 | 4,490,000 | 5.9% | 0.37% | 0.04% |
| 2011 | 1,860 | 30,300 | 485,000 | 4,570,000 | 6.2% | 0.38% | 0.04% |
| 2012 | 1,990 | 32,400 | 508,000 | 4,690,000 | 6.1% | 0.39% | 0.04% |
| 2013 | 2,080 | 34,300 | 542,000 | 4,850,000 | 6.1% | 0.38% | 0.04% |
| 2014 | 2,100 | 35,300 | 569,000 | 5,060,000 | 6.0% | 0.37% | 0.04% |
| 2015 | 2,100 | 35,600 | 583,000 | 5,290,000 | 5.9% | 0.36% | 0.04% |
| 2016 | 2,150 | 36,700 | 603,000 | 5,600,000 | 5.9% | 0.36% | 0.04% |
| **Average Annual growth** | | | | | | | |
| 2006-2016 | **2.95%** | **1.98%** | **1.65%** | **2.19%** | | | |

*Source: IHS Markit Regional eXplorer version 1156*

Source: ECSECC (2017:46).

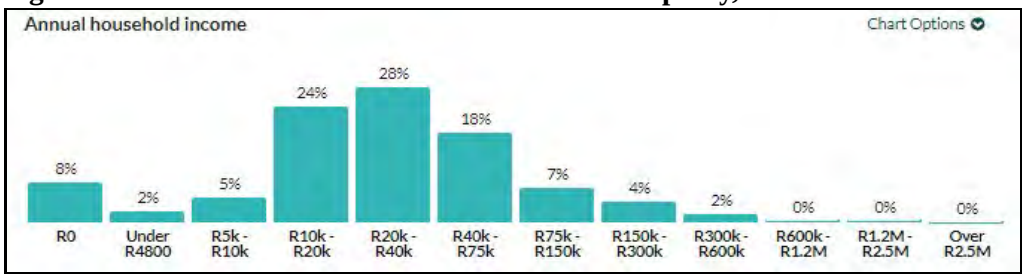
The figure above indicates that from 2006-2016, the Koukamma Local Municipality experienced an average annual increase of 2.95% in unemployment.

The increasing unemployment rate in this region is ideal for commercial farmers who exploit the vulnerability of these unemployed people to accept low wages to help them transfer the cost pressures from global supermarkets in the global apple value chain onto the workers. From an SLA perspective, high levels of unemployment also increase the vulnerability of farm workers in Koukamma municipality, thus compelling them to accept low-wage farm work. This thesis also examines Anner's (2015) contention that market control (unemployment) deters many workers from engaging in collective action in their places of work.

### 1.4.4 Household Income, Personal Income and Per Capita Income

Household income includes the combined incomes of all people sharing a particular household. Figure 1.8 indicates the household income in the Koukamma Municipal District in 2016 (Wazimap, 2016).

**Figure 1.8: Household income in Koukamma Municipality, 2016**




Source: Wazimap (2016).

The figure above shows that in 2016, most households in Koukamma Municipality (67%) did not earn more than R40,000 in that year. When this amount is divided by 12 months, it shows that many households in the Koukamma Municipality did not earn more than R3,333 per month in 2016. Per capita income refers to the income per person and is often used as a measure of wealth, particularly when comparing economies or population groups (ECSECC, 2017). Figure 1.9 below shows the annual total per capita income by population group in the Koukamma Municipal District (ECSECC, 2017).

**Figure 1.9: Annual total per capita income by population group in Koukamma Municipality**

| | African | White | Coloured |
|---|---|---|---|
| Kou-Kamma | 36,800 | 192,000 | 41,200 |
| Dr Beyers Naude | 31,600 | 178,000 | 33,800 |
| Blue Crane Route | 28,600 | 220,000 | 38,500 |
| Makana | 33,400 | 217,000 | 52,600 |
| Ndlambe | 32,600 | 190,000 | 51,700 |
| Sundays River Valley | 30,500 | 206,000 | 37,100 |
| Kouga | 31,700 | 154,000 | 39,800 |

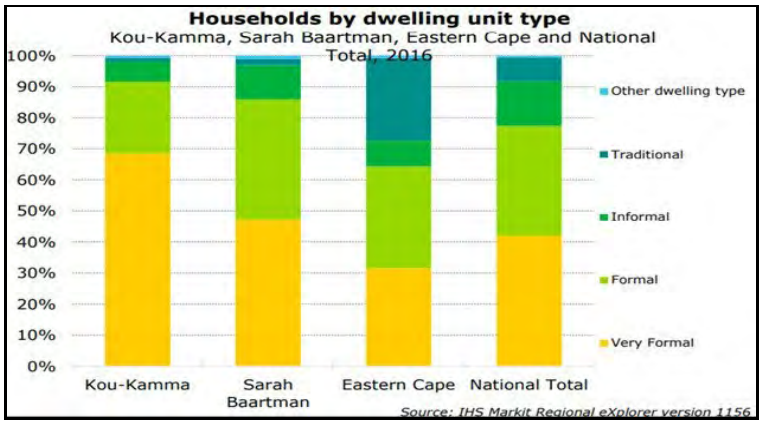
Source (ECSECC, 2017:53).

The figure above shows that in Koukamma Municipality, the white population group has the highest per capita income, with R192,000, relative to the other population groups. The group with the second highest per capita income within Koukamma Municipality is the coloured population group (R41,200). Black Africans have the lowest per capita income (R36,800), compared to other population groups, in Koukamma municipality. These findings from figure 9.9 show a continuation of the legacy of colonialism and apartheid in the Langkloof Valley, as the whites (who are the minority) are in a better economic standing than coloureds and blacks. From these findings, it is easy to deduce that whites (especially those in this study) in the Langkloof Valley may have better access to diverse forms of assets/capital, which impacts their positioning and outcomes in the global apple value chain compared to coloureds and blacks. This point is examined in this study.

### 1.4.5 Housing, Water, Sanitation and Electricity

Households can be categorised according to type of dwelling: very formal, formal, informal dwellings, traditional dwellings and other (ECSECC, 2017:76). Very formal dwellings are structures built according to approved plans that also have running water and flush toilets within the dwelling (ECSECC, 2017:76). It is worth noting that standard government housing in South Africa customarily comes with sanitation facilities (ECSECC, 2017). Formal dwellings are structures built without running water or a flush toilet (ECSECC, 2017:76). Informal dwellings include shacks or shanties in informal settlements (ECSECC, 2017:76). Traditional dwellings-structures are often made of clay, mud, reeds, or other locally available material. Other dwelling units include tents, ships, caravans, etc. Figure 1.10 shows households by dwelling unit type in Koukamma municipality in 2016.

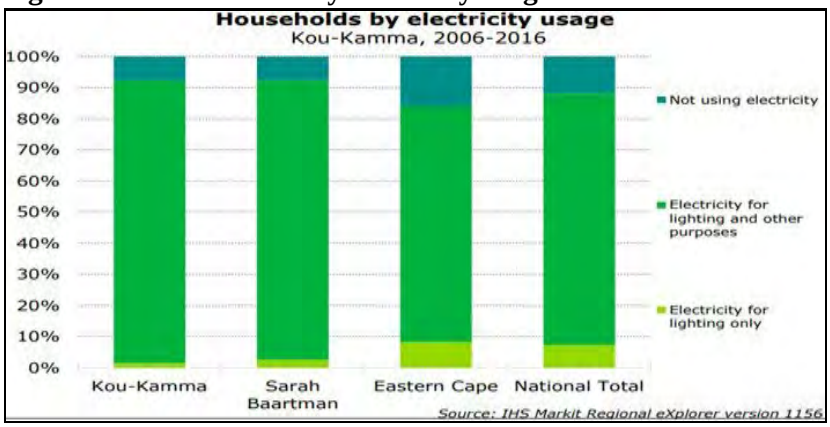
**Figure 1.10: Household by dwelling unit type in Koukamma Municipality, 2016**




Source: ECSECC (2017:77).

Koukamma Municipality had a total number of 8 740 (68.51% of total households) very formal dwelling units, a total of 2 950 (23.15% of total households) formal dwelling units and a total number of 824 (6.46% of total households) informal dwelling units (ECSECC, 2017:77). The fact that most people in Koukamma Municipality resided in very formal dwellings (with running water and flushing toilets) is an indication of the government's RDP housing programme that provides free housing to previously disadvantaged peoples in South Africa. In addition to the provision of sanitation and water, most Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses in South Africa often come with the provision of electricity (ECSECC, 2017). Figure 1.11 below indicates the households that had access to electricity in Koukamma in 2016.

**Figure 1.11: Households by electricity usage in the Koukamma Municipality, 2016**




Source: ECSECC (2017:84).

ECSECC (2017:84) indicates that Koukamma Municipality had a total number of 189 (1.43%) households with electricity for lighting only, a total of 12 000 (90.83%) households had electricity for lighting and other purposes, and a total number of 1 020 (7.74%) households did not use electricity. Most people residing in Koukamma municipality have access to very formal housing with water, sanitation, and electricity, which are provisions for government RDP houses. Public services provided by the government are not without their challenges and backlogs, as the Koukamma municipality also struggles with the provision of public services such as health, schooling and policing (among other factors) (Koukamma Municipality, 2020). This thesis highlights the issue of housing, water, and electricity, as these contribute to the social security of the farm workers in this study, a pillar of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda that determines the level of social upgrading experienced by workers involved in GCs.

## 1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used qualitative research methodologies to collect and analyse data. Qualitative research methods involve collecting and analysing non-numerical data to understand the subjective opinions and experiences of research participants on a particular social phenomenon (Bryman, 2012; Flick et al., 2004). This study used purposive sampling to identify and locate research participants. Purposive sampling involves intentionally selecting participants based on their characteristics, knowledge, experiences, or other criteria (Campbell et al., 2020; Etikan et al., 2016). The participants in this study included the selected commercial apple farmers, farm workers and volunteers from the ANC office in Joubertina in the Langkloof Valley. After the sample was identified, snowball sampling was used to recruit research participants. Snowball sampling is a process whereby research respondents recommend or recruit each other to participate in a study (Browne, 2005; Goodman, 2011; Noy, 2008; Polit-O'Hara and Beck, 2012). In this study, the selected apple farmers and farm workers mostly recommended and recruited each other to participate in this study. Once the research respondents were recruited for this study, data was collected through in-depth one-on-one interviews, group interviews, observation and document analysis (Bryman, 2012). The data collected through these various methods was analysed using a deductive thematic analysis, which applies predefined themes or concepts drawn from existing theories or prior research to analyse qualitative data (Bryman, 2012; Clarke and Braun, 2017; Fife and Gossner, 2024; Proudfoot, 2023). The data obtained from closed-ended questions in the questionnaire designed for farm workers was quantified and presented through frequency tables and cross-tabulations. Notwithstanding the hybridity in the research methods used, however, this study is informed by a qualitative research paradigm.

## 1.6 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

### 1.6.1 Chapter Two

This thesis is divided into eleven chapters, including this introductory chapter. Chapter two provides a detailed discussion of the three-tiered (trilogy) theoretical framework that informs this study. The first section of this chapter outlines the genealogy of the GCF, which consists of the Marxist-inspired world systems theory GCC theory, the 'break-away' neoliberal-inspired GCC theory, the GVC theory, and the contemporary GPN theory. The GCF provides the tools for analysing the sphere of trade exchange between the selected producers and lead firms in GCs but has a surface understanding of labour in these GCs.

This section of the chapter traces the evolution of the LPT from its Marxian roots to its present state, which makes conceptual linkages between the spheres of trade exchange and production in GCs. This chapter unpacks the LPT, which covers the sphere of production and shows why its integration into the trilogy theoretical framework is ideal for this study. The vertical and horizontal profit maximisation in the spheres of trade exchange and production influences the outcomes of participants in GCs. The socio-economic conditions in the geographical territories where GCs are anchored play a crucial role in determining the positionality and outcomes of local role players (producers and their employees) in the GCs, hence the inclusion of the SLA into the trilogy theoretical framework informing this study.

Although the SLA does not have Marxist influence, it acknowledges the importance of the dynamics outside the 'factory gates' that determine and influence the livelihood strategies of people in vulnerable contexts. In this study, the selected commercial apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley are vulnerable in the global apple value chain because they are subjected to the domineering trading practices of global supermarkets, unpredictable climatic conditions and the significant risks associated with farming. The vulnerability of farm workers in this study is further exacerbated by their generally poor socio-economic backgrounds which are exploited by their employers. Overall, this chapter provides a detailed conceptual justification and explanation of why a three-tiered (trilogy) theoretical framework is used in this study. Key concepts and themes highlighted in this chapter are linked to the broader objective of this study.

### 1.6.2 Chapter Three

Chapter three provides an overview of the South African agri-food value chains, pre- and post-1994. The South African agricultural sector is a product of colonial dispossession, which, from the onset, was established and developed by the state sector into a globally competitive exporter of agricultural commodities. Pre-1994, the agri-food value chains in South Africa can best be described as producer-driven because white farmers, through state support, enjoyed an advantageous bargaining position over international buyers. The success of the white farmers in South Africa (pre-1994) can also be attributed to having access to a low-cost and exploited class of workers without any form of legal protection. During this period, race, sex and employment status influenced employment outcomes on the white-owned farms.

Post-1994, however, the ANC government fully adopted neoliberal policies and withdrew state support from the agricultural sector, thus exposing white commercial farmers to competitive buyer-driven global agri-food value chains dominated by global supermarkets. While some white commercial farmers exited the market, some consolidated and formed large-scale agribusinesses, continually upgrading to remain competitive. Post-1994, farm workers in South Africa continue to experience multiple forms of exploitation at the hands of their employers despite the existence of labour laws that are meant to protect them. Additionally, factors such as sex and employment status still influence the employment outcomes of farm workers in South Africa, whilst race plays less of a factor. This chapter also highlights key concepts and themes linked to the fundamental objectives of this study.

### 1.6.3 Chapter Four

Chapter four provides a detailed discussion of the qualitative research methods used in this study. This chapter describes how the research participants were identified and recruited through purposive sampling and snowball sampling, respectively. After recruiting research participants, the data was collected through one-on-one interviews, group interviews, observation and document analysis. The data collected through the diverse methods (listed in the previous sentence) was analysed using deductive thematic analysis. The data obtained from the closed-ended questions of the farm worker questionnaire were presented through frequency tables and cross-tabulations. This chapter also discusses how the research philosophy and theoretical approach influenced the adoption of the qualitative research methods used in this study.

### 1.6.4 Chapter Five

Chapter five covers the following four areas: the governance model of the global apple value chain, the apple industry of South Africa and the profile of the white commercial apple. The global apple value chain is governed through a three-tiered model that includes public, social and private stakeholders at an international and national level. This chapter analyses how this governance model functions and its impact on the selected commercial apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley. In describing the apple industry of South Africa, this chapter also covers areas such as the export markets and the apple-producing regions in South Africa. This chapter also provides a profile of the large-scale white commercial apple farms that participated in this study. These farms were established and developed through the formation of strategic partnerships that bolstered their dominance in the apple industry of the Langkloof Valley.

This chapter also shows that economic upgrading is a necessity for surviving the highly competitive global apple value chain; as such, the formation of strategic partnerships influences the economic upgrading trajectories of the selected commercial apple farmers who participated in this study. The commercial apple farmers in this study experienced process, product, functional and intersectoral upgrading. The findings in this chapter validate Selwyn and Leyden's (2022) contention that GCs are oligopolistic, thus casting doubt on the inclusive development assumed by the neoliberal-inspired mainstream GC scholars about GCs.

### 1.6.5 Chapter Six

Chapter six examines the state of four land reform apple farms participating in the global apple value chain in the Langkloof Valley. This chapter discusses 'new age sharecropping' arrangements between white commercial apple farmers and land reform apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley. Not only are the land reform farms located within or adjacent to their white 'parent' farms, but they also use their resources to produce apples, which they sell to the white farmers at low prices. Additionally, the land reform beneficiaries (in this study) were either previously or currently employed by their white business partners/mentors, which further reinforces the paternalistic relationships that have existed on the farms in the Langkloof Valley for decades. The economic upgrading achievements experienced by the land reform farms are highly dependent on the support provided by their white 'partners' and 'mentors'.

The distribution of returns from the value produced through these various forms of economic upgrading (not on the same scale as the selected commercial white apple farmers) is skewed in favour of the white commercial apple farmers rather than the land reform beneficiaries. Land reform beneficiaries find themselves in this precarious position because the government has not consistently supported them in sustaining commercial farming enterprises. The notion of land reform in the apple industry of the Langkloof Valley, as per the findings in this study, appears to be decorative rather than substantial, as it does not threaten the unequal racially skewed land ownership patterns and economic dominance of white commercial apple farmers in that industry and region. This chapter, therefore, unpacks the notion of 'new age sharecropping' between the white commercial apple farmers and land reform beneficiaries (in this study) within the global apple value chain.

### 1.6.6 Chapter Seven

Chapter seven analyses how the demands from the international or global supermarkets impact the production processes (orchards and packhouses) and division of labour on the selected commercial apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. More specifically, this chapter unpacks the production and packaging of apples on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. This chapter shows how apple production on the selected commercial apple farms in the Langkloof Valley is dominated by modern technology to such an extent that workers appear as appendages of a techno-centric system. This does not mean that workers are not key to the production process, but their tasks and jobs are driven and monitored through modern technologies and innovative managerial (supervision) techniques. The commercial apple farmers in this study apply various methods to monitor and boost the productivity of farm workers, whether in the orchards or the packhouses. The margins for human error and sabotage have been drastically reduced as well.

### 1.6.7 Chapter Eight

Chapter eight profiles 75 farm workers who participated in this study. This discussion covers their demographic (age, race and sex) make-up, historical backgrounds (places of origin, etc.), educational backgrounds, and employment histories before their current employment on the commercial apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. This chapter shows that most of the farm workers who participated in this study came from poor socio-economic backgrounds, which induced their vulnerability and chances of being exploited by the selected apple farms. This chapter also provides an overview of the employment profiles of the 75 farm workers who participated in this study. In doing so, it covers job-search methods, employment statuses, the training and opportunities for job growth, and the value of a vulnerable workforce in the global apple value chain. In this chapter, it is also clear that race is becoming less of a factor in determining employment outcomes on the selected commercial apple farms in the Langkloof Valley.

### 1.6.8 Chapter Nine

Chapter nine interrogates the extent to which certain rights of farm workers (in this study) were adhered to by the selected commercial apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley. This chapter examines the following areas: employment contracts, hours of work, income, health and safety, water and sanitation, rights at work, and employment rights.

This chapter shows that a large proportion of farm workers (black or coloured female farm workers employed on seasonal contracts in particular) in this study experienced violations of their labour rights. Only a small group of (mostly permanently employed black or coloured male) farm workers did not experience violations of their labour rights. This chapter shows that the outcomes of farm workers in this study, according to race, are mixed and favour different races in different areas of employment. More importantly, the chapter shows that the vertical and horizontal profit maximization strategies in the global apple value chain induce voluntary noncompliance and governance deficits by public and private labour auditing institutions tasked with conducting labour audits on the selected commercial apple farms in this study.

### 1.6.9 Chapter Ten

Chapter 10 examines the social protection mechanisms and channels for social dialogue available to the 75 farm workers in this study. The following areas are covered in this chapter: medical cover, pensions and funeral cover, access to the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF), places of residence, housing, number of people in the household and social protection in the global apple value chain. This study shows that the majority of the (mostly seasonal female) farm workers were not given social protection by their employers but had to rely on alternative sources. The UIF, which also covers seasonal farm workers, was not sufficient to sustain the farm workers during the off-season. Other seasonal farm workers struggled to access their UIF monies timeously due to non-compliance by their employers and government officials. This chapter shows that only a small group of (mostly) permanently employed (black or coloured) male farm workers enjoyed social protection from their places of employment.

This chapter also shows that there were internal and external channels for farm workers in this study to engage in social dialogue and express their grievances. This chapter shows that the internal and external channels were largely ineffective, as evidenced by the large-scale violations of various labour laws on the selected commercial apple farms in this study. Only the CCMA proved to be very effective, however, most farm workers in this study did not access it because of the lack of knowledge, the long distance to the CCMA office in Gqeberha and the general fear of being perceived as troublemakers that could compromise their job security. The latter reason also deterred many farm workers who participated in this study from engaging robustly in both the internal and external channels for social dialogue available to farm workers.

Nonetheless, regardless of these channels for social dialogue, this study shows that the selected apple farmers violated the rights of most of their employees, most of whom were seasonally employed females. Additionally, this study shows that both public and private labour monitoring institutions were ineffective, as the selected apple farmers blatantly violated various labour laws. Overall, only a small group of mostly permanently employed male farm workers engaged meaningfully in social dialogue with their employers. However, this engagement was also measured as they did not want to compromise their job security. The remaining of the mostly seasonally employed female farm workers in this study found the channels available to engage in social dialogue ineffective. The employment outcomes of the farm workers in this chapter were mixed, as both races experienced favourable outcomes in different areas of employment relating to social protection and dialogue.

### 1.6.10 Chapter Eleven

Chapter eleven is dedicated to the discussion and conclusion. This chapter covers the following areas: theories informing this study, methodologies used, key research findings and recommendations for future research. This chapter essentially ties the research together and shows how findings in this study answer the core research question informing this study.

## 1.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter provides an overview of this thesis. The first part of this chapter outlines the neoliberal-inspired account of the mainstream GC discourse on the developmental impacts of GCs on participants from emerging economies. The second part of this chapter briefly discusses the research philosophy and theoretical framework informing this study. The third section of this chapter provides a brief overview of the context of the apple value chain in South Africa. This includes both historical and present dynamics of the agricultural sector of South Africa as a whole. The fourth part of this chapter provides a brief overview of the Langkloof Valley located in Koukamma Municipality in the Eastern Cape. The fifth section of this chapter describes the qualitative research methods adopted in this study, followed by the sixth part, which provides an overview of the thesis.

# CHAPTER TWO

# THE TRILOGY THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter unpacks the trilogy theoretical framework, which consists of the global chain framework (GCF), the labour process theory (LPT) and the sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA). This chapter elucidates the logic of adopting three theories to examine the outcomes and experiences of selected commercial apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley in the global apple value chain. The first section of this chapter provides a genealogical breakdown of the GCF, which possesses the conceptual tools for analysing the sphere of trade exchange between commercial apple producers and global supermarkets in the global apple value chain. The GCF is an umbrella term used to consolidate the global commodity chain (GCC), the global value chain (GVC) and the global production network (GPN) theories under a single theoretical framework. The second section of this chapter unpacks the labour process theory (LPT), which possesses the conceptual tools for analysing the sphere of production on the selected commercial apple farms from the Langkloof Valley engaged in the global apple value chain.

Taylor et al. (2015) explained the value of combining GC theories with the LPT, as they address each other's theoretical weaknesses. GC theories have a weak understanding of labour in GCs, whilst the LPT is weak at understanding the impact of the political economy on the labour processes of supplier firms in GCs. The third section of this chapter provides an overview of the SLA, which has the conceptual tools for analysing the sphere of social reproduction in the global apple value chain. Baglioni et al. (2022) broadly define social reproduction as that space outside the workplace that includes the household and private, social and public institutions outside the household. The SLA is ideal for this study, as it shows how the diverse socio-economic conditions in the Langkloof Valley influence the position and outcomes of selected commercial apple farmers and farm workers in the global apple value chain. Using a trilogy theoretical framework that connects the spheres of trade exchange, production and social reproduction is necessary for uncovering how the extraction of surplus value within and across these spheres of the global apple value chain influences the outcomes of the selected commercial apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley.

## 2.2 GLOBAL COMMODITY CHAIN FRAMEWORK

### 2.2.1 Historical Background

The GCC framework was established by world systems theory (WST) scholars to show how global capitalism and colonialism created uneven development worldwide (Wallerstein and Hopkins, 1986). The WST derives its inspiration from dependency theory which was developed to counter the Eurocentric developmental prescripts advanced by modernization theory in the 1950s (Amin, 1976; Chirot and Hall, 1982; Dos Santos, 1970; Evans, 1976; Frank, 1979; Furtado, 1973; Harrison, 1988; Leys, 1996; Sunkel, 1972;). Modernization scholars argue that nations in the global South should follow Western development models to reach 'First-World' status (Bernstein, 1971; Chirot and Hall, 1982; Escobar, 2011). This framework also attributes the 'underdevelopment' of economies in the global South to internal deficiencies, such as political and social instability (Harrison, 1988; Jenkins and Scanlan, 2001). Modernization theory is seemingly blind to the power asymmetries that reproduce archaic and unequal global trade patterns established during the colonial era.

Dependency theory contends that the global trading system favours core (advanced nations), that exploit the periphery (less advanced) nations (Dos Santos, 1970; Frank, 1969; Galtung, 1971; Ferraro, 2008; Furtado, 1973; Jenkins and Scanlan, 2001). Building on the foundations of dependency theory, WST introduced the notion of 'semi-periphery' regions that possess features of both core and periphery nations (Arrighi and Drangel, 1986; Chase-Dunn, 1999; Namkoong, 1999; Sorinel, 2010; Wallerstein, 1974, 1980, 2000a, 2000b). Clelland (2015) uses the world systems theory to show how voracious surplus value extraction in modern GCs creates monopolies, inequality and exploitation, thus indicating the relevance of such a theoretical framework in the modern era. This thesis, although it acknowledges the existence of internal governance deficits in South Africa (especially in the agricultural sector), adopts the critical approach of Marxist-inspired WST scholars and contemporary GC scholars to analyse whether integrating into the global apple value chain leads to economic and social upgrading for the selected apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley. Suwandi (2020) applies Marx's (1976) concept of the 'hidden abode of production' to the GC, which is driven by underlying mechanisms seeking to appropriate maximum 'surplus value'.

### 2.2.2 The 'Break-Away' Global Commodity Chains Framework

The meteoric rise of East Asian economies in the late twentieth century after adopting export-oriented industrialization (EOI) policies, altered the perceptions of some GCC scholars from being critical of GCs to touting them as ideal conduits for accelerating economic and social development of participants from emerging economies (Bair, 2009; Gereffi and Korzeniewicz, 1994; World Bank, 1993). This thesis labels this group of GCC scholars 'breakaway' scholars because they shifted from a world-systems-inspired approach to a neoliberal approach to GCs. These 'breakaway' scholars also attributed the growth of firms in East Asian economies to being exposed to lead firms (multinational companies) that have access to lucrative global markets and their transfer of 'best practices' onto supplier firms, who are compelled to upgrade their operations and positions within GCs (Bair, 2009; Humphrey and Schmitz, 2000, 2001, 2002a, 2002b).

In keeping with the narrow focus on lead firms, Gereffi (2001) identified two types of GCCs. *Producer-driven commodity chains (PDCCs)* are governed by lead firms that undertake cross-border production in-house, whilst *buyer-driven commodity chains (BDCCs)* are governed by lead firms that outsource production to independent producers around the world (Gereffi, 2001). The global apple value chain is buyer-driven, as it is governed by global supermarkets that communicate multiple product, price and time specifications (among others) to apple producers in South Africa, who (in turn) structure their production processes and division of labour to meet these specifications. Nevertheless, the core assertion of the 'break away' GCC scholars was that lead firms facilitate the upgrading of supplier firms and their employees in GCs (Gereffi, 1996; Humphrey, and Schmitz, 2000; Dussel, 2008; Ponte and Ewert, 2009).

## 2.3 GLOBAL VALUE CHAIN FRAMEWORK

### 2.3.1 Transition from the GCC Framework to the GVC Framework

During the early 2000s, Gereffi's (2001) dual model of governance was criticized by the new GVC scholars for being too static and not considering the dynamic nature of global trade (Humphrey, 2003; Ponte and Gibbon, 2005; Smith et al., 2002; Sturgeon, 2002). GVC scholars proposed that governance should focus on how firms are coordinated rather than focusing on the type of lead firm at the helm of a GC (Sturgeon, 2009). As such, three distinct types of GC coordination were identified: *network, hierarchy* and *arm's-length market relations* (Sturgeon, 2002).

*Network trade relations* are found in GCs where firms cooperate in a close and even relationship where information, competencies and even risk (among other things) are shared between lead firms and suppliers (Humphrey and Schmitz, 2000). *Hierarchical relations* are defined by the degree of control exerted by lead firms on their suppliers' production processes (Humphrey and Schmitz, 2002a; Shaohan et al., 2009). In *arm's-length market relations*, the buyer and supplier do not develop close relationships but negotiate price, as the buyer has confidence in the competency of the producer to deliver quality products within a specific timeframe (Gibson, 2003; Gibbon et al., 2008; Humphrey and Schmitz, 2004). The buyer-driven global apple value chain is coordinated via *arm's-length market relations* because the producers independently meet the buyer's demands promptly without any close relationship (Visser and Alford, 2024). This thesis situates the selected commercial apple farmers (from the Langkloof Valley) within this governance framework to show how the vertical power dynamics and profit maximization strategies in this chain influence their upgrading outcomes.

### 2.3.2 Governance and Economic Upgrading

Economic upgrading can be described as the process of moving a firm from low profit to more profitable activities within a GC (Gereffi, 1999). Humphrey and Schmitz (2000) proposed four types of economic upgrading identified in GC literature: process, product, functional and intersectoral upgrading. Process upgrading involves the enhancement of production through technological advancement (Giuliani et al., 2005). Product upgrading entails firms moving into more sophisticated, high-value product lines (Gereffi, 1999), whilst functional upgrading involves adopting more profitable activities and nodes in the GC (Glaser, 2008). Intersectoral upgrading is the movement of firms into a more profitable value chain using the skills and knowledge learnt in the previous value chain (Humphrey and Schmitz, 2002a). This study investigates whether the selected commercial apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley experienced economic upgrading and how they achieved this. The inclusion of land reform in this study on a GC raises further questions about how land reform farms managed to participate in a competitive GC with minimal resources (Greenberg, 2013b). GVC scholars contend that supplier firms' economic upgrading pathways depend on the coordination governing a particular GC (Humphrey and Schmitz, 2002b). Supplier firms engaged in *network relations* have diverse upgrading options because of their balanced trade relations with lead firms (Humphrey and Schmitz, 2002b).

Supplier firms participating in chains governed through *hierarchy relations* have a high chance of process and product upgrading (Humphrey and Schmitz, 2002b). In these types of GCs, however, the chances of functional upgrading for supplier firms are limited because lead firms do not want their suppliers to upgrade to a point where they compete against them (Campos et al., 2000; Bazan and Navas-Aleman, 2004; Giuliani et al., 2005). Firms in *arm's-length market relations* often experience product, process and functional upgrading while relying on their resources to upgrade and can be derailed by economic and political forces (Bair and Gereffi, 2001). The global apple value chain is buyer-driven with market forms of coordination; as such, this thesis interrogates whether the selected commercial apple farmers (from the Langkloof Valley) experienced the types of economic upgrading asserted above. Mainstream GC scholars acknowledge that disparities exist in GC. Hence, they suggest the formation of clusters among suppliers as a strategy for achieving economic upgrading (Gereffi and Lee, 2016; Humphrey and Schmitz, 2002a; Giuliani et al., 2005; Pietrobelli and Rabellotti, 2006; Trienekens and van Dijk, 2011).

This suggestion, however, does not fully appreciate the localized socio-economic and political dynamics in the geographical territories where these clusters are located (Hess, 2004). In South Africa, for example, agri-food value chains are dominated by white agri-business, whilst the majority of the previously disenfranchised indigenous (coloured and black) people struggle to penetrate these racialized networks (Sihlobo, 2023). The small percentage of previously disenfranchised commercial farmers who engage in global agri-food value chains in South Africa participate through unequal partnerships with economically stronger white commercial farmers (Okunlola et al., 2016). Research shows that small-scale farmers are often exploited by the more financially dominant businesses in global agri-food value chains (Amanor, 2019; Sivramkrishna and Jyotishi, 2008; Karatepe and Scherrer, 2021; Willoughby and Gore, 2018;). Selwyn and Leyden (2022) contend that GCs are geared toward monopoly capital and not smaller businesses. As such, this thesis analyses the upgrading trajectories of the selected established white commercial apple farmers and land reform beneficiaries from different socio-economic backgrounds. This thesis seeks to show how the vertical and horizontal profit-driven trade relations in the global apple value chain create uneven outcomes for the selected commercial apple farmers from the Langkloof Valley.

### 2.3.3 The ILO's Decent Work Agenda and Social Upgrading

Mainstream GC (especially GCC and GVC) scholars assume that there is a causal relationship between economic upgrading and social upgrading in GCs (Knorringa and Pegler, 2006). Sen (1999, 2000) describes social upgrading as the process of improving workers' rights to enhance the quality of their employment. The concept of social upgrading stems from the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, which stands on the following four pillars: employment creation, social protection, rights at work and social dialogue (Barrientos and Smith, 2007; Elliot and Freeman, 2003; ILO, 1999; Posthuma and Nathan, 2010; Selwyn, 2013). Selwyn (2013) identifies three major shortcomings in the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, upon which the notion of social upgrading is built.

The first shortcoming posits the danger of the co-option of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda by elite institutions and whether its implementation can be fully realised (Cammack, 2002; Mayer and Pickles, 2011; Selwyn, 2013). Multilateral institutions (such as the Bretton Woods Institutions) support the ILO's Decent Work Agenda in global chains whilst simultaneously supporting neoliberal policies that (essentially) facilitate the domineering trade practices of lead firms in global chains (Lerche, 2012). The second shortcoming identified by Selwyn (2013:81) is that the ILO's Decent Work Agenda fails to diagnose the root causes of the decent work deficits. This failure is compounded by the ILO's narrow focus on best-case labour market outcomes rather than the social processes and mechanisms to achieve them (Selwyn, 2013). Selwyn (2013:81) notes that the third shortcoming of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda is that it does not unmask and explain the systemic processes of exploitation characteristic of capitalist social relations (Mayer and Pickles, 2011).

For Marx (1967), the 'secret' of capitalist profit lies in the ability of capital to garner a larger share of value from workers' labour power (surplus value) than the cost of its initial purchase. Businesses usually increase the appropriation of surplus value through increasing relative surplus value extraction and increasing absolute surplus value extraction (Marx, 1967). The increasing of relative surplus value entails intensifying worker productivity through technological innovations and diverse managerial techniques, and the increasing absolute surplus value involves lengthening the working day without increasing wages proportionately (Marx, 1967). Marx (1967) notes that capitalists extract surplus value through immiseration (pushing down real wages) and super-exploitation (paying workers less than the costs of reproducing their labour power).

These strategies to reduce wages to increase surplus value have threatened stable standard employment for many workers in the global capitalist system, as research shows an increase in non-standard, low-wage precarious workers, which Standing (2011) terms as the growing precariat. The increasing group of non-standard workers often find themselves in and out of employment, therefore, experiencing periods of unemployment and are mostly employed in seasonal or short-term work as per the demands from capital. Marx (1967) identified this growing group of workers as the 'reserve army of labour'. Marx (1967) saw the expansion of a reserve army of labour as an inevitable outcome of the process of capital accumulation. As capital accumulated, it threw certain workers out of employment into a reserve army; conversely, to accumulate, capital needed a reserve army of labour.

Without such a reserve, capital accumulation would cause wages to rise, and the process of accumulation would itself be threatened as surplus value was squeezed. While Marx (1967) did note that certain workers - the pauperized lumpen proletariat - might bear the brunt of unemployment, he was concerned with showing how the expansion of capitalism inevitably drew more and more people into a labour reserve of potential, marginal and transitory employment, rather than to identify any group of workers as particularly vulnerable. Bruegel (1979) argues that Marx did not consider women as a group in his reserve army of labour model. Nevertheless, the extension of women's involvement in wage labour around the world fits the picture of the continued expansion of the reserve army drawn by Marx, as a growing number of women are employed in non-standard work across different industries around the world (Bhattacharjee and Roy, 2015; Mezzadri, 2016b).

In GCs, labour arbitrage is pursued on a global scale, as lead firms source their products from the global South nations that have lower wage rates and have a history of suppressing worker rights (Smith, 2016). The increasing outsourcing of production by lead firms to producers and suppliers to the global South is largely driven by a profit-driven cost-cutting agenda (Willoughby and Gore, 2018). Low-wage destinations in the global South also have an abundance of a reserve army of labour, as per Marx's definition, because most of the workers employed at the bottom of GCs are on seasonal or casual employment, which means that they experience unemployment and employment interchangeably throughout the year (Foster and McChesney, 2017). Their precarious economic state induces their vulnerability, thus making them an attractive labour force for lead firms and local producers or suppliers in GCs who seek to maximize surplus value.

Inspired by a critical realist research philosophy, this study adopts a Marxist approach to show how the 'hidden abode of surplus value extraction' influences the outcomes of the selected commercial apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley. The ILO's Decent Work Agenda and its efforts to improve working conditions in GCs are curtailed by the capitalist imperatives of cost minimization and profit maximization in fiercely competitive global markets (Anner et al., 2013; Barrientos et al., 2011a; Mayer and Pickles, 2011). This thesis uses the ILO's Decent Work Agenda (with all its weaknesses) to determine whether farm workers (in this study) experienced social upgrading in the global apple value chain. This study uses the ILO's Decent Work Agenda because it is used in mainstream GC discourse to measure social upgrading. The outcomes of this study can be used to examine the concerns raised by Selwyn (2013).

### 2.3.4 Supplier Strategies and Labour Outcomes in GCs

Barrientos et al. (2010:14-15) note that labour outcomes in GCs are determined by the strategies adopted by supplier firms to meet the demands of the lead firms. Following this logic, Milberg and Winkler (2011) outline three supplier strategies that affect worker outcomes, which include: the low-road approach (involves economic and social downgrading), the high-road approach (involves economic and social upgrading) and a mixed approach (involves economic upgrading, social upgrading and social downgrading). Research shows that suppliers in GCs often choose the third approach, hence the persistent variegated labour outcomes in GCs (Barrientos et al., 2011b; Bernhardt and Milberg, 2011; Gereffi and Lee, 2016; Nadvi, 2004; Posthuma and Nathan, 2010).

Rossi (2011) notes that labour outcomes in GCs are mostly divided into standard (permanent) and non-standard (short-term) employment that reflect the broader social hierarchies that are specific to those societies. For example, males are often employed in permanent and semiskilled/skilled jobs, while females are employed in short-term or casualized work that requires limited skills (Alamgir et al., 2022; LeBaron and Gore, 2020; Mezzadri, 2014; Mezzadri, 2016a, b; Rossi, 2011). Colombini (2020) contends that, at the turn of the twenty-first century, modern global production networks have consolidated new forms of work to optimize profit margins for capital. For example, both the active working class and the industrial reserve army are constituted in a much more fluid way. The differentiation between active labourer and industrial reserve army merge.

Colombini (2020:423) further argues that “the chain that holds the worker to capital becomes even stronger, arising as it does from his/her constitution as a capitalist individual. The intrinsic pressure for exploitation by the segregated mass of the labour market becomes even more intense, containing in its form of labour the work reserve of capitalist society”. Smith (2016) notes that global labour arbitrage (search for the cheapest forms of labour) is one of the main drivers of outsourcing of production (through GCs) to lower wage destinations in the global South. This race to the bottom thrives on the exploitation of economically vulnerable groups of people from different backgrounds (Asia Floor Wage, 2016a, b; Dolan, 2004; LeBaron et al., 2018:21; Lloyd and James, 2008; Mezzadri, 2016a; Oxfam, 2016; Standing, 2011; Selwyn, 2016; Siegmann, 2008; Ugarte et al., 2023). Visser and Alford (2024) also show an increase in the social downgrading of farm workers in the apple industry in the Western Cape.

The weakness in their analysis, however, is that they blame this increasing social downgrading solely on governance deficits and omit the role of the aggressive vertical and horizontal profit maximization strategies driving the global apple value chain. This study seeks to show how the drive for profit in the global apple value chain influences farm worker outcomes on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. In GCs, there is a clear intersectionality between the capitalist drive for profit and patriarchy, as vulnerable women from disadvantaged backgrounds are used as cheap labour by suppliers in the GCs. According to socialist feminists, gender stratification in paid work is grounded in the interacting forces of patriarchy and capitalism (Eisenstein, 1979; Sokoloff, 1981). Thus, these two forces are key to analysing women's marginalisation in GCs (Dunaway, 2013).

In an analysis of the feminised exploitative sweatshop regime in the garment value chain in India, Mezzadri (2016b) illustrates the interconnection between processes of class formation and patriarchal norms in globalised production circuits. Many suppliers in different GCs are increasingly employing women from poor backgrounds, not to empower them but to exploit their vulnerability (Mezzadri, 2016a). Mies (1986:38) also contends that patriarchy constitutes the mostly invisible underground of the visible capitalist system. In the South African deciduous fruit sub-sector, male farm workers have consistently enjoyed better employment outcomes (on farms) than female farm workers who stem from vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds (Bekker et al., 1982; Kritzinger and Vorster, 1996; Visser, 2016).

Nevertheless, this thesis examines which of the three approaches outlined by Milberg and Winkler (2011) apply to the outcomes of the selected commercial apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley, whilst endeavouring to uncover the driving forces behind these outcomes.

## 2.4 GLOBAL PRODUCTION NETWORK FRAMEWORK

### 2.4.1 Three Pillars of Global Production Networks

The GPN framework was established by a group of scholars from the University of Manchester to broaden GC analysis by accentuating the role of external stakeholders in the trading relationship between lead firms and suppliers in GCs (Coe et al., 2004; Coe et al., 2008). The first stage of the GPN framework, known as 'GPN 1.0', focuses on *value, power and embeddedness* (Coe and Yeung, 2015; Hughes, 2005; Johns, 2006). GPN scholars based their approach on the idea of 'value' from the Marxian notion of 'surplus value'. The notion of 'value' is centred on how value is created, enhanced and captured along the global chains (Henderson et al., 2002). This study places the logic of profit maximization at the centre of analysing how value is created, enhanced and captured by the selected apple farmers and farm workers in the Langkloof Valley in the global apple value chain. Within the GPN literature, the notion of 'power' includes corporate power (private governance), institutional power (public governance) and collective power (social governance) (Bair, 2017; Gereffi and Lee, 2016; Rainnie et al., 2011).

Research indicates that cooperation among these three levels of power does not necessarily translate to inclusive development in GCs, but rather the public and social stakeholders work in tandem to facilitate the domineering profit-driven agenda of monopolies (lead firms and suppliers) (Alford, 2020; Davis et al., 2018). As in the case of *value* noted above, this thesis also adopts the logic of profit maximization in determining how the three variants of power in the global apple value chain operate and influence the outcomes of selected commercial apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley. The last focus of GPN 1.0 is the notion of *'embeddedness'*, which recognizes the socio-economic and political dynamics that exist where the GCs are anchored. The dynamics on the ground are crucial as they influence how participants from those regions integrate into GCs and their outcomes thereafter (Amin and Thrift, 1994; Grabher, 1993; Harrison, 1992; Liu and Dicken, 2006; Scott, 1998; Yeung and Li, 2000).

This thesis also shows how the historical and socioeconomic conditions of the Langkloof Valley influence the engagement, positionality and outcomes of the selected commercial apple farmers and farm workers in the region.

### 2.4.2 Global Production Networks 2.0

GPN 2.0 acknowledges the concept of 'uneven development' through an explication of how regions are tied into the dynamics and strategies of the lead firms in GPNs (Coe and Yeung, 2015:2; Fuller, 2022). In response to the uneven distribution of wealth in GCs, the GPN 2.0 framework proposed strategic coupling, which entails using clusters to partner with and meet the needs of lead firms, to capture higher profit margins in GCs (Coe et al., 2004; Hassink, 2021; Hess, 2018:4; Yeung, 2009). Vicol et al. (2019) note that GPN 2.0 assumes that all lead firms are open to forming strategic partnerships with suppliers from developing countries, as is the case in certain industries in East Asia that are governed through *network forms of coordination*. Even in GCs that are governed through network forms of coordination, there is an element of competition between lead firms and suppliers as well (Nathan et al., 2018).

The trading relationships between lead firms and suppliers in such value chains are not completely egalitarian, as various factors reinforce inequality (Nathan, Tewari and Sarkar, 2018). The global apple value chain, on the other hand, is governed through unequal *arm's length market coordination* solely based on negotiating product quality and price (Willoughby and Gore, 2018; Visser and Alford, 2024). GPN 2.0, however, has been criticized for failing the GPN approach, which prioritizes the role of non-firm actors in GCs (Vicol et al., 2019:989). The GPN 2.0 shows a lack of appreciation of the dynamics that create disparities in the geographical territories where supplier firms are located (McGrath 2018:8). For example, the commercial apple farmers and farm workers in this study come from different socio-economic backgrounds that impact their positionality and outcomes in the global apple value chain.

### 2.4.3 The GCF and Labour

The GPN approach can be credited for addressing the 'labour deficit' in mainstream GC (especially GCC and GVC) literature (Smith, Rainnie, Dunford, Hardy, Hudson and Sadler, 2002). As such, the past decade has seen a burgeoning of labour-focused literature in GPN discourse (Coe and Hess, 2013). Bair and Werner (2015) identify two streams of labour analysis in the GPN framework.

The first group of scholars perceives labour as an object of capitalist manoeuvres, meaning that the outcomes for workers in GCs are determined by how supplier firms respond to the demands of lead firms (Barrientos and Kritzinger, 2004). The second group of scholars focus on the agency of workers in GCs (Castree, 2000; Castree et al., 2004; Herod, 2001; JordhusLier, 2013; Katz, 2004; Neilson and Pritchard, 2009; Rogaly, 2009; Tufts, 2007). Some GPN scholars identified structural power and associational power to describe worker mobilization in GCs (Coe and Jordhus-Lier, 2011). Structural power describes the workers' position in the production process, whilst associational power is based on the workers' collective organisation (Coe and Jordhus-Lier, 2011; Selwyn, 2011). This thesis also determines whether the farm workers who participated in this study had accessed or utilized these forms of power to raise their workplace grievances.

Anner (2015) notes that the collective action of workers in global chains is largely determined by the type of control mechanism/s imposed on them, which includes state, labour market, and employer control. State control exists when the government applies various methods to repress worker mobilization, as such, the response by workers is expressed through wildcat strikes, as trade unionism or transnational labour campaigns are not an option (Adelman, 2015; Cumbers et al., 2008; Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Perry, 1995; Pravda and Ruble, 1986). Market labour control takes place in contexts with high levels of unemployment that discourage worker activism; as such, workers reach out to external multi-stakeholder formations that establish international accords and global framework agreements to address their workplace grievances (Alamgir and Banerjee, 2019; Bezuidenhout et al., 2008).

Employer control takes place when employers use various methods to suppress worker mobilization; as such, workers embark on transnational corporate campaigns to force their employers to address their grievances quickly (Barrientos, 2013; Cumbers and Routledge, 2010; Fichter and Sydow, 2012; Wad, 2013). It is worth noting that the worker control methods and responses noted above are not static dichotomies but often materialize in diverse hybrid formations depending on the geographical territory (Anner, 2015). In light of this, this study also examines the types of labour control methods applied in this study to suppress farm workers from raising their workplace. Worker agency and desire to raise their workplace grievances fall under the 'social dialogue' pillar of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, which is one of the measures used to gauge social upgrading in GCs.

GPN scholars (Bieler and Lindberg, 2011; McGrath-Champ, Herod, and Rainnie, 2010; Taylor, 2010) have made various attempts at incorporating labour in their analysis, but they have failed to analyse production processes as sites of surplus value extraction. The broader objective of this study is to show that the global apple value chain is driven by flows of surplus extraction both on the vertical and horizontal levels and their impact on the outcomes of the selected commercial apple farms and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley. This section of the chapter has theorized the vertical aspects of GC analysis, and the next section theorizes the horizontal aspects, that is, the sphere of production where surplus value extraction takes place.

## 2.5 LABOUR PROCESS THEORY AND GLOBAL CHAINS

### 2.5.1 Marx and the Labour Process

Thompson (1989) describes the capitalist labour process as the process under which labour power (the individual's capacity to work) is transformed into actual or productive labour. Since Marx's Capital: *Volume 1* is arguably the cornerstone of labour process discourse (Braverman, 1974; Thompson, 1989; Heinrich and Locascio, 2012), it is necessary to commence with his account of the capitalist labour process. Marx (1976) notes that the capitalist labour process is made up of three elements, which include: (a) labour as a purposeful activity, (b) the object on which work is performed and (c) the instruments of that work. The combination of these elements makes up a simple labour process that is a purposeful activity, as it creates the production of a commodity with use-value; that is, it meets a human need (Marx, 1976). Apples have use-value because they are produced by farm workers using various farming implements and equipment to meet the nutritional needs of consumers locally and abroad. Marx (1967) identified two key features relating to the capitalist labour process, and these include (1) the commodification of labour power in the labour market, and (2) the appropriation of surplus value (unpaid labour) as profit. The labour market is defined as a platform where labour power is bought and sold (Fevre, 1992). When an employer hires an individual, their labour power automatically becomes the commodity of the employer during working hours (Fevre, 1992). Entering an employment relationship as a 'bought commodity' automatically skews the power in favour of the employer, hence the persistent tension between 'capital and labour' as they seek two contrasting things (profit and a wage) from the employment relationship (Marx, 1967).

This ongoing tension between capital and labour shapes the labour process and labour outcomes as well. Since the power is mostly in the employer's hands, profit becomes the central focus of the production process. For Marx (1967), profit or surplus value is the difference between the value that labour creates in production and the value paid by the capitalist to the worker in the form of wages. The production of surplus value is a prerequisite for making a profit, as the capitalist seeks to increase surplus value to increase their profits (Hunt, 1979; Marx and McLellan, 2000; Rubin, 1973). In his analysis of the labour process, Marx (1967) identifies two distinct methods used by capitalists to extract maximum surplus value in the production process. The first method, which is known as *'absolute surplus value'*, entails extending the working day, which also means increasing the hours that the labourer works (Marx, 1967).

The second method, better known as *'relative surplus value'*, involves the use of innovative technologies and work organization processes to intensify the work in the production process. Combined, both absolute and relative surplus value are designed to appropriate as much surplus value from the worker in the production process as possible. Selwyn (2016) proposed two more methods of surplus value extraction by capitalists, and these include immiseration (pushing down real wages) and super-exploitation (paying workers less than the costs of reproducing their labour power). This thesis also examines the notion of the appropriation of surplus labour to determine whether the selected apple farmers are pursuing any of the abovementioned strategies. Although the appropriation of surplus value is taking place at the production base level, GCs also contribute to this appropriation.

Smith (2016) also notes that surplus value is extracted by lead firms in GCs through the practice of global labour arbitrage (GLA), that is, the pursuit of the cheapest form of labour from emerging economies. Similarly, Willoughby and Gore (2018) contend that (as a competitive strategy) global supermarkets in global agri-food value chains purchase agricultural commodities from developing nations where production costs are low and labour standards are not adequately enforced. This thesis analyses whether any of the abovementioned profit-accumulation strategies are used in the global apple value chain and the selected apple farms. In doing so, their impact on farm workers (in this study) is analysed.

### 2.5.2 Braverman and the Labour Process

In *Labour and Monopoly Capital*, Braverman (1974) expounded on Marx's account of the labour process and demonstrated how innovation in technology and work organization intensified surplus value extraction whilst diminishing the value of the workers' labour power. Braverman (1974) cited Frederick Taylor's 'principles of scientific management' to show how a scientific approach to tasks could improve the productivity of workers (Harper and Mousa, 2015; Locke, 1982). Before 'scientific management', work was performed by skilled craftsmen who made their own decisions about how their jobs were to be performed and had strong bargaining power about cash payments (Locke, 1982). Nonetheless, Taylor performed experiments that were called 'time-and-motion' studies with stopwatches to time a worker's sequence of motions to determine the 'one best' way to perform a job (Harper and Mousa, 2015).

After conducting these experiments, Taylor developed the following principles of scientific management that included: (1) Selecting methods based on science, not the rule of thumb; (2) Assigning workers jobs based on their aptitudes; (3) Monitoring worker performance; and (4) properly divide the workload between managers and workers (Taylor, 1911). One of the main principles that Braverman (1974) used to justify his deskilling thesis was the separation of the conception and execution of tasks in the production process. In this context, managers do conceptual production planning, whilst the workers are employed to execute simplified tasks designed to boost productivity. It is worth noting that scientific management eroded much of this autonomy and converted skilled crafts into a series of simplified jobs that could be performed by unskilled workers (Locke, 1982).

This led to the deskilling of the craftsmen, the degradation of their work, and it significantly decreased their bargaining power with their employers (Locke, 1982). Some scholars, however, argued that the introduction of new technologies in production processes facilitates opportunities for upskilling for workers (Cavestro, 1992; Elger, 1979; Howell and Wolff, 1991; Wood, 1982). Nevertheless, evidence from a series of labour process studies shows evidence of both deskilling (Burawoy, 1979; Edwards, 1982; Friedman, 1977; Gamble, 1988; Knights and Willmott, 1990; Wood, 1982; Wood and Kelly, 1982) and upskilling tendencies in capitalist labour processes (Cavestro, 1992; Crompton and Jones, 1984; Elger, 1982; Kraft, 1979; Zimbalist, 1979). Labour market segmentation scholars argued that labour outcomes are divided into primary, secondary and internal labour markets (Cain, 1976).

Primary labour markets are those defined by well-paying jobs that require specialized skills. Secondary labour markets consist of lower-paying jobs which do not require any specialized skill (Harrison and Sum, 1979). Internal labour markets consist of 'exclusive jobs', which are designated to a select few who often portray features that are held in high regard by management (Doeringer and Piore, 1985). The labour market segmentation theory contends that labour segmentation in the workplace is shaped by political, social and economic forces. Hence, this thesis integrates LPT with the GCF framework to show how the political economy affects the production process and labour outcomes (Newsome, Taylor, Bair and Rainnie, 2015). Peck (1996) also argued that the division between skilled and low-skilled workers because of the introduction of new technology (among other factors) reduces the chances of collective worker action.

ChisoroDube et al. (2019) note that the success of the South African fruit industry has been largely bolstered by research, innovation and technological developments. This has mostly been the case for large-volume fruit exports from South Africa, such as apples and pears, citrus, as well as stone fruit. The key changes in technology are happening in the South African areas of biotechnology, irrigation and precision farming methods; sorting, packaging and cold storage; and electronic certification and integrated data-sharing digital platforms. Logically, these technological changes in the South African agri-food chains have a direct impact on the segmentation of farm workers into skilled and unskilled groups. This thesis uses themes and concepts from Braverman's (1974) LPT contributions to understanding how the drive for profit through various workplace alterations influences the farm worker outcomes and experiences on the selected farms in the Langkloof Valley.

### 2.5.3 Fordism, Neo-Fordism and Post-Fordism

Henry Ford, the pioneer of assembly lines, is a prime example of the successful application of Taylorist principles of scientific management (Locke, 1982). An assembly line is a semiautomated production process whereby a product is produced as it moves from one station (where workers perform simplified tasks) to the next until it is completed (Locke, 1982). In the deciduous fruit sub-sector of South Africa, farmers use precision agriculture in the orchards and automated sorting and grading equipment in the packhouses, which essentially shows a mixture of Taylorist and Fordist elements (Chisoro-Dube et al., 2019). This thesis interrogates whether Taylorist or Fordist methods are used in the selected farms in the Langkloof Valley.

The Fordist assembly line influenced the mass production movement, which was adopted by many companies around the world (Paxton, 2012). By the 1970s, however, the Fordist assembly line began losing its popularity as droves of workers employed in companies utilizing Fordist production methods complained about the rigidity, monotony and alienating experience of their working conditions (Wood, 1993). Furthermore, multinational companies from the global North were increasingly outsourcing production to low-cost supplier firms in the global South that had shorter lead times due to their new multi-purpose machines and flexible work regimes (Udagawa, 1995). Piore and Sabel (1984), who coined the term 'flexible specialization', argued that new technology demanded a sophisticated degree of discretion and a skilled workforce.

Visser and Ferrer (2015) note that farm work in South Africa is becoming more sophisticated and requires a certain level of skill to handle rising standards, mechanisation trends, new niche crops and new packing requirements. These changes in the deciduous fruit sub-sector have made it almost mandatory for permanent farm workers to be multi-skilled in performing tasks such as pruning, irrigation, tractor driving, orchard monitoring, and supervising other workers (Barrientos and Visser 2012:23). This thesis also examines whether flexible specialization methods were adopted on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley to determine how these changes affected the labour outcomes of the farm workers in this study.

Critics of the flexible specialization thesis contend that post-Fordist production processes are neo-Fordist because they are mere reconfigurations of the original Fordist production process with new technologies and work organization methods to optimize production and profits (Berggren 1992; Womack et al., 1990). Neo-Fordist scholars argue that the multi-purpose machines that require an upskilled workforce have contributed to work intensification (workers performing multiple tasks for low wages), labour segmentation and increased insecurity for workers (Baldry et al., 1998; Beirne et al., 1998; Coriat, 1980; Crowley et al., 2010; Danford, 1998a, 1998b; Milkman, 1998). This thesis adopts the neo-Fordist stance in analysing the production processes on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley because it re-emphasizes the need for understanding that the innovations in the production process are products of profit maximization strategies that are anchored in Taylorism and Fordism. Another key aspect of post-Fordism is the decentralization of power from management to teams to allow workers to be involved in decision-making and to hold each other accountable (Pollert, 1985).

Neo-Fordist scholars contend that group work merely gives workers a false sense of empowerment, whilst it is another control mechanism to boost worker productivity (Murakami, 1999). Visser and Ferrer (2015) note that South African farmers divide their work according to teams that are supervised by permanently employed farm workers. This thesis examines the notion of work teams and their impact on farm workers employed on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. Furthermore, this thesis determines whether these apple farms apply any Taylorist, Fordist and post-Fordist methods and their impact on the farm workers. Although the mainstream GC discourse attempts to explain labour outcomes in GCs, its analysis does not thoroughly unpack how the profit-driven strategies of lead firms influence the production process and the division of labour in the supplier firms, which are also profit-driven.

### 2.5.4 Control in the Labour Process

The first wave of LPT discourse was followed by a second wave of studies that interrogated the concept of 'control' in the capitalist labour process (Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980; Edwards, 1982; Friedman, 1977; Herman, 1982; Littler, 1982; Knights and Collinson, 1985). These studies repeatedly criticised what they perceived to be a determinism in Braverman's argument about management's control practices (Friedman, 1977; Hyman, 1987), as such, these scholars sought to highlight the multifaceted nature of control in a capitalist labour process (Edwards, 1982; Littler, 1982; Friedman, 1977; Ramsay, 1977). Edwards (1982) highlights simple control (by managers and supervisors), technical control (through mechanical and technological methods) and bureaucratic control (through a set of rules) that large organizations use to monitor and subdue their workers.

LPT scholars generally agree that, over time, managerial control measures in capitalist organizations often evolve into hybrid formations (Barker, 1993; Child, 1984; Delbridge, 1998; Edwards and Scullion, 1982; Hyman, 1987; Sturdy, 1992; Ramsay, 1977; Sewell, 1998; Wilkinson, 1983). Historically, South African farmers controlled their workers mostly through direct supervision by white farm managers and permanently employed (male) supervisors (Davies, 1990). Chisoro-Dube et al. (2019) note that the advances in technology and work arrangement methods have added new dimensions to the way that South African commercial fruit farmers manage and monitor their employees.

This thesis analyses the profit-driven methods used by the apple farmers to monitor their employees (in this study), whilst considering Anner's (2015) three modes of worker control within the broader framework of GC governance that includes public, private and social dimensions and stakeholders.

### 2.5.5 Subjectivity and the Post-Modernist Contribution

Burawoy (1979) is credited for introducing the issue of worker subjectivity into labour process analysis, a feature that Braverman (1974) is criticized for omitting (Du Gay, 1996, 2007; O'Doherty and Willmott, 2001; Knights and Willmott, 1989; Willmott, 1989). Postmodernists contend that workers are not passive victims of managerial control methods but are often willing participants complicit in their subjugation (Cressey and MacInnes, 1980; Knights and Willmott, 1989, Willmott, 1989; Knights and Willmott, 1990). As such, postmodernist scholars tend to adopt the Foucauldian idea of power as a framework for analysing the capitalist labour process. Foucault (1977) showed how prisoners modified their behaviour because they understood they were under the panopticon gaze. Foucauldian scholars argued that workers are more than able to self-discipline, as they understand they are monitored in various ways by their employers (Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992). When considering the notion of the panopticon, it is also important to acknowledge the gendered nature of production processes in GCs. Many supplier firms in the global South are employing women in the production processes such as sweatshops in the garment industry (Mezzadri, 2016a). Salzinger (2003) contends that factories producing in global production networks have feminized their labour force as a means of inducing productivity, labour control and optimizing profits. This thesis seeks to understand how and why farm workers (in this study) 'voluntarily' subject themselves to the control measures imposed by their employers. This thesis also determines the extent to which socio-economic conditions contribute to farm workers' voluntary subjugation, as market conditions compel workers to accept control due to desperation (Callinicos, 1989).

### 2.5.6 'Core' Labour Process Theory

To consolidate the different strands of labour process analysis, Thompson (1990), identified four key elements constituting a 'core' LPT (Jaros, 2005; Thompson and Newsome, 2004; Thompson and Warhurst, 1998).

The first key aspect recognizes the capital-labour relationship as the centre of LPT analysis. The second key aspect of LPT focuses on the logic of accumulation, which leads to the evolution of production systems to outcompete rivalries. The third aspect of LPT focuses on the mechanisms used by capitalists to control the labour process. The fourth aspect of LPT unearths the nature of the capital-labour relationship, which is both exploitative and cooperative (Thompson, 1989, 1990). Nevertheless, the 'core LPT' has been criticised for excluding the notion of worker subjectivity (Alvesson et al., 2008; Knights and Kerfoot, 2004) and the appropriation of surplus value (profit maximization) through the production process at the expense of unpaid labour (Jaros, 2000, 2005; Spencer, 2000; Tinker, 2002). This thesis shows how the profit-driven strategies at the horizontal production level on the apple farms (in this study) are influenced by the vertical profit maximization strategies of global supermarkets to determine where feasibility of inclusive decent work and social upgrading in such a context.

### 2.5.7 Labour Process Theory and Political Economy

Building on the notion of vertical trade relations mentioned above, Newsome et al. (2015) noted that LPT discourse has struggled to find a credible theoretical framework that could show how the political economy impacts production processes. The theoretical discord between LPT and the political economy is known as the 'connectivity gap', which some scholars have tried closing over the years (Newsome et al., 2015). In the 1980s, Edwards and Scullion (1982) studied how broader competition influenced workplace relations. Kelly (1985) criticized accounts that attributed changing production systems solely to 'capital-labour' relations rather than the full circuit of capital (i.e., production, distribution, consumption). Regulation theory also emerged in the late 1980s as a framework for broadening the scope of labour process analysis (Edwards and Scullion, 1982; Jessop, 1990; 2001; Lipietz, 1986). The 'varieties of capitalism' approach also tried to fill the 'connectivity gap' in LPT discourse by highlighting the impact of the institutional context on firm competitiveness (Deeg and Jackson, 2007; Smith, 2016; Soskice and Hall, 2001; Whitley, 1999; Wood et al., 2014). Recently, LPT scholars have gravitated towards the GCF as it possesses the conceptual tools to unpack the impact of GC governance on supplier firms in GCs (Newsome et al., 2015). The amalgamation of the LPT and GCF shows a symbiotic interaction between the sphere of trade exchange (vertical trade relations) and the sphere of production (horizontal trade relations) in the global apple value chain.

Interestingly, the foundations of both the GCF and LPT were influenced by Marxists who highlighted the polarizing and exploitative effects of global capitalism at both an international level and at the point of production. Marx (1967) contends that the creation of profit through the appropriation of surplus value does not create equitable distribution in any way, which casts doubt on inclusive development in a profit-driven global apple value chain. This thesis draws from these foundations to determine whether integrating into GCs leads to inclusive economic and social upgrading for the selected apple farmers and farm workers (from the Langkloof Valley) who are engaged in the global apple value chain. The marriage between GCF and LPT frameworks is incomplete without analysing the sphere of social reproduction, hence the adoption of the SLA that is unpacked in the next section of the chapter (Baglioni et al., 2022:81; Dunaway, 2013).

## 2.6 SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS APPROACH AND GLOBAL CHAINS

### 2.6.1 Background to the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach

The term “sustainable livelihoods” was coined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987 to describe how people living in poverty-struck regions could utilise the assets at their disposal to survive (Scoones, 2009). The approach was established as a bottom-up approach that recognises the strengths and assets of the poor, rather than a top-down approach that emphasises deficiencies (Scoones, 2009). The SLA does not perceive vulnerable population groups as passive victims but emphasizes their agency amid their precarious state. Although originally targeted at poor population groups, it has been refined and expanded to include groups and institutions that may be considered vulnerable (Ellis, 2000; Lahiff, 2002; Scoones, 2009). The selected apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley are considered vulnerable because they operate in global agri-food value chains where producers (and their employees) are dominated by powerful global supermarkets (Willoughby and Gore, 2018). This thesis utilizes the SLA to show how access to diverse forms of capital influences the positioning, outcomes and experiences of the selected apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley who are engaged in the global apple value chain.

### 2.6.2 A Context of Vulnerability

The SLA describes the vulnerability context as the dynamic external environment in which people, households and institutions exist (Allison and Horemans, 2006).

When interrogating the vulnerability context, the SLA identify the following three main drivers: trends, shocks and seasonality (DFID, 1999). *Trends* include identifiable patterns such as political, economic, and technological trends (among other trends). *Shocks* include unpredictable factors such as illness or death, conflict, and weather (among other shocks). *Seasonality* includes prices, production and other cycles (Carney et al., 1999). The SLA contends that the three factors noted above induce the vulnerability of people, organizations, households and institutions (Chambers and Conway, 1992). Producers (and their employees) in global agri-food chains are susceptible to all three areas identified above. Firstly, as participants of global chains, producers are vulnerable to the ever-changing global and local markets and political trends that are highly unpredictable (Greenberg, 2015).

The socio-economic conditions in rural farming districts in South Africa can also induce vulnerability for individuals, groups, organizations and communities (Visser and Ferrer, 2015). Secondly, producers in global agri-food chains are vulnerable to weather and climate patterns; for example, drought can affect the quantity and quality of crop yields, which determine the size of the labour force required on deciduous fruit farms in any given season (WWF, 2016). Lastly, producers in global agri-food value are price takers and not price makers, which means that they have limited bargaining capacity and must accept whatever prices are set by supermarkets or international buyers (Visser, 2016). This price negotiation framework places producers and their employees in a precarious state (Devereux, 2020; Willoughby and Gore, 2018). Overall, this thesis examines the different factors (trends, shocks and seasonality) that induce the vulnerability of the selected apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley who are participating in the global apple value chain.

### 2.6.3 Assets or Types of Capital

The SLA emphasizes the agency of those in vulnerable contexts, that is, how they mobilize the assets (or capital endowments) at their disposal to sustain their livelihoods (Scoones, 1998). Assets refer to the basic resources that an individual, institution and community own with the expectation that they will provide a future benefit (Scoones, 1998). Although the term ‘capital’ is used, not all the assets are capital stocks in the strict economic sense of the term (in which capital is the product of investment which yields a flow of benefits over time) (DFID, 1999:17). The five types of capital are perhaps best thought of as livelihood building blocks; the term ‘capital’ is used because this is the common designation in the literature (DFID, 1999:17).

The SLA identifies five types of assets (capital endowments) that are key for surviving vulnerable contexts: natural, social, financial, physical and human capital (DFID, 1999). Natural capital refers to the natural resource stocks that people can draw on for their livelihoods, including land, water, and the flora and fauna in an ecosystem (Collados and Duane, 1999). It is important to note that this study is not claiming that land is the only natural capital, but it is one of many natural resource stocks that make up natural capital. This study focuses on land when referring to natural capital. Natural capital is tied to different ownership patterns, and different societies use the land for different purposes. Private property, for example, is land that is owned by an individual or group with legal documentation barring anyone else from accessing the land for use (Clarke, 2006). State-owned land is open for public use, however, interested parties must go through official procedures and protocols to gain access to it (Clarke, 2006).

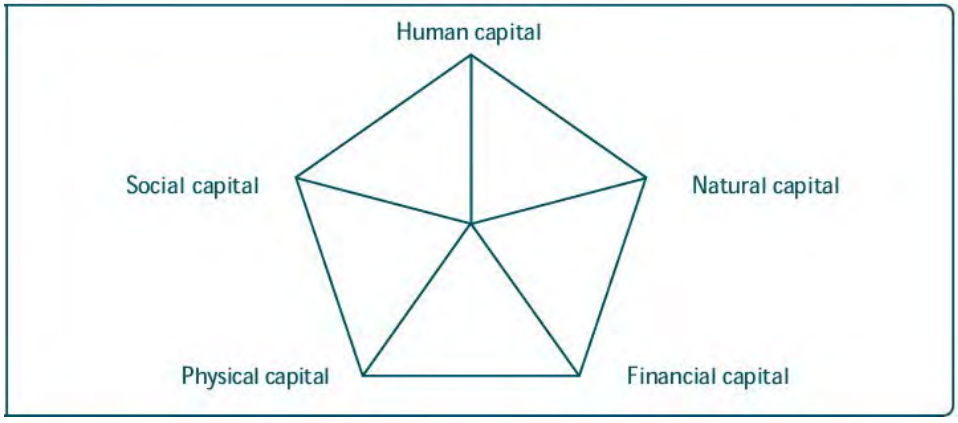
In this study, the nine selected White apple farmers owned their land (as groups), whilst the five coloured apple farmers were land reform beneficiaries who secured their land through government procedures. The land ownership patterns and the relationship between these two racially defined apple farming groups are also examined within the context of the global apple value chain. The farm workers' access to natural capital, regardless of its size, is also interrogated to determine how it contributes to their livelihood strategies. Human capital is a tangible asset, which includes endowments such as skills, knowledge, the ability to work and good health (Becker et al., 1990; Glavovic and Boonzaier, 2007). In the context of South African agriculture, commercial farmers have always relied on the labour of black, coloured and migrant labour (Atkinson, 2007).

Although the sector has always employed a mixture of both male and female farm labour, male farm workers were always favoured for permanent semi-skilled jobs (Greenberg, 2013a). However, the history and state of farm workers in South Africa are discussed in separate chapters further along this thesis. One of the key objectives of this thesis is to examine the outcomes of the farm workers employed in the selected farms in this study. This study also determines how farm workers employed on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley use their human capital to sustain their livelihoods. Social capital is the network or community of people from whom individuals (households and organizations) can draw for survival (Ballet et al., 2007; DFID, 1999; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000).

Historically, both (white) farmers and farm workers relied on different social networks to survive, and this is still the case today (Atkinson, 2007; Devereux, 2020; Kritzinger and Barrientos, 2004; Mather and Greenberg, 2003; Vink and Van Rooyen, 2009). This study also interrogates the role of social capital in assisting apple farmers and farm workers to participate in the global apple value chain. For the farm workers in particular, this thesis also examines how they used their social capital to sustain their livelihoods. Physical capital involves the basic infrastructure (such as transport, shelter, equipment, sanitation systems and energy, among other factors) that people or organizations need to survive (Allison and Ellis, 2001). Infrastructure on farms is necessary for the production and exporting of agricultural commodities. This thesis examines the infrastructure that is used in the orchards and packhouses on the selected apple farms and the infrastructure that is available to farm workers to help them sustain their livelihoods as well.

Financial capital refers to having access to financial services, loans, savings and regular inflows of money (e.g., wages and salaries) (Gertler et al., 2009). This thesis examines how the selected apple farmers and farm workers (from the Langkloof Valley) access financial capital for sustaining the apple farms (for farmers) and the livelihoods (for farm workers). Overall, it is important to note that the five forms of capital outlined above are interlinked, and their combinations or lack thereof can determine the livelihood outcomes of individuals, households, institutions, organizations or communities (Larson et al., 2007; Solesbury, 2003). The asset pentagon was developed to enable information about people's assets to be presented visually, thereby bringing to life important inter-relationships between the various assets. Figure 2.1 shows an illustration of the asset/capital pentagon:

**Figure 2.1: Asset or capital pentagon**




Source: The Department for International Development (DFID) (1999:17)

According to DFID (2017:17), “the shape of the pentagon can be used to show schematically the variation in people’s access to assets. The idea is that the centre point of the pentagon, where the lines meet, represents zero access to assets, while the outer perimeter represents maximum access to assets. On this basis, differently shaped pentagons can be drawn for different communities or social groups within communities. It is important to note that a single physical asset can generate multiple benefits. If someone has secure access to land (natural capital), they may also be well-endowed with financial capital, as they can use the land not only for direct productive activities but also as collateral for loans. Similarly, livestock may generate social capital (prestige and connectedness to the community) for owners while at the same time being used as productive physical capital (think of animal traction) and remaining, in itself, as natural capital”. This thesis, therefore, determines how the differential access to various forms of capital influences the positioning, outcomes and sustainable livelihoods of the selected farms and farm workers (from the Langkloof Valley) that are participating in the global apple value chain.

### 2.6.4 Situating the SLA in the Trilogy Theoretical Framework

One of the most persistent critiques of the SLA framework is its failure to address how global processes impact livelihood outcomes in the global South (Pegler, 2015). In response to this gap, SLA has recently been included in global chain studies to assess the impacts of a globalised economy from a bottom-up perspective (Bolwig et al., 2010; Challies and Murray, 2011; Le Polain et al., 2013; Neilson and Shonk, 2014; Vicol et al., 2019). Kanji et al. (2005) note that combining the SLA with the global chain approaches provides a more comprehensive understanding of how markets interact with livelihood strategies. Due to the nature of this study, focusing on the global apple value chain, the GCF was selected to be the core theory informing this study. The GCF unpacks the sphere of trade exchange in detail, whilst the LPT discusses the sphere of production about this study’s objectives as well. The SLA completes the trilogy theory as it uncovers the sphere of social reproduction, more especially how producers and their employees access different forms of assets to survive the shocks and pressures associated with GCs and general social, political and economic conditions (Vicol et al. 2019).

## 2.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the trilogy theoretical framework that informs this study, which examines the outcomes of selected commercial apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley in the global apple value chain. The goal of this research is to uncover the factors that produce the variegated outcomes of the research participants in this profit-driven value chain. The global apple value chain is multifaceted and consists of various spheres which need to be considered when analysing the outcomes of role players in the chain. Mainstream GC studies traditionally focus on the developmental gains achieved by participants from the global South in GCs and often fail to acknowledge the mechanisms that drive inequality and exploitation in these chains.

This study seeks to address this matter by adopting a trilogy theoretical framework which covers the spheres of trade exchange, production and social reproduction. The GCF possesses a plethora of conceptual tools that systematically uncover the complex dynamics of GCs, as such, these are used in this study to show how the vertical and horizontal drive for the extraction of surplus value influences the divergent outcomes of the selected commercial apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley in the global apple value chain. The LPT shows that the production processes of producers in GCs are directly influenced by the structures and stakeholders governing those value chains. Although the LPT covers various aspects of the capitalist production process, it is important not to lose sight of its Marxist foundations, which perceive the capitalist labour process as a site where surplus value is extracted by both the producer and the lead firm in the context of a GC.

The intersection of the profit-driven strategies of the lead firms and the producers in GCs has a direct impact on the structure of production and the division of labour at the producer level. This chapter shows that the vertical and horizontal trade relations in GCs are embedded in specific geographical territories with varying socio-economic dynamics, such as the Langkloof Valley. The SLA is ideal for this study because it shows how the selected commercial apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley utilize the diverse assets or capital at their disposal to sustain their participation in the global apple value chain. The sphere of social reproduction in GCs, especially the geographical areas where the supplier firms are located, forms an integral part of the profit maximization strategies used by both the lead firms and the suppliers. Overall, the GCF, LPT and SLA provide the conceptual tools that are necessary to unearth the profit maximization strategies in the global apple value chain.

# CHAPTER THREE

# SOUTH AFRICAN AGRICULTURAL VALUE CHAINS: FROM COLONIALISM AND APARTHEID TO DEMOCRACY

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter adopts a value chain lens to unpack the South African agricultural sector from colonialism to democracy. The agricultural sector of South Africa is a product of colonialism and apartheid, which dispossessed indigenous (black and coloured) populations from their land and established a white settler colony (Davies, 1990). Thompson (2001:8) notes that a substantial proportion of the genetic heritage of coloured people comes from the Khoisan people, which is why in this study, the reference to indigenous people includes coloured and black people. During both the colonial and apartheid eras, the state established a strong institutional apparatus which supported white farmers and elevated them to a strong bargaining position in the global agri-food value chains that were described as 'producer-driven' at the time (Atkinson, 2007; Feinstein, 2005; Visser, 2016). Pre-1994, the employment conditions and outcomes on most of the white-owned farms were largely determined by employment status, race and sex (Marcus, 1989).

During this period in South Africa's history, farm workers were not protected by the law; as such, they endured years of exploitation and paternalism at the hands of many white farmers who also repressed any form of worker activism on their farms (Atkinson, 2007). In the early 1990s, when the newly elected democratic government adopted neoliberal policies and withdrew support from the sector, the white farmers were left exposed to global supermarkets that had consolidated their economic capacity in the late 1980s, as such, the global agri-food value chains became 'buyer-driven' (Visser, 2016:21). To survive these value chains, South African farmers consolidated their assets to form large-scale agricultural companies, which has resulted in the dominance of white farmers in the agri-food value chains of the country. Post-1994, the South African government also instituted labour legislation which also protected farm workers. These legislative changes coincided with the removal of state support from the agricultural sector; as such, many farmers engaged in global agri-food value chains restructured their labour force to remain competitive in these chains.

This chapter covers the South African agri-food value chains pre- and post-1994 and links key themes to the objectives of the thesis.

## 3.2 AGRI-FOOD VALUE CHAINS OF SOUTH AFRICA, PRE-1994

### 3.2.1 Dispossession and Sharecropping

Pre-1994, the agri-food value chains of South Africa can best be described as producer-driven because of the strong bargaining position of white farmers with international buyers as a result of heavy state support and investment in the sector (Visser and Ferrer, 2015). The agricultural sector of South Africa was established on the back of the dispossession of indigenous people from their lands, livestock and livelihoods at the hands of European settlers (Ngcukaitobi, 2021). Colonialism relegated the indigenous people of South Africa to a peasant class that served the European settlers for pittances (Hamanna and Tuinder, 2012; Ngcukaitobi, 2021). Thompson (2001) notes that, in the process of dispossession in the 1800s, indigenous people could only remain on the 'white-owned' as sharecroppers and labourers. Sharecropping allowed natives to occupy a small portion of the 'white-owned' land to farm in exchange for their produce and their labour (Atkinson, 2007; Keegan, 1983; Van Onselen, 1992; 1996). Some sharecroppers were so successful in their commercial farming that the white farmers resented this success and approached the government to stop this phenomenon (Marcus, 1989).

In response, the colonial government passed the 'Natives Land Act of 1913' which prohibited indigenous people from purchasing or leasing any land demarcated for whites (which was a large portion of the country) (Ngcukaitobi, 2021). This legislation only allowed indigenous people to remain on 'white-owned' land as workers, not as owners or tenants (Ngcukaitobi, 2021). The notion of sharecropping is interrogated in this thesis because the relationships between the selected white apple farmers and the coloured apple farmers (who are also land reform beneficiaries and workers on the White farms in this study) from the Langkloof Valley resemble some features of sharecropping of the 1800s. This arrangement is analysed within the GC context, thus revealing interesting insights about how land reform beneficiaries fit into the global apple value chain. The integration of land reform beneficiaries into the GC context uncovers some evident class and power disparities between the land reform beneficiaries and their White counterparts in this study.

### 3.2.2 The Role of the State in Supporting White Farmers

The colonial governments established an entire state-centric institutional apparatus covering various facets of the agri-food value chain of South Africa to support white farmers to produce for local and internal markets (Davenport and Hunt, 1974; Vink and Van Rooyen, 2009). The colonial government passed the Co-operative Society Act of 1925, which made it possible for farmers to establish co-operatives and access financial and technical assistance from the state (Vink and Van Rooyen, 2009). This Act was amended and became known as the Marketing Act 26 of 1937, which made provision for the establishment of state-controlled marketing boards that governed the following services: price setting, monitoring quality standards, and selling and supplying agricultural products (Morris, 1976).

The ascendency of the National Party (in 1948) further strengthened the state-centric marketing boards and cooperatives, which used their monopoly power in the agri-food chains to keep the prices of their agricultural products high in international markets (Hirsch, 2005; Vink, 1999). The apartheid government also funded several agricultural research institutions to keep South African farmers up to date with changing production and global market trends (Koch and Terblanche, 2013). This thesis also examines how the selected apple farmers from the Langkloof Valley utilize the services of the now privatized former state-sponsored institutions that assisted apple farmers pre-1994.

Most of the economic upgrading that white commercial farmers experienced in South Africa during the colonial and apartheid eras was mostly state-sponsored, and it aimed to boost productivity, crop yields and product quality (Davenport and Hunt, 1974; Kirsten et al., 1994). From a GC perspective, these types of economic upgrading are better known as process and product upgrading. The adoption of new farming implements by white farmers in South Africa did not only reduce labour costs but also their dependence on rural labour as well (Antrobus, 1976; Feinstein, 2005; Grain SA, 2016:9; Lipton, 1986; Visser, 2016). Most of the white farmers did not experience much functional upgrading, as the state-sponsored single marketing channel helped South African producers bargain with international buyers (Feinstein, 2005; Vink, 1999). White farmers used their resources and those from the government to upgrade their operations (Vink, 1999).

During apartheid, the South African agricultural sector also saw the rise of cases of intersectoral upgrading in the form of agribusiness diversifying investments into other industries as a response to the shifting neoliberal policies that were afoot in South Africa in the late 1908s and early 1990s (Bayley, 2000). This thesis examines whether the selected apple farmers from the Langkloof Valley (participating in the global apple value chain) experienced any economic upgrading and, if so, how they managed to achieve this, considering the class disparities and profit maximization strategies embodied in this value chain.

## 3.3 AGRI-FOOD VALUE CHAINS OF SOUTH AFRICA, POST-1994

### 3.3.1 Structural Changes in the Agri-Food Value Chains

The agricultural sector of South Africa started experiencing changes in the late 1980s because of international pressures that called for the end of apartheid and the economic policies that were practised by the National Party (Levy, 1999). By the early 1990s, the National Party government started conceding to these pressures and began preparing for democratic elections and adopting a more market-friendly approach to exporting agricultural commodities (Bond, 2000; Hirsch, 1995; Levy, 1999). During this period, state support for the sector was gradually withdrawn as cooperatives and marketing boards were also dismantled (Levy, 1999; Matona, 1994; Vink, 2012). When the ANC ascended to power in 1994, it fully adopted orthodox neoliberal policies and withdrew state support from the sector; as such, South African white farmers were fully exposed to oligopolistic global supermarkets that were now governing buyer-driven global agri-food value chains with market coordination (Visser, 2016).

Global supermarkets in the global North used their dominance in markets with higher currencies than South Africa (among other factors) to overpower South African farmers in bargaining for product quality, price and shorter lead times (Dannenberg, 2013). In this unequal trading relationship, South African farmers often accept whatever prices are set by the global supermarkets for fear of losing contracts to their competitors (locally or internationally) who are willing to accept the lower prices for their agricultural commodities (Visser, 2016). The insistent drive by global supermarkets in the global North for lower agricultural commodity prices from the producers in the global South is better known as the ‘race to the bottom’ as it places producers under pressure to keep production costs low (Willoughby and Gore, 2018).

Post-1994, many farmers in South Africa exited the agricultural sector, as they could not cope with the pressures of engaging in global agri-food value chains without state support (Visser and Ferrer, 2015). One of the methods used by South African farmers to compete in the global agri-food value chain was by consolidating their assets to absorb pressures from global supermarkets and remain profitable (Visser, 2016). It is for this reason that scholars such as Selwyn and Leyden (2022) label GCs as oligopolistic. The South African agricultural sector is racially skewed in favour of large-scale white farmers over black and coloured farmers (Sihlobo, 2023). This thesis, therefore, depicts how socioeconomic backgrounds and access to various forms of capital influence the outcomes of the selected apple farmers (from the Langkloof Valley) in the global apple value chain.

### 3.3.2 Economic Upgrading

The pressures stemming from global supermarkets force producers from the global South to upgrade their operations, product offerings and positioning in Global Chains (GCs) or else they risk being outcompeted by other (local and international) producers (Barrientos and Visser, 2012). Ponte and Ewert (2009) note that the four types of economic upgrading identified in mainstream global chain literature often take place concurrently or in hybrid formations. Post-1994, many South African farmers that are involved in global agri-food value chains have experienced economic upgrading in some way, as upgrading is necessary to remain competitive in GCs (Cutts and Kirsten, 2006; Ponte and Ewert, 2009; Greenberg, 2010; 2013b; Mather and Greenberg, 2003). The fruit industry in South Africa has been at the forefront of innovation and adopting technologies in agriculture (Bastian et al., 2019; ChisoroDube, Das Nair, and Landani, 2019; Future Farming, 2020; Iost Filho et al., 2020; Maluleke, 2020).

Das Nair and Landani (2020) show how the fruit value chains of South Africa experienced the following advancements: (1) the development of new varieties of produce and crops; (2) crop pest technologies; (3) smart water technologies and precision agriculture; (4) agricultural robots; (5) cold storage technologies and materials; (6) smart materials in cold chain infrastructure; (7) sensor technologies; (8) delayed ripening technology and ripening chambers; (9) process automation, machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI); and (10) ICT, the Internet of Things, digital platforms, and big data. The advancements outlined above include elements of process, product and functional upgrading depending on how they are adopted by farmers.

It is worth noting that the fruit industry of South Africa is divided into sub-sectors, such as citrus and deciduous fruit (just to name a few), that require different technologies in their production processes (Das Nair and Landani, 2020). The economic upgrading outcomes experienced by farmers depend on their financial capacity (among other factors) (Chisoro-Dube et al., 2019). This thesis uncovers and discusses the different types of economic upgrading experienced by the selected farmers on their apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. Mainstream GC (especially GCC and GVC) scholars attribute economic upgrading trajectories of supplier firms to the way GCs are governed (Barrientos et al., 2010). This thesis, therefore, examines the connection between the type of governance methods in the global apple value chain and the economic upgrading trajectories of the selected apple farmers whilst being cognizant of the class disparities and the profit maximization strategies in this GC as well.

### 3.3.3 Land Reform in Monopolized Agri-Food Value Chains

The full adoption of neo-liberal policies in the 1990s led to the formation of large-scale white agribusinesses that dominate the agri-food value chains in South Africa (Greenberg, 2017). The passing of land reform legislation, post-1994, was geared towards redressing the racially skewed land ownership patterns and empowering indigenous peoples who were interested in subsistence or commercial farming (Kloppers and Pienaar, 2014). South Africa's land reform programme has three pillars that include land restitution, land redistribution and tenure reform (Hall, 2004; Greenberg, 2015). Land restitution was primarily designed to return people to the land they had been forced off during colonialism and apartheid (Ngcukaitobi, 2021).

Successful land claims can be settled with the return of land, provision of alternative land, payment of cash or other forms of compensation (Ngcukaitobi, 2021). According to Hall (2004:12), most of the land claims in South Africa have been settled through financial compensation instead of land transfer. Land redistribution, unlike land restitution, is aimed at providing economically marginalized people with land for residential and productive purposes. Land redistribution is based on the free market-based principle of 'willing buyer-willing seller' (Lahiff, 2007). From 1994 to 1999, land reform focused on transferring land to groups of former dispossessed people using the Settlement and Land Acquisition Grant (SLAG) (Greenberg, 2013b:9). Under SLAG, each household could access a grant of R15 000 from the Department of Land Affairs to acquire agricultural land (Grain SA, 2015).

Unfortunately, to reach the purchase price of the farm, many unrelated families were often grouped into one legal entity (Communal Property Associations or Trusts) and the farm was bought for them altogether (Greenberg, 2013b:9). Having large groups of people with minimal resources and different visions for the land and limited commercial support from the state led to mostly negative outcomes for many land transfers under the restitution programme (Ngcukaitobi, 2021). Unlike SLAG, which gave grants to a household as a unit, LRAD issued grants to individual members of a household (R25 000 per person for all members over 18) and this resulted in many non-related family groups being registered in 'Trusts' and gaining title deeds to land (Grain SA, 2015). The establishment of these 'Trusts' was the only way that beneficiaries could afford to purchase land at market prices (Cliffe, 2000; Lahiff, 2002).

LRAD was succeeded by the Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy (PLAS) enabled the government to purchase land and lease it to beneficiaries for five years (Greenberg, 2013b). If the beneficiaries are successful during this period, they are granted an extended lease agreement of 30 years. Kepe and Hall (2020:132) assert that colonial conquests were often justified based on 'guardianship' or 'trusteeship', concepts that are grounded in the idea of saving or civilising the 'conquered' people. In other words, these land dispossessions were framed under the guise of improvement, welfare and development of the people concerned. The idea of trusteeship legitimises the rule of the capable on behalf of the incapable. Trusteeship is evident in all three aspects of land reform in South Africa (redistribution, restitution and tenure reform) and uses the same colonial logic of trusteeship to continue to keep black people subservient, despite the rhetoric of justice (Kepe and Hall, 2020:132).

The Extension of Security of Tenure Act (ESTA) 62 of 1997 is designed to prevent the eviction of people (above the age of 60) who have been working and living on farms for over ten years (Gootkin and Narshi, 2014). Overall, land reform in South Africa has not significantly altered land ownership patterns, which still favour White commercial farmers (Ngcukaitobi, 2021). A 2017 Land Audit revealed that Whites owned 72% of the total farms and agricultural holdings in South Africa, followed by Coloured at 15%, Indians at 5% and Africans at only 4% (DRDLR, 2017). Ngcukaitobi (2021) also notes that internal incapacities within the state have reduced the chances of transforming land beneficiaries into commercial farmers, as such, many beneficiaries have either sold their land or sought assistance from white farmers (Dube et al., 2018; Greenberg, 2013b:7; MacLeod et al., 2008; Manenzhe et al., 2016; Rusenga, 2020).

This thesis also seeks to uncover how LRAD beneficiaries were able to participate in the global apple value chain, which requires a certain level of economic capacity. Some scholars (such as Manenzhe et al., 2016; Terblanché, 2011) argue that successful land reform can only take place through a successful mentorship or joint partnerships between beneficiaries and more established private white farmers. Several studies, however, have shown that joint partnerships between land reform beneficiaries and private commercial (white) farmers have favoured the latter over the former (Akinola, 2018; Clarke, 2006; Bitzer and Bijman, 2014; Greenberg, 2015; Hall and Kepe, 2017; 2020; Lahiff et al., 2012; Mayson, 2003). Kepe and Hall (2017) contend that the current government's approach to land reform is reproducing paternalistic relations that echo apartheid practices and represent the 'colonial present'. Using the GC context, this thesis also interrogates the nature of the relationships between the Coloured land reform beneficiaries and White apple farmers in this study.

## 3.4 FARM LABOUR IN SOUTH AFRICA, PRE-1994

### 3.4.1 Securing Farm Labour

The colonial and apartheid governments dispossessed indigenous populations from their land (Marcus, 1989). In the process of dispossession, sharecropping was allowed but was later outlawed, and indigenous people were only allowed to remain in the 'white colony' as low-paid labourers without any legal protection (Ngcukaitobi, 2021) which strengthened the bargaining power of white farmers in the producer-driven global agri-food chains (Visser, 2016). Bekker et al. (1982) showed that, although white farmers in the Langkloof Valley preferred local coloured labour, they also searched for black labour from the former homelands, such as the Ciskei and Transkei in the Eastern Cape. This labour was recruited by black male supervisors (Bekker et a., 1982).

These recruiters adopted the role of labour brokers and were paid by the white farmers in the Langkloof Valley to perform this task. This thesis also determines whether labour broking is still practised in the deciduous fruit industry in the Langkloof Valley. In addition to labour broking, people secured work on farms mostly through (among other avenues) social connections, that is, through permanently employed male farm workers (Bekker et a.1982; Marcus, 1989). These permanently employed male farm workers also enjoyed on-farm housing and payments in kind (Bekker et al., 1982). Payments in kind in the deciduous fruit industry in the Langkloof Valley in the 1980s included housing, transport, fuel, clothing and food (Bekker et al., 1982).

Even though the Bekker et al. (1982) study did not cover the dop system and the credits or loans granted to farm workers by white farmers does not mean that it did not exist, as these were common practices in the agricultural sector pre-1994 (Davies, 1990). Women (who were mostly employed as seasonal workers) could only secure work or enjoy payments in kind through a male associate (husband, family or partner), thus revealing a patriarchal, racist and capitalist system during the colonial and apartheid eras (Bekker et al., 1982; Davies, 1990). Seasonal workers resided in the nearby townships and did not enjoy any payments in kind. This thesis examines the different avenues that the farm workers used to secure their employment on the selected apple farms, as 'employment creation' is one of the key pillars of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda used to determine social upgrading in GCs. This thesis also determines whether these farm workers received payments in kind or secured credit from their employers, as this covers the 'social security' of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda.

### 3.4.2 Division of Labour on White-Owned Farms

The division of labour during the colonial and apartheid eras was largely based on employment status and job categories, which were largely filled according to race and sex (Marcus, 1989). The increasing mechanization of production processes on South African farms in the 1970s divided their workforces into a small percentage of higher-paid semiskilled workers and a significant percentage of lower-paid, low-skilled farm workers (Stavrou, 1988; Visser, 2016). The semiskilled workers were mostly employed on permanent contracts, and these were mostly coloured males and a small percentage of black males as well (Kritzinger and Vorster, 1996). Most of the workforce on farms (during this period) were employed on seasonal contracts, and this group was dominated by black and coloured females (Kritzinger and Vorster, 1996).

Bekker et al.'s (1982) study shows most of the white farmers in the Langkloof Valley preferred coloured farm workers over black workers, whilst others did not mind employing black workers as they even promoted black males to permanent status after the coloured males were considered. Bekker et al. (1982) study also indicated that male farm workers in both the permanent and seasonal job categories in the Langkloof Valley were paid higher wages than female farm workers. The division of labour during the colonial and apartheid eras depicts a clear intersection between colonial (and apartheid) white settler capitalism and pre- and postcolonial patriarchal systems (Atkinson, 2007; Marcus, 1989).

This thesis also examines the division of labour on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley to determine whether it has remained the same since the pre-1994 era or whether things have changed. This again interrogates the notion of inclusive social upgrading for the farm workers in this study, as promised in GC literature.

### 3.4.3 Farm Worker Conditions in South Africa

The lack of labour legislation to protect farm workers during the pre-1994 era facilitated exploitative conditions for farm workers (Atkinson, 2007). Pre-1994, occupational hazards and accidents were common on commercial farms in South Africa, as many farm workers were not given protective clothing or safety training (Davies, 1990; London and Myers, 1995; Marcus, 1989; Scully, 1992). Farm workers worked long hours, which induced fatigue, stress and mental breakdowns (Davies, 1990). These farm workers often lacked access to good medical facilities and depended on the 'goodwill' of white farmers to transport them to the nearest town or city to access health services (Davies, 1990). The areas of health and safety are interrogated in this thesis, as they fall under one of the 'rights at work' pillars of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, which measures social upgrading in GCs. Decent education for the children of farm workers was not prioritized in rural farming districts of South Africa because many white farmers needed a low-skilled labour force waiting to take over after their parents retired from farm work (Davies, 1990).

Decent education would motivate young people in these regions to pursue higher education and subsequent lucrative careers outside farm labour (Christie and Gaganakis, 1989). To avoid this exodus of a reserve labour force for the farms, white farmers established farm schools which provided substandard education and whose calendars ran concurrently with the agricultural calendars, as their labour was often used during the peak seasons or on 'school holidays' (Christie and Gaganakis, 1989; Harvey, 1980; Levine, 1999). This thesis also investigates the educational and socio-economic backgrounds of the farm workers (in this study) and those of their guardians to show how these backgrounds steer people into seeking employment on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. The living conditions on commercial farms during the colonial and apartheid eras were poor and often favoured coloured and a few black males over black and coloured females (Davies, 1990). Bekker et al. (1982) showed that the houses for permanent farm workers on the fruit farms varied from makeshift shacks to neat farm cottages, depending on the farmer's willingness to build habitable housing for their workers.

Seasonal farm workers employed on the fruit farms in the Langkloof Valley resided in makeshift houses in the townships outside the farms (Bekker et al., 1982). This thesis also examines the living conditions of the farm workers (in this study), which fall under the 'social security' pillar of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda. The poor working and living conditions on farms sparked pockets of worker activism mostly driven by trade unions (Bennett, 1986; Mather, 1993). The trade unions, however, failed to make inroads into the agricultural sector because of the (1) geographical locations of farms; (2) lack of legislation covering farm workers; (3) the close alliance that farmers had with the state; and (4) absolute power and surveillance that farmers had on farms (Davies, 1990). This thesis, therefore, interrogates whether the farm workers (in this study) had access to platforms of 'social dialogue' (a pillar of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda) with their employers and whether they are useful when or if they access them.

## 3.5 FARM LABOUR IN SOUTH AFRICA, POST-1994

### 3.5.1 An Overview of the Legislation

The values imbued in the South African Constitution align with the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, which consists of four key pillars: employment creation, rights at work, social security and social dialogue (Cohen and Moodley, 2012; Klug, 2010). Post-1994, farm workers are covered by an array of labour legislation, but in this study however, the focus is on the following legislative areas: the Labour Relations Act (right for farm workers to join a trade union or association); Sectoral Determination 13 (working hours, minimum wage for farm workers); Occupational Health and Safety Act (availability of sanitation facilities, availability of drinking water, provision of protective clothing); Unemployment Insurance Act (Unemployment Insurance Fund) (Theron et al., 2007; Ulicki and Crush, 2007). These laws fall under the 'rights at work' pillar of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda.

### 3.5.2 Education Levels

During the colonial and apartheid eras, black and coloured people residing in rural farming districts in the country were not exposed to quality education, as this would motivate them to aspire for higher education and careers outside farm work (Davies, 1990). Therefore, to provide white farmers with a constant supply of low-skilled and low-cost labour, the government of the time did not bother investing in quality education (Christie and Gaganakis, 1989).

Post-1994, Visser and Ferrer (2015:10) note that the modal level of education for people living in farm areas in South Africa is Grade 12. Furthermore, the economically active population in farming districts in South Africa has a relatively low average level of formal education, which channels them into farm work due to limited career opportunities (Visser and Ferrer, 2015:10). This thesis also investigates the educational backgrounds of the farm workers and those of their guardians as well to highlight a connection between low levels of education and farm work. Additionally, this study interrogates the notion that lead firms prefer resource-rich geographical territories in the global South with vulnerable populations with limited education and other career opportunities (Mezzadri, 2016a; Selwyn, 2016; Smith, 2016). This is part of the race to the bottom strategy of lead firms, which contrasts with the very notion of inclusive development (social upgrading for all workers in GCs) when some GCs thrive on a low-wage regime (Selwyn, 2016).

### 3.5.3 Labour Broking

Post-1994, the practice of labour broking has continued to exist in the agricultural sector of South Africa in multiple ways. Although permitted by law, labour broking has taken many exploitative forms in the agricultural sector of South Africa (Barrientos, 2013). Concern over the practices of labour brokers in the 1990s led to their insertion into the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, with a provision of 'joint and several liability' so that producers became responsible if contractors failed to adhere to labour legislation (Webb, 2017). One of the most popular forms of exploitation in the labour broking system in agriculture is through remuneration methods (Barrientos, 2013). For example, a farmer will give the labour broker a lump sum of money to distribute as wages to the workers they recruited or the recruited farm workers get paid directly by the farmer and pay a percentage of their wage to the labour broker (Visser and Ferrer, 2015). Recently, more South African farmers have been using Zimbabwean labour brokers to recruit their compatriots into seasonal or casualized farm labour (Addison, 2019; Barrientos and Visser, 2012; Chirima, 2022; Rutherford and Addison, 2007). The increase of migrant workers in the agricultural sector has also led to xenophobic tensions in some rural regions of South Africa as locals felt that migrant workers were taking farm jobs at lower wage rates and did not engage in worker struggles against farmers (Hågensen and de Jager, 2016; Kerr and Durrheim, 2013). Some of the farm workers interviewed in this study were also immigrants from Zimbabwe, however, this study does not analyse them in isolation but integrates their experiences with the rest of the farm workers who participated in this study.

Nonetheless, Bekker et al.'s (1982) study shows that labour broking was practised in the Langkloof Valley in the 1980s, hence, this thesis investigates whether this practice still exists and in what manner. Labour broking falls under the notion of 'employment creation', which is one of the pillars of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda as well.

### 3.5.4 The Division of Labour on Commercial Farms

Post-1994, white farmers further mechanized and restructured their labour forces as a response to being exposed to highly competitive buyer-driven global agri-food value chains without state support (Visser, 2016). On top of that, the implementation of labour laws that also protected farm workers influenced the division of labour on commercial farms post-1994 (Visser and Ferrer, 2015). The continued upgrading of technology on farms has continued the division of labour into a small group of permanently employed semi-skilled workers and a larger group of low-skilled seasonal workers (Visser and Ferrer, 2015). From its inception, the division of labour on South African farms has always favoured males over females (Davies, 1990). Barrientos et al. (2000:142) note that the South African fruit sector shows "clear gendered and racial patterns of employment in which coloured men constitute most of the permanent workforce, and women and Africans the majority of the temporary, seasonal and migrant workforce.

These patterns of inequality according to sex and race within employment are based on long-established paternalist traditions in which coloured family labour has provided the foundation of the fruit labour force. Paternalist practice provides the framework for the gendering of the labour conditions experienced by different sections of the fruit labour force". Although coloured males were favoured on South African farms, there is a small percentage of black males who also enjoy permanent employment and semi-skilled jobs. The stronger disparities are mostly between males and females (Greenberg, 2013; Visser and Ferrer, 2015). This thesis also analyses the outcomes of farm workers by race and sex, as the mainstream GC discourse tends to overlook systems of power such as patriarchy, race and profit maximization (among other factors) when determining labour outcomes in GCs.

### 3.5.5 Wages

Pre-1994, farm workers were not protected by labour legislation; as such, their wages were determined by estimations made by farmers depending on practices in their sub-sectors and regions where they were farming.

Bassier and Ranchhod (2024:399) note that 90 per cent of farm workers in South Africa had wages below the new minimum wage level just before it was implemented. A minimum wage for South African farm workers was introduced in 2003 by the Sectoral Determination of 2002 (Bhorat et al., 2014). Sectoral Determination provides for minimum wages and rates which all employers of farm workers must comply with. These wages and rates must be set at hourly, daily, weekly and monthly should increase annually. The minimum wage for farm workers has increased annually since it was introduced in 2003 (Fresh Fruit Portal, 2013). It is worth noting that, during the time of the interviews with farm workers (in 2019), the national minimum wage for farm workers in South Africa was R18 per hour, R162 per day (nine hours), R810 per week (five days) and R3,240 per month (IOL, 2018).

Farm workers are now entitled to a minimum wage of R23.19 per hour, just like other workers covered by the National Minimum Wage Act 9 of 2018 (Business Tech, 2022). The Sectoral Determination was amended (to Sectoral Determination 13) in 2006 to address broader employment concerns of farm workers in South Africa (Fresh Fruit Portal, 2013). The Sectoral Determination 13 also includes the following aspects of the farm employment relationship: payment of remuneration, prohibited acts concerning pay, deductions, ordinary hours of work, work on Sundays, night work, meal intervals, rest period, public holidays, leave, freedom of association and political rights, and termination of employment (SAHRC, 2020). The Sectoral Determination 13 also deters employers from deducting farm worker wages for training, provision of tools, equipment or uniforms (SAHRC, 2020).

Sectoral Determination 13 also provides that farm workers should not work longer than nine hours per day (or eight hours if working more than five days per week) or 45 hours per week (Van De Wall, 2015). Any work exceeding this timeframe is considered overtime, which the farmer should pay (at least one and a half times the farm worker's wage) to his employees (Molatseli, 2014). If farm workers work on Sundays, they should be paid double their ordinary wage rate (SAFLII, 2021; SAHRC, 2020). The Sectoral Determination 13 also prohibits children younger than 15 (and not over 18) from working more than 35 hours a week and from working with chemicals. Finally, Sectoral Determination 13 deters farmers from terminating farm workers without a valid reason and following the correct legal channels (SAHRC, 2020). If a farm worker is dismissed without a valid reason or a fair procedure, the farm worker can take the matter to the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) (SAHRC, 2020).

Sectoral Determination 13 is binding and applies to the employment of farm workers in all farming activities in the Republic (SAHRC, 2020). Since its inception, the minimum wage in the agricultural sector of South Africa has been debated by scholars from different disciplines. This thesis highlights only a few perspectives on the minimum wage (in the agricultural sector) that align with its key objectives. The establishment of a minimum wage in the agricultural sector is seen as a way of protecting farm workers and lifting them out of poverty (SAHRC, 2020). Conversely, some scholars criticize this notion because they do not regard the minimum wage as a living wage that can take farm workers out of poverty (Naidoo et al., 2007). Another perspective on the issue of the minimum wage in the agricultural sector of South Africa is that it accelerates the mechanization of production processes on the farms, which leads to job shedding (BFAP, 2012; Bhorat et al., 2014; Visser and Ferrer, 2015).

Naidoo et al. (2007) noted four observations in their study, which examined the extent to which the Sectoral Determination for Farm Workers was implemented on selected farms in the Eastern Cape. The first observation was that farmers in the Eastern Cape were complying with the provisions of the sectoral determination on a selective basis (Naidoo et al., 2007:22). A second observation noted that, although wages increased due to the introduction of the minimum wage, a significant portion of the workers interviewed in that study still did not receive the minimum wage (Naidoo et al., 2007:22). A third observation made in this study was that the sectoral determination did not significantly alter the working, living and tenure conditions of farm workers (Naidoo et al., 2007:22). The fourth observation made in this study was that farmers absorbed the increasing costs of wages through selective compliance, work intensification, increased deductions and strategic use of female and casual labour (Naidoo et al., 2007:22).

The notion of non-compliance to minimum wage is all too common in the agricultural sector of South Africa, which shows weaknesses in the monitoring of labour standards by public and private institutions (Benjamin, 2011; Bhorat et al., 2015; Hastings, 2019; Visser and Ferrer, 2015). This thesis considers the points raised in this section in determining whether the farm workers in this study were paid the minimum wage by their employers on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. This is important because the minimum wage falls under the ‘rights at work’ pillar of the ILO’s decent work agenda used to measure social upgrading in this study. Pre1994, white farmers in South Africa justified paying low wages to their employees with noncash payments or payments in kind (Bekker et al., 1982; Davies, 1990).

Post-1994, however, the agricultural sector of South Africa has seen a drastic reduction of payments in kind, which have been externalized to government and the farm workers' social networks (Atkinson, 2007; Du Toit and Ally, 2003; Wisborg et al., 2013).

### 3.5.6 Skills Development and Promotion

White farmers in South Africa have been upgrading and mechanizing their operations since the 1970s, as such, this has had two observable effects on labour (Antrobus, 1976; Visser, 2016). On the one hand, it has casualized (and de-skilled) a large segment of farm workers, thus leaving a smaller group of permanently employed farm workers who have been upskilled (trained) and employed to mind machines and newer technologies (Barrientos and Visser, 2012; Visser, 2016). These 'skilled' workers are usually employed on permanent contracts, as the farmers believe that they form the critical core of the labour force on their farms (Barrientos and Visser, 2012; Visser and Ferrer, 2015). These opportunities are not open to everyone as factors such as employment status, job category, race, and sex also count (Du Toit and Ewert, 2005; Eriksson, 2018; Kritzinger and Vorster, 1996; Mather and Greenberg, 2003). Kritzinger and Vorster (1996) note that fruit farms in the Western Cape mostly gave male farm workers training, upskilling and job promotion opportunities. This thesis also analyses (according to race, sex and employment status) the areas of training, skills upgrading and promotion among the farm workers. Upskilling falls under the 'employment creation' pillar of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, as it can lead to the promotion of farm workers to new jobs on the apple farms.

### 3.5.7 Workplace Health and Safety

Farm work is by nature hazardous, as farm workers are always at risk of contracting ailments or being injured whilst at work (Human Rights Watch, 2011). The Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) compels employers to implement all practicable measures to ensure a safe and healthy workplace (Republic of South Africa,1993; SIZA, 2020). According to Zwane et al. (2011), farmers often sideline this practice and expose their employees to hazardous work environments. According to Human Rights Watch (2011), the agricultural sector exposes students to machine-related accidents, pesticides and agrochemicals, and musculoskeletal disorders (among other dangers). In most cases, the injuries sustained by farm workers are exacerbated by their poor access to health care or the farmer's insistence that the worker keep toiling after being injured.

Devereux's (2020) study notes that many farm workers have either been or know a colleague who was injured while at work. London (2003) also notes that farm workers in South Africa are increasingly exposed to dangerous chemicals and pesticides, which directly impact their health. Farm workers who do not directly work with chemicals or pesticides are also exposed to them, as many farmers expect their employees to work on the fields straight after these chemicals have been applied (Devereux, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2011; Ulicki and Crush, 2007). Hygiene and sanitation also continue to be a challenge in this sector, especially for the field workers who often do not have access to toilets and water for washing or drinking (Barrientos and Barrientos, 2002; Devereux et al., 2017). In packhouses, there is a concerted effort to provide toilets and sanitation to workers since the monitoring is stricter with indoor farming activities (Devereux, 2020). Some farmers often take advantage of their employees' lack of knowledge of the laws and do not report work-related injuries to the DEL, nor do they register with the Compensation Fund (Devereux, 2020). The issue of workplace health and safety is also analysed in this study, as it forms part of the 'rights at work' pillar of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda. The findings are also analysed according to employment status, sex and race.

### 3.5.8 On-Farm Versus Off-Farm Residence

According to Wegerif (2006:9), almost 1.7 million people were evicted from farms in the 21 years from 1984 to the end of 2004. After 1994, many white farmers evicted farm workers into nearby townships, which consisted of a mixture of government (Reconstruction and Development Programme) housing and informal settlements (Du Toit and Ally, 2003). Wegerif (2006:9) also notes that most of these evictions did not follow legal procedures. One of the main factors driving farm evictions is economic pressure caused by trade liberalisation, and farmers also had to contend with land reform and amended labour laws. In this context, farmers have resorted to increasing the rate of evictions in the quest to cut costs and reduce risks (Atkinson, 2007; Hall et al., 2002; Wegeriff, 2006). The farm workers who remained on the farms were those who were either employed on permanent contracts (mostly males and their families) or those who qualified for the Extension of Security of Tenure Act 62 of 1997 (ESTA) (Greenberg, 2013b). Some farm workers left the on-farm residence of their own volition for the opportunity of owning RDP houses, accessing public services (even though they were limited and remained poor in those regions), escaping the paternalism of their White

employers and the chance of engaging in community life outside the farms (Du Toit and Ally, 2003).

Nevertheless, many of the farm worker houses on South African farms are in a state of deterioration as farmers have increasingly stopped funding such projects (Clarke and Isaacs, 2005; Du Toit and Ally, 2003; Ulicki and Crush, 2007). This thesis also examines the living conditions of farm workers residing on or outside the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley where they were employed. The living conditions of farm workers fall under the 'social security' pillar of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, which is used to measure decent work and social upgrading. As with some of the employment outcomes in this study, the living conditions of the farm workers in this study are analysed and compared according to employment status, race and sex.

### 3.5.9 Access to Health Care Services

In South Africa, farms are often located far from healthcare services; as such, farm workers often miss a day's wage when they go to the nearest town or city to access these services (De Gruchy, 2020; London, 2003; Roberts and Antrobus, 2013; Sithole, 2005). In response to this need, the government provided mobile clinics to visit farms on certain days; however, these mobile clinics have not been available in all farming areas, nor have they been consistent in their on-farm visits (Parliament, 2016). Farm workers mostly rely on state healthcare services offered in hospitals and clinics, where they stand in long queues and miss a day's wage due to hours missed at work (Sithole, 2005). Some farm workers often postpone dates when they must collect their chronic medication because they do not want to lose a day's wage, thus compromising their health (Devereux et al., 2017; Sithole, 2005; Visser and Ferrer, 2015).

Barrientos and Visser (2012) note that some large-scale farms in the horticultural (fruit and vegetable) sub-sector have on-site clinics, but their farm workers must pay a fee to use these services. Visser and Ferrer (2015:2) note that only 1.5% of the farm workers in South Africa received contributions to medical or health insurance. Within this small percentage, the farm workers who enjoy private medical insurance on farms are mostly permanent male farm workers. The same outcomes were similar for pension fund contributions which were mostly available to permanent male farm workers (Visser and Ferrer, 2015:2). This thesis investigates the type of healthcare services and pension funds available to the farm workers in this study, as these fall under the 'social security' pillar of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda that is used to measure social upgrading of the selected farm workers in the global apple value chain.

### 3.5.10 Social Dialogue in South Africa

Farm workers are among the most exploited and lowest-paid workers in South Africa, despite the labour laws passed by the democratic government to protect farm workers (Devereux, 2020). The post-1994 labour legislation on farm labour has had an adverse (and negative) effect on the employment outcomes and experiences of farm workers in the country. One of the key pillars of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda is the notion of 'social dialogue', which encourages negotiation between workers and their employers. As a signatory to the ILO, South Africa's Labour Relations Act (LRA) has made provisions for farm workers to raise their workplace grievances through avenues such as strikes, trade unions, workplace forums, the Department of Employment and Labour and the CCMA (among other avenues) (Visser and Ferrer, 2015).

This thesis examines the platforms that are available to the farm workers who are employed on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley to gauge whether they experienced 'social dialogue', a key pillar of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda to determine social upgrading. The LRA makes provisions for legal (protected) strikes if workers are disgruntled with their employment conditions (Barter McKellar, 2023). For strikes to be protected, certain requirements must be met (Barter McKellar, 2023). The first prerequisite is that the employees or their trade unions must provide written notice of their intention to strike to the employer, relevant bargaining council and the CCMA at least 48 hours before the strike (Barter McKellar, 2023). The second prerequisite instructs the parties involved to make reasonable attempts to resolve the dispute through negotiation or other dispute-resolution mechanisms (Barter McKellar, 2023).

A wildcat strike, officially known as an unprocedural or unprotected strike, is one where the strikers have not complied with the requirements of the Labour Relations Act (LRA) before going on strike (The South African Labour Guide, 2022). If a strike is unprotected, an employer has the right to lock out the employees from entering the business premises, take legal action or even dismiss the employees (Consolidated Employers Organisation, 2023). The case of the 2012-2013 farm worker strike in De Doorns, Western Cape, is one of the most famous strikes by farm workers in South Africa post-1994 (Bitter Grapes, 2016; Hågensen and de Jager, 2016; Wilderman, 2015). The farm workers in De Doorns in the Western Cape were calling for better employment and living conditions (Wilderman, 2015).

Alford et al. (2017) note that “farm workers in that region used both their associational power in the form of multistakeholder effort (from trade unions, workers’ committees, NGOs and other community-based movement) and structural power (withdrawing the labour and blocking production). Ultimately, the main leverage of the farm workers was to block the main arterial routes linking farmers and pack houses to supermarket exports via Cape Town port. Community-based collective action was strategically taken at the height of the table grape and deciduous fruit harvest, resulting in widespread economic disruption to the value chain. This indicated workers’ awareness of the logistical ‘choke points’ of adversaries integrated into supermarket value chains. The blocking of arterial routes also closed off the main roads for all traffic in and out of Cape Town, swiftly gaining the attention of the media and ultimately government”.

The pressure placed on the farmers in that region led to multi-stakeholder negotiations, which resulted in various settlements and concessions being made by the farmers. Although these strikes led to some concessions (such as wage increases) by the affected farmers, they also led to increased mechanization of production processes, large-scale retrenchments, evictions and casualization of workers on the affected farms (Maregele, 2019; SAHistory, 2015). This thesis analyses the nature and outcomes of the one-strike action that took place on one of the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley, as it is part of the ‘social dialogue’ pillar of the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda, which determines social upgrading. Visser and Ferrer (2015) indicate that trade union membership is very low in the agricultural sector, as the membership is mostly dominated by permanently employed farm workers who constitute a small portion of the workers on farms in South Africa.

Generally, trade unions have a very limited footprint (and success rate) in the agricultural sector of South Africa, mainly due to geography, the hostile attitudes of many white farmers towards them, and farm workers' fear of retrenchment for joining trade unions (Devereux, 2020; Webb, 2017). Barrientos and Visser (2012) contend that trade unions also do not cater to the bulk of the mostly seasonal (and casualized) labour force on the commercial farms in South Africa because of the precarious state of their employment and high turnover as well. As part of the ‘social dialogue’ pillar of the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda, this thesis analyses the experience of farm workers with trade union memberships. Webb (2017:50) notes that the rural labour market is thus shaped by the vestiges of paternalist labour relations behind the farm gate and new forms of precarity, specifically labour broking.

In this context, trade unions have struggled to organise farm workers. Klerck and Naidoo (2019) argue that low levels of unionisation in the agricultural sector of South Africa have resulted in civil society organizations playing an active role in advising and representing farm workers. This was evident in the 2012–2013 farm worker strikes that took place in the De Doorns in the Western Cape when farm workers expressed dissatisfaction with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and formed independent committees that addressed wages, services and overall living conditions for farm workers (SAHistory, 2015). Webster and Buhlungu (2004) contend that trade union federations such as COSATU are far removed from rank-and-file workers. Farm worker committees provide a platform to seasonal farm workers who do not qualify to join trade unions on the farms.

White farmers in South Africa appear to be more willing to accept the establishment of farm internal worker committees than trade unions (Alford et al., 2017; Visser and Ferrer, 2015). These farmers do not embrace farm worker committees out of goodwill, but they allow them because they need such (worker representation) platforms to gain certification to export their produce, whilst also closely monitoring them through the supervisors who oversee these committees (Pahle, 2015). Webb (2017) notes that many seasonal farm workers do not join the worker committees because they fear victimization. This is not to say that farm worker committees have not achieved any concessions for farm workers, however, they have not created substantial changes for farm workers, especially seasonal farm workers (SAHistory, 2015; Webb, 2017; Wilderman, 2015).

Civil society organizations (such as the Women on Farms Project, Surplus People Project, the Trust for Community Outreach and Education, Support Centre for Land Change etc.) play invaluable roles in supporting farm workers, by sensitising them about their rights, mobilising them to claim these rights, and campaigning for their improved lives and livelihoods (Devereux, 2020; NGO Pulse, 2016; MOTT, 2018; Visser and Ferrer, 2015). Visser and Ferrer (2015:55) show how the Eastern Cape Agricultural Research Project (ECARP) helps farm workers and farm dwellers set up committees to address their grievances. Visser and Ferrer (2015:62) also note that 98 per cent of farm committees that ECARP works with have changed some aspects of their working conditions through a process of engagement with the farmer.

Davies (1990:48) notes that during the apartheid era, white farmers (who often identified as Christians) were more accepting of the churches reaching out and helping their employees, rather than trade unions or other organizations which they deemed to have 'radical' political intentions. In 1989, the South African Council of Churches (SACC), passed a resolution expressing solidarity with farm workers and outlined a practical programme of action (Davies (1990:48). This programme urged member churches to use their special relationship with farmers and workers to tackle such issues as violence against farm workers, to help prepare the way for unions to organise the workforce, to inform workers about their rights, and to campaign for facilities to reduce illiteracy (Davies, 1990:49). Post-1994, civil society organizations still play a key role in assisting farm workers and farm dwellers in different ways. Nevertheless, Visser and Ferrer (2015:205) note that civil society organizations such as the ones mentioned in the previous sentence, often operate under tight financial constraints. This thesis also examines whether farm workers in this study had access to farm worker committees and civil society organizations and whether these were effective in addressing their grievances.

### 3.5.11 Public and Private Social Auditing for Exports

Part of the accreditation prerequisites for exporting agricultural commodities requires both public and private monitoring of social standards on farms. On the public side, the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL) employs labour inspectors to monitor adherence to labour laws (social standards) on farms (Visser and Ferrer, 2015). Pahle (2015) argues, however, that labour inspectors have mostly failed to report labour rights violations taking place in many white-owned farms in South Africa. This is largely because most labour inspections take place in the absence of the farm workers and the unethical relationship between some labour inspectors and white farmers (Devereux, 2020:400; Pahle, 2015:132). Greenberg (2010) contends that the DEL's labour inspectorate is understaffed and demoralized. A study by Godfrey and Clarke (2002) provides a depiction of a labour inspectorate (from the DEL) that was woefully inadequate to effectively monitor and enforce the BCEA at the workplaces it covered. Human Rights Watch (2011) also notes that DEL is under-resourced, hence their poor monitoring of labour rights violations on farms in the country. The CCMA is mandated to promote social justice and fairness in the workplace by delivering ethical dispute and resolution services (Visser and Ferrer, 2015).

The CCMA is a body established in terms of the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 to settle and resolve disputes that arise in employer-employee relationships (CCMA, 1996; 2021). Despite its effectiveness in dealing with workplace issues, research shows that only a small percentage of farm workers access the services of the CCMA mainly due to fear of retrenchment or not being recalled for future harvests, geographical location of the CCMA office, and lack of knowledge of such services (among other reasons) (Pahle, 2015). The case referral rates to the CCMA from the agricultural sector are drastically low. Bhorat et al. (2009:18-19) indicate that a marginal increase in the share of CCMA referrals from agricultural workers is observable from 2001/02 (4.6 %) to 2003/04 (5.1%). This may be seen as a response to the sectoral determination that was introduced for agricultural workers in 2002.

However, the impact has not been significant and only temporary, as shown by the subsequent decline in the share of referrals from agricultural workers. By 2005/2006, this share had again reached 4.6%. Compared to the labour force shares, agricultural workers are underrepresented in the case management system database, which probably reflects the fact that many farm workers reside in rural areas and have difficulty travelling to the urban centres where the CCMA offices are located. This thesis examines the experience of farm workers (in this study) with labour inspectors and with accessing the CCMA, as these are important aspects of the 'social dialogue' pillar of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda used to determine social upgrading. The private certification companies that are used by exporters are also not so innocent, as certain unethical practices or 'omissions' have been identified in their monitoring processes due to their close relationship with white farmers (Hastings, 2019).

The Wine and Agricultural Ethical Trading Association (WIETA), for example, was found to be lacking in its social auditing and monitoring processes when a Danish documentary called '*Bitter Grapes'* exposed the poor working and living conditions on some of the wine farms in the Western Cape (Bitter Grapes, 2016). This exposure led to international outcry, and various changes were made in the monitoring mechanisms of this organization (Hastings, 2019). In the apple value chain of South Africa, private labour audits are conducted by an internationally accredited (and approved by some international buyers) Sustainable Initiative of South Africa (SIZA). SIZA was established in 2008 to monitor compliance and best practices on deciduous fruit farms (SIZA, 2016).

The South African fruit industry decided to respond to the need to provide (global and local) retailers and their consumers with assurances of fair labour practices in their supply base by supporting the development of a single South African based ethical standard and programme that would meet all retailer requirements (SIZA, 2016). SIZA conducts labour audits to ensure that the apple farmers comply with South African labour legislation (SIZA, 2016). SIZA is informed by the Ethical Trade Initiative (ETI) base code, ILO conventions as well as South African legislation, thus reinforcing South African workplace regulation (Visser and Alford, 2024:75). The ETI code is based on core International Labour Organisation (ILO) principles, designed to protect workers and ensure decent work in GVCs (Visser and Alford, 2024:74).

SIZA drives a comprehensive and credible audit oversight programme that assures that global markets have trustworthy audit data (SIZA, 2016). Visser and Ferrer (2015:176) note that "in 2012, the SIZA code was subjected to the Global Social Compliance Programme Equivalence Process, an international benchmarking process that allows for recognising the SIZA standard and audit methodology among international and local retailers. SIZA-audit results are automatically uploaded on SEDEX, which means that the results of individual farms are available to retailers from the United Kingdom (UK) and European Union (EU) registered with SEDEX".

This monitoring takes place through an ethical and environmental self-assessment and third-party social/ethical and environmental audits conducted by independent third-party audit bodies where SIZA is the independent partner overseeing the compliance journey of each business (SIZA, 2016). Global supermarkets and international buyers find SIZA to be a credible organization to conduct labour audits and provide certification (in this regard). Apple producers who want to export their produce are obliged to pay a fee for SIZA to conduct auditing of labour standards on their farms to gain certification. This means that any monitoring lapses by SIZA cannot solely be blamed on SIZA but also on buyers who do not monitor them closely or perform due diligence. This thesis also explores the effectiveness of private certification companies on the selected farms, as this also falls under the 'social dialogue' pillar of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda.

## 3.6 CONCLUSION

The first part of this chapter provides a value-chain analysis of the South African agricultural sector, pre- and post-1994.

Pre-1994, the colonial and apartheid governments established an institutional apparatus that elevated white South African farmers in global agri-food value chains, which were producer-driven at the time. This support from the state assisted white farmers with different types of economic upgrading as well. Pre-1994, farm workers were not protected by the law and, as a result, suffered various forms of exploitation at the hands of white commercial farmers. The division of labour on the farms reflected the social stratification in South Africa during colonialism and apartheid. Farm worker solidarity was restricted by white farms, as they relied on the lack of legal protection or rights for farm workers.

Post-1994, the ANC government fully adopted neoliberal policies and withdrew state support from the sector, thus leaving white farmers exposed to global supermarkets that had already gained hegemonic status in the now buyer-driven global agri-food value chains. Some white farmers left the sector as they could not cope with the pressures of global agrifood value chains, whilst others merged their assets and upgraded their operations to remain competitive in these GCs. This chapter also provided an overview of the land reform programmes of South Africa, as five coloured apple farmers (in this study) were LRAD beneficiaries. Post-1994, the newly elected ANC government instituted an array of labour legislation to protect farm workers. This chapter also covers some provisions of the LRA that correlate with the four pillars of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, which are used to measure the quality of employment to determine whether the farm workers in South Africa have experienced social upgrading.

The variegated farm worker outcomes shown in this chapter are not products of happenstance but are driven by historical and other systemic factors. At the centre of these drivers lies the capitalist drive for profit, which intersected with colonialism, apartheid and patriarchal systems (among other factors). Using a Marxian approach to GCs, this thesis examines whether all the farmers and farm workers (in this study) who were engaged in the profit-driven global apple value chains experienced economic and social upgrading as promised by the neoliberal-inspired mainstream GC (GCC and GVC) scholars and multilateral institutions. The reason behind this interrogation is that the process of profit accumulation is not geared towards equitable distribution or inclusive development, hence, this thesis seeks to uncover the drivers of the economic and social outcomes of the participants in this study.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# RESEARCH DESIGN

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the qualitative research methods adopted in this study. Qualitative research involves sampling, collecting, analysing and interpreting non-numerical data to gauge the subjective opinions and experiences of research participants in a particular situation or about a certain phenomenon (Silverman, 2020). This study provides a subjective account of the selected apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley who were engaged in the global apple value chain to determine whether their participation led to economic and social upgrading. In this study, two sampling methods were used to identify and collect data, and these include purposive and snowball sampling. Post the recruitment process, data was subsequently collected through the following methods: one-on-one interviews, group interviews, observation, and documentary analysis from secondary sources. The data collected is subsequently categorized and analysed through deductive thematic analysis, which involves approaching data with preconceived themes based on theory. The data obtained through closed-ended questions in the questionnaire designed for farm workers was quantified and presented through frequency tables and cross-tabulations. This shows some hybridity in the presentation of data, however, this study is largely informed by a qualitative research paradigm. This chapter, therefore, unpacks the research methods that were utilized in this study.

## 4.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

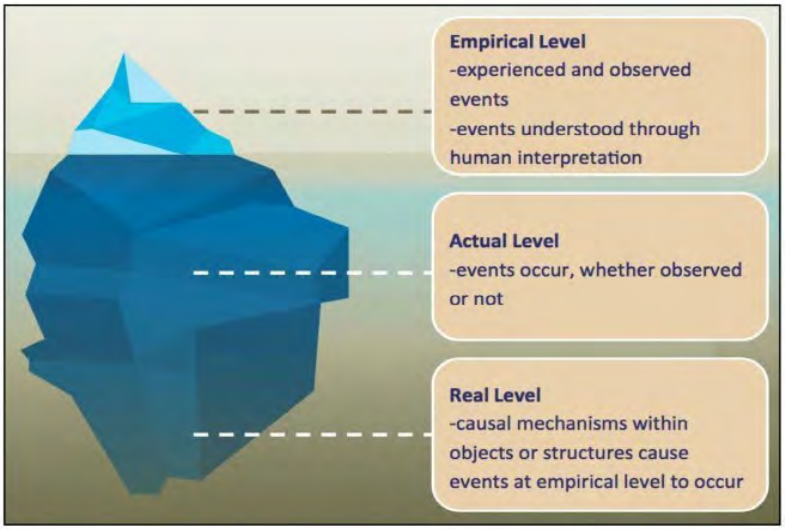
A research philosophy is a framework that guides how research should be conducted based on ideas about reality and the nature of knowledge (Bryman, 2012). This study seeks to understand the outcomes of selected apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley in the global apple value chains. Analysing these outcomes is only a part of the core concern of this study, as this study seeks to uncover the underlying profit accumulation mechanisms which produce these visible outcomes. The neoliberal-inspired GC (especially GCC and GVC) scholars and multilateral organizations promote GCs as vehicles for economic and social upgrading for participants from the global South (Gereffi, 2019; Humphrey and Schmitz, 2000; World Bank, 2020).

Nevertheless, research shows glaring inequalities and exploitation in GCs (Selwyn, 2017; Smith, 2016), which mainstream GC scholars blame on the governance deficits in the GCs (Gereffi and Lee, 2016). Some Marxist GC scholars (who are in the minority) point to the need for GC discourse to acknowledge the role of the profit-driven mechanisms which induce the inequalities and exploitation in GCs (Selwyn, 2016; Smith, 2016; Suwandi, 2019). A fitting ontological perspective for this study is critical realism, which searches for the causal mechanisms existing below the surface and are invisible but give rise to experiences and events. Critical realism (CR) emerged in the 1970s and 1980s through the work of Bhaskar (Fletcher, 2017). It was further elaborated by other critical realists such as Archer (1995) and Collier (1994). As a philosophy of science, CR is not associated with any set of methods.

One of the most important tenets of CR is that ontology (i.e. the nature of reality) is not reducible to epistemology (i.e. our knowledge of reality). Human knowledge captures only a small part of a deeper or underlying reality. In CR ontology, reality is stratified into three levels. The first is the empirical level, which is the realm of events as we experience them. At this level, events or objects can be measured empirically and are often explained through 'common sense,' but these events are always mediated through the filter of human experience and interpretation. This is the transitive level of reality, where social ideas, meanings, decisions, and actions occur – but, importantly, these can be causal. The middle level consists of the actual. At this level, there is no filter of human experience.

Events occur whether we experience or interpret them, and these true occurrences are often different from what is observed at the empirical level (Danermark et al., 2002). Finally, the third level is the real. At this level, causal structures, or 'causal mechanisms,' exist. These are the inherent properties in an object or structure that act as causal forces to produce events (i.e. those appearing at the empirical level) (Fletcher, 2017). It is the primary goal of CR to explain social events through reference to these causal mechanisms and the effects they can have throughout the three-layered 'iceberg' of reality (Fletcher, 2017). The iceberg metaphor does not suggest that any one level is more or less 'real' or that the levels do not interact. Indeed, all levels of the iceberg are part of the same entity or reality. Figure 4.1 illustrates the 'iceberg' metaphor for CR ontology.

**Figure 4.1: An iceberg metaphor for CR ontology**




Source: Fletcher (2017)

This study interrogates the underlying mechanisms in the spheres of trade exchange, production and social reproduction that produce the disparate outcomes for the selected apple farms and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley. Mainstream GC literature traditionally shows the tip of the iceberg; that is, the outcomes in GCs without interrogating the underlying mechanisms that produce these outcomes (Clelland, 2014). At its core, CR offers a theory of being and existence (ontology), but it takes a more open position about the theory of knowledge (epistemology). Epistemology is a theory of knowledge concerning beliefs about how phenomena come to be known, that is, how valid knowledge is produced (Giacomini, 2010:131). Giacomini (2010) elaborates that epistemology is concerned with the nature, sources, and limits of knowledge.

Epistemological assumptions are reflected in the theoretical perspectives, methodology, and methods of research studies. Critical realists can gain knowledge in terms of theories, which can be truth-like (Danermark et al., 2002). The theories that help researchers get closer to reality, i.e., help with identifying causal mechanisms driving social events, activities, or phenomena, are selected and formed using rational judgment of these social events (Danermark et al., 2002). Marx (1976) notes that to understand the capitalist production of value, it is important to descend into the ‘hidden abode of production’, which is often concealed within the capitalist trade relations and employment relations.

Suwandi (2020:3-4) argues that “one way to understand the persistent imperialist characteristics of the world economy is through examining the exploitation that occurs in what Karl Marx calls the hidden abode of production - which, in the era of global commodity chains, is in the global South. Although production has shifted to the South, imperialist relations of exchange continue to prevail, precisely because the difference in wages between the North and South is greater than the difference in productivity”. The CR ontological iceberg metaphor complements the Marxist capitalist trade relations, which show that the surface events and outcomes in the capitalist markets are produced by the hidden abode where the intense extraction of surplus value takes place. This study adopts a trilogy theoretical framework that includes the GCF, LPT and SLA. It is important to note that GCF and LPT have Marxist foundations for trade exchange and the labour process, respectively.

The Marxist-inspired GCF foundations point out how colonialism (imperialism) was driven by a capitalist (profit) motive (among other factors), which means that the economic class disparities (together with race and sex) in South Africa are a legacy of colonialism in addition to current governance failures. South Africa was colonized by imperialist nations who were setting up rudimentary GCs as they were forming colonies as sites of extraction of resources for the mother countries in Europe. One can conclude that the colonial dispossession was connected to the establishment of rudimentary GCs, which utilized the labour of dispossessed and vulnerable indigenous classes of people. The apple-exporting commercial farms in the Langkloof Valley were established during this era as well.

The production processes on thesis farms that have been upgraded through their participation in the global apple value chain have also been driven by profit motive that has had segmenting effects on the labour outcomes on the selected apple farms. The indigenous farmers (land reform beneficiaries) who are new entrants into the global apple value chains come from a position of disadvantage, which impacts their positionality and outcomes in this value chain. On the surface, the outcomes in the global apple value chain appear a certain way, however, this study seeks to unearth the underlying mechanisms that produce the visible outcomes. The best methods for each CR study should be determined by its guiding theoretical and conceptual framework, which is treated as fallible and subjected to imminent critique throughout the process (O’Mahoney & Vincent, 2014). As noted above, the iceberg metaphor for CR ontology includes the empirical, actual and real.

The empirical level can be seen and/or measured (the visible part of the iceberg); the actual level can be investigated relatively easily through qualitative research methods (just below the surface); and the real level (the bottom of the iceberg) must be inferred through a process of abduction (theoretical re-description) and retro-duction (a focus on causal mechanisms). This study adopts a qualitative research approach to capture the actual level, as mainstream GC (especially GCC and GVC) discourse focuses on the empirical level. This group of scholars focuses on best-case scenarios of the outcomes of participating in GCs for firms in developing countries. The visible inequalities and exploitation that take place in GCs are attributed to governance deficits. By adopting a Marxist-inspired approach to the global apple value chain, this study seeks to capture the underlying events that create the outcomes on the surface. Capturing a bottom-up account of the selected apple farmers and farm workers in the Langkloof Valley provides a more in-depth account than the top-down, neoliberal-inspired approach of mainstream GC discourse and multilateral institutions on the impact of GCs on participants from developing countries such as South Africa.

## 4.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

This thesis seeks the subjective accounts of selected apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley who were engaged in the global value chain to determine whether they experienced economic and social upgrading outcomes as assumed by mainstream GC (GCC and GVC) scholars and Bretton Woods institutions. The broader research question informing this study is whether inclusive economic and social development is possible in a profit-driven trading framework like a GC. Engaging the research participants from their subjective perspectives and experiences of the global apple value chain helps answer this broader research question. Qualitative research is ideal for this thesis, as it seeks to unearth the subjective perspectives and experiences of research subjects in a particular social reality (Fossey et al., 2002; Marshall and Rossman, 2014). Although it has evolved over the years, qualitative research remains true to uncovering an insider's view of a particular social phenomenon (Hopf, 2004; Kvale, 1996; Lecompte, 2002; Merriam, 2002).

## 4.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations are meant to protect the research participants from any form of harm, embarrassment or violation of their human rights (Brajuha and Hallowell, 1986; Jones, 1981; Monaghan, 1993). Before data was collected, the study was vetted and subsequently granted ethical clearance by the Rhodes University ethics office.

Although most of the research participants were recruited through snowball sampling, the researcher still had to build a rapport with the research participants before they consented to be interviewed (Legard et al., 2003; Walford, 2005). With this consideration in mind, the researcher took the following steps to secure consent from the research participants: (1) produced his student card and the letter from the research supervisor, (2) explained the overall objective of the study, (3) outlined their roles as participants in the study, (4) requested the use of a digital voice recorder, (5) assured them anonymity through pseudonyms, (6) emphasized their right to avoid uncomfortable questions or withdraw their consent at any point of the interviews, and (7) ensured them feedback on the research outcomes if requested (which none of the research participants requested).

After the abovementioned process was completed, the research participants provided verbal consent to participate in the study. It is worth noting that all the names of the research participants and those of their organizations have been concealed with pseudonyms to protect their identities. The process of coming up with pseudonyms required some creativity on the side of the researcher, but was enjoyable, nonetheless. Lahman, Thomas, and Teman (2023) note that "people's names and the places, animals, and items named by people are deeply personal and reflective of their culture and identity, yet in qualitative research, the standard is to use pseudonyms. This practice is thought to protect research participants". Therefore, all the names of farm workers and the farms in this study have been given pseudonyms.

## 4.5 IDENTIFYING AND RECRUITING RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Purposive sampling is a method where the researcher utilizes their judgment to identify potential research participants who possess specific characteristics that are required for a particular study (Browne, 2005; Etikan et al., 2016). In this study, the characteristics that were required included being an apple farmer and farm worker (from the Langkloof Valley) who was actively participating in the global apple value chain. The two volunteers from the ANC office added valuable supplementary information about the employment relationships on the selected apple farms in the region. After identifying the research participants for this study, snowball sampling was used to recruit them. Snowball sampling is a technique in which research participants recommend and recruit other potential participants who fit the research criteria and are willing to participate in that study (McNamara, 1994; Noy, 2008). These sampling methods were very effective in this study, as the researcher was able to interview 91 research respondents using these methods.

### 4.5.1 Recruiting Farm Worker Respondents

Before venturing into the Langkloof Valley, the researcher was faced with a major decision of whether to access farm workers through their employers or outside their work environment. The researcher chose the latter because it is well-known that farmers are generally wary of outsiders visiting the farms to interview farm workers (Visser and Ferrer, 2015). Additionally, the power dynamic on farms would taint the data as farm workers would not be free to speak about their employment and living conditions in the presence of their employers. For this reason, the researcher accessed an alternative channel to reach farm workers outside their work environment, thus eliminating the need for a gatekeeper. The researcher enlisted the services of an ex-farm worker, who also had experience working as a field worker with a local NGO in the Langkloof Valley, to search and identify research participants, as the researcher was not familiar with this region. It is important to note that the researcher recruited and interviewed the research participants and not the research assistant.

Nevertheless, to remunerate the research assistant for his services, the funders of the research required a copy of his personal identity document and an affidavit, which was obtained from the police station in Joubertina. Whilst at the police station, the police officer helping with the affidavit provided the researcher with a number to call in case they encountered any danger in the research field. When the documentation process was completed and documents were emailed to the funders, the recruitment process ensued. As a native of the Langkloof Valley, the research assistant had access to a large pool of acquaintances, friends, and family members who were more than willing to participate in the study because they trusted the research assistant. These research participants recommended and recruited other participants.

As much as the recruiting process was made easier by the presence of the research participant (who could speak English and Afrikaans), the researcher still had to secure consent from the research participants. The process of securing consent included: producing a student card and a letter from the research supervisor; describing the purpose of the research; and assuring them anonymity by using pseudonyms (as most of them feared being identified by their employers). After consent was given, interviews were conducted outside working hours in settings that were comfortable and safe for both the researcher and the research participants. The researcher did not have trouble securing interviews with female farm workers because of the familiar face of the research assistant, and the interviews were conducted in their homes where they felt safe.

Some of these settings included the homes of farm workers (living on and off the farms), in the car driven by the researcher, by the roadside in townships, and in a tool shed. Interviews were conducted during the day, so the safety of the researcher and the assistant were not compromised at any point during this study. With farm workers, the longest interview lasted two hours, and the shortest lasted 30 minutes. Goodman (2011) notes that in snowball sampling, the saturation point is reached when data begins to be repetitive, and no further data collection is necessary. The saturation point with the seventy-five farm workers was reached when their responses became repetitive and clear patterns were apparent. Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 provide brief demographical breakdowns of the farm workers who participated in this study.

**Table 4.1: The first group of farm workers interviewed**

| Name and Surname | Race | Sex | Age | Nationality | Employer | Employment Status | Job Position | Date of Interview |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gill Freeman | Coloured | Female | 63 | South African | Fresh Orchards Incorporated | Seasonal | General worker | 19/11/2018 |
| Irene Cousins | Coloured | Female | 56 | South African | Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd | Seasonal | Packer | 19/11/2018 |
| Hendrika October | Coloured | Female | 52 | South African | Fresh Orchards Incorporated | Seasonal | General worker | 19/11/2018 |
| Caroline Conrad | Coloured | Female | 23 | South African | Fresh Orchards Incorporated | Seasonal | General Worker | 19/11/2018 |
| Florence Kaap | Coloured | Female | 42 | South African | Fresh Orchards Incorporated | Seasonal | General Worker | 19/11/2018 |
| Nadine Nuwe | Coloured | Female | 37 | South African | Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd | Seasonal | Sorter | 19/11/2018 |
| Brendon Kaizer | Coloured | Male | 40 | South African | Koukamma Vrugte | Permanent | General Worker | 20/11/2018 |
| Sharney Meyer | Coloured | Female | 24 | South African | Kloof Fruit Company | Seasonal | Sorter | 20/11/2018 |
| Gill Shansein | Coloured | Female | 25 | South African | Kloof Fruit Company | Seasonal | Scanner | 20/11/2018 |
| Stephanie De Jong | Coloured | Female | 52 | South African | Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd Affiliate | Permanent | General Worker | 20/11/2018 |
| Martha Fortuin | Coloured | Female | 48 | South African | Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd Affiliate | Permanent | General Worker | 20/11/2018 |
| Marlene Lottering | Coloured | Female | 51 | South African | Vrugteland Pakkers | Seasonal | Packer | 20/11/2018 |
| Nomfanelo Duma | Black | Female | 26 | South African | Vrugteland Pakkers | Seasonal | Packer | 20/11/2018 |
| Nomvelo Sibanda | Coloured | Female | 40 | South African | Koukamma Vrugte | Seasonal | Packer | 20/11/2018 |
| Garth Isaacs | Coloured | Male | 34 | South African | Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd | Seasonal | Forklift Driver | 21/11/2018 |
| Justine Goliath | Coloured | Male | 26 | South African | Kloof Fruit Company | Seasonal | General Worker | 21/11/2018 |
| Nosipho Zinto | Coloured | female | 38 | South Africa | Kloof Fruit Company | Seasonal | Packer | 21/11/2018 |
| Pieter Matthews | Black | Male | 33 | South African | Kloof Fruit Company | Permanent | Quality Control | 21/11/2018 |
| Silvia Reinecke | Coloured | Female | 34 | South African | Kloof Fruit Company | Seasonal | Label operator | 21/11/2018 |
| Claudine Augustus | Coloured | Female | 23 | South African | Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd | Seasonal | General Worker | 21/11/2018 |
| Leroy January | Coloured | Male | 51 | South African | Progressiewe Boerdery | Seasonal | General Worker | 21/11/2018 |
| Martina Beste | Coloured | Female | 48 | South African | Vrugteland Pakkers | Seasonal | Packer | 22/11/2018 |
| Jan Jaer | Coloured | Male | 55 | South African | Kloof Fruit Company | Permanent | Supervisor | 22/11/2018 |

**Table 4.2: The second group of farm workers interviewed**

| Name and Surname | Race | Sex | Age | Nationality | Employer | Employment Status | Job Position | Date of Interview |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Siphosethu Ludidi | Black | Male | 24 | South African | Koukamma Vrugte Trust | Permanent | Field Worker | 02/12/2018 |
| Justin Davies | Coloured | Male | 26 | South African | Koukamma Vrugte Trust | Permanent | Field Worker | 02/12/2018 |
| Ayanda Nyanda | Black | Male | 34 | South African | Koukamma Vrugte Trust | Permanent | Field Worker | 02/12/2018 |
| Calvin Xavier | Black | Male | 33 | Zimbabwean | Koukamma Vrugte Trust | Permanent | Field Worker | 02/12/2018 |
| Tendai Tshedzi | Black | Male | 44 | Zimbabwean | Koukamma Vrugte Trust | Permanent | Field Worker | 02/12/2018 |
| Jeremiah Mlenze | Black | Male | 24 | Zimbabwean | Koukamma Vrugte Trust | Permanent | Field Worker | 02/12/2018 |
| Thando Sinda | Black | Male | 30 | South African | Koukamma Vrugte Trust | Permanent | Field Worker | 02/12/2018 |
| Nosiviwe Dywili | Black | Female | 37 | South African | Kloof Fruit Company | Seasonal | Apple Counter | 03/12/2018 |
| Fezeka Ntamo | Black | Female | 32 | South African | Kloof Fruit Company | Seasonal | Packer | 03/12/2018 |
| JilhandreThomas | Coloured | Male | 40 | South African | Koukamma Vrugte | Seasonal | General Worker | 03/12/2018 |
| Foidal DeVos | Coloured | Male | 48 | South African | Kloof Fruit Company | Permanent | Supervisor | 03/12/2018 |
| Latishia April | Coloured | Female | 36 | South African | Kloof Fruit Company | Seasonal | General Worker | 03/12/2018 |
| John Roberts | Coloured | Male | 25 | South African | Progressiewe Boerdery | Seasonal | General Worker | 03/12/2018 |
| Sullette Meyer | Black | Female | 30 | South African | Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd | Seasonal | Sorter | 03/12/2018 |
| Matthew Reinecke | Black | Male | 42 | South African | Kloof Fruit Company | Permanent | Supervisor | 04/12/2018 |
| Edeth September | Coloured | Female | 58 | South African | Kloof Fruit Company | Seasonal | General worker | 04/12/2018 |
| Calvin Zondani | Black | Male | 46 | South African | Progressiewe Boerdery | Seasonal | General Worker | 04/12/2018 |
| Eric Kahla | Black | Male | 50 | South African | Kloof Fruit Company | Contract | Specialist tree planter | 04/12/2018 |
| Bongani Jacobs | Black | Male | 21 | South African | Kloof Fruit Company | Seasonal | General Worker | 04/12/2018 |
| Bongani Zimbini | Coloured | Male | 22 | South African | Fresh Orchards Incorporated | Permanent | General worker | 04/12/2018 |
| Louise Blaauw | Coloured | Female | 58 | South African | Vrugteland Pakkers | Seasonal | Packer | 04/12/2018 |
| Nozipho Dubula | Black | Female | 46 | South African | Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd | Seasonal | Packer | 04/12/2018 |
| Glenden Montvoer | Coloured | Male | 28 | South African | Kloof Fruit Company | Permanent | Chemical Sprayer | 05/12/2018 |
| Hazely Nigels | Coloured | Female | 28 | South African | Kloof Fruit Company | Seasonal | Sorter (orchards) | 05/12/2018 |
| Clinton Baaitjies | Coloured | Male | 56 | South African | Fresh Orchards Incorporated | Seasonal | Picker | 05/12/2018 |
| Gershin Malinga | Coloured | Male | 43 | South African | Fresh Orchards Incorporated | Seasonal | Picker | 05/12/2018 |
| Alexandra Booi | Coloured | Male | 40 | South African | Fresh Orchards Incorporated | Permanent | Supervisor | 05/12/2018 |
| Bradley Leywer | Coloured | Male | 33 | South African | Fresh Orchards Incorporated | Permanent | Chemical sprayer | 05/12/2018 |
| Marnus September | Coloured | Male | 25 | South African | Fresh Orchards Incorporated | Seasonal | Picker | 05/12/2018 |

**Table 4.3: The third group of farm workers interviewed**

| Name and Surname | Race | Sex | Age | Marital Status | Nationality | Employer | Employment Status | Job Position | Date of Interview |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brenda Bloem | Coloured | Female | 26 | Single | South African | Vars Vallei Pak | Seasonal | Packer | 24/01/2019 |
| Duncan Kalanga | Coloured | Male | 59 | Married | South African | Kloof Fruit Company | Permanent | Tractor Driver | 24/01/2019 |
| Wilderine Kok | Coloured | Male | 19 | Single | South African | Kloof Fruit Company | Seasonal | General worker | 24/01/2019 |
| Johan Minnaar | Coloured | Male | 28 | Single | South African | Vars Vallei Pak | Seasonal | Packer | 24/01/2019 |
| Gilmore Mere | Coloured | Male | 38 | Single | South African | Fresh Orchards Incorporated | Permanent | General worker | 24/01/2019 |
| Sonia Damons | Black | Female | 39 | Single | South African | Fresh Orchards Incorporated | Seasonal | Picker | 24/01/2019 |
| Denzel Bailey | Coloured | Male | 26 | Married | South African | Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd | Seasonal | Forklift Driver | 25/01/2019 |
| Mavis Stuurman | Coloured | Female | 35 | Single | South African | Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd | Seasonal | General Worker | 25/01/2019 |
| Marvin September | Coloured | Male | 20 | Single | South African | Koukamma Vrugte | Seasonal | Pallet Packer | 25/01/2019 |
| Davien Willemse | Black | Male | 19 | Single | South African | Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd Affiliate | Permanent | General Worker | 25/01/2019 |
| Rochelle Van Rooyen | Coloured | Female | 24 | Single | South African | Fresh Orchards Incorporated | Seasonal | Packer | 25/01/2019 |
| Mavis Leer | Coloured | Female | 47 | Married | South African | Fresh Orchards Incorporated | Seasonal | Packer | 25/01/2019 |
| Chandre Zonke | Coloured | Female | 39 | Married | South African | Fresh Orchards Incorporated | Seasonal | Packer | 25/01/2019 |
| Roseline Van Rooyen | Coloured | Female | 42 | Married | South African | Progressiewe Boerdery | Permanent | Cleaner | 26/01/2019 |
| Jordan Daniels | Black | Male | 20 | Single | South African | Progressiewe Boerdery | Season | General worker | 26/01/2019 |
| Jaden Witbooi | Black | Male | 22 | Single | South African | Vrugteland Pakkers | Seasonal | Pallet Packer | 26/01/2019 |
| Byron Hlazo | Black | Male | 19 | Single | South African | Fresh Orchards Incorporated | Seasonal | Picker | 26/01/2019 |
| Zain Booysen | Coloured | Male | 27 | Single | South Africa | Vars Vallei Pak | Permanent | Driver | 26/01/2019 |
| Saylin Kopho | Coloured | Female | 22 | Single | South African | Vars Vallei Pak | Seasonal | Packer | 26/01/2019 |
| Elise Kopho | Coloured | Female | 24 | Single | South African | Vars Vallei Pak | Seasonal | Palletiser | 26/01/2019 |
| Solomon Duna | Black | Male | 35 | Married | South African | Koukamma Vrugte | Permanent | Supervisor | 27/01/2019 |
| Jilhandre Leen | Coloured | Male | 36 | Single | South African | Kloof Fruit Company | Permanent | Driver | 27/01/2019 |
| Royda Tima | Coloured | Female | 24 | Single | South African | Kloof Fruit Company | Seasonal | Sorter | 27/01/2019 |

The three rounds of interviews with farm workers drew a picture of the conditions of farm workers employed on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. These interviews provided nuances, complexities and contradictions of being employed on the selected farms in the Langkloof Valley. Although the apple farms (in the study) differed in various ways, the division of labour followed the same pattern in all the apple farms in this study. These findings are analysed further in the thesis using the pillars of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda to determine whether the farm workers in this study experienced social upgrading. Table 4.4 is not a representative sample of all the farm workers employed in each of the organizations listed below, as probability sampling was not conducted. Table 4.4 simply provides a numerical breakdown of where the 75 farm workers (who participated in this study) were employed, as all the organizations listed below were also part of the study.

**Table 4.4: Number of farm workers interviewed per organization**

| Organization | Number of Interviewees |
|---|---|
| Kloof Fruit Company | 21 |
| Fresh Orchards Incorporated | 16 |
| Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd (and affiliated farms) | 11 |
| Progressiewe Boerdery (Land Reform Farm) | 5 |
| Koukamma Vrugte Trust (Land Reform Farm) | 7 |
| Koukamma Vrugte | 5 |
| Vars Vallei Pak | 5 |
| Vrugteland Pakkers | 5 |
| **Total** | **75** |

The table above shows that most of the farm workers (63) who participated in this study were employed in white apple farms, and 12 were employed in coloured (land reform) apple farms.

### 4.5.2 Representatives from the ANC Office in Joubertina

The third and last round of interviews with farm workers was followed by two interviews with two representatives (volunteers) from the African National Congress office in Joubertina. Some of the farm workers who were interviewed in this study identified the ANC office in Joubertina as one of the external channels they use to express their workplace. Approaching the volunteers at the ANC office was straightforward, as the researcher introduced himself and the purpose of his study to the office manager, who subsequently requested two volunteers to speak to the researcher, and they enthusiastically agreed to participate in this study.

These volunteers consented to participate in this study, and the interviews were conducted separately in their homes. The interviews with each of the volunteers lasted an hour. The names of the volunteers were concealed using pseudonyms. Table 4.5 provides basic demographical information of the volunteers from the ANC office in Joubertina.

**Table 4.5: Interviews with representatives from the ANC Office in Joubertina**

| Name and Surname | Sex | Age | Race | Occupation | Role at the ANC office | Date of Interview |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Xolani Ntabeni | Male | 38 | Black | Entrepreneur | Volunteer | 08/05/2019 |
| Daniel September | Male | 65 | Coloured | Retired Teacher and Reverend | Volunteer | 08/05/2019 |

### 4.5.3 Recruiting White Apple Farmer Respondents

When a saturation point was reached after interviewing the 75 diverse farm workers in this study, the researcher decided to approach the dominant white-owned farms in the Langkloof Valley. It is worth noting that all the names of the white apple farmers (who participated in this study) and their organizations have been given pseudonyms to protect their identities. The first organization approached in the Langkloof Valley was the Kloof Fruit Company, as the research assistant had identified it as one of the largest apple producers in the region. At Kloof Fruit Company, the researcher was introduced to Mr Kobus Van Tonder, who was the product manager of his organisation's fourteen production units (farms) at the time. During this first meeting, the researcher introduced himself and explained the purpose of the study, which Mr Van Tonder welcomed and subsequently scheduled an interview date.

When the researcher returned to the Langkloof Valley for the interview, Mr Van Tonder had also arranged interviews with Mr Gerald Goosen (the farm manager at one of the fourteen farms of the Kloof Fruit Company), Mr Schalk Matthias Venter (packhouse manager at Kloof Fruit Company Koukamma plant), Mr Dawid Koos Van Zyl (marketing manager at Kloof Fruit Company) and Mr Johan Groenewald-Sterling (Chief Executive Officer at Fresh Orchards Incorporated). This is classic snowball sampling, as Mr Van Tonder not only participated in the study but also recruited some of his colleagues and industry peers to participate in the study as well. Mr Van Tonder made the process of recruiting some of the White apple farmers in the region easier because when the researcher arrived for the interviews, the farmers were already willing to be interviewed.

Although the farmers had consented to participate in the study, the researcher still had to build a rapport with them during the introductory phase of the interviews. The icebreakers in these interviews included conversations about different aspects of South African life such as sports, schooling backgrounds and politics (just to name a few). These icebreakers proved to be very effective as they put the farmers at ease, so much so that they provided in-depth insights about their outcomes and experiences in the global apple value chain. The rest of the white apple farmers who participated in this study were approached without any recommendations, and the researcher had to build a rapport with them before securing their consent. The four white farmers included Mr Marnus Andre Liebenberg (owner of Koukamma Vrugte), Mr Jonathan van der Linde (owner of Vrugteland Pakkers), Mr Raymond RoosBurger (owner of Vars Vallei Pak), and Mr Jannie Hendrick Wiese (the general manager at Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd). All the interviews with the white farmers took place on their organizational premises and were roughly an hour each. After interviewing nine White apple farmers from the Langkloof Valley, a saturation point was reached. As their responses to the interview questions became repetitive, a clear picture of their experiences in the global apple value chain emerged. Table 4.6 provides basic demographic information of the white apple farmers who participated in this study.

**Table 4.6: Interviews with white apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley**

| Name of Farmer | Sex | Age | Race | Employment Experience Prior to Current Position | Organization | Position | Date of Interview |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mr Kobus Van Tonder | Male | 55 | White | Farm Manager | Kloof Fruit Company | Product Manager | 07/05/2019 |
| Mr Schalk Matthias Venter | Male | 56 | White | Army<br>Packhouse Manager | Kloof Fruit Company | Packhouse Manager | 07/05/2019 |
| Mr Gerald Goosen | Male | 57 | White | Army<br>Farm Owner | Kloof Fruit Company | Production Manager | 08/05/2019 |
| Mr Dawid Koos Van Zyl | Male | 50 | White | Marketing Coordinator | Kloof Fruit Company | Marketing Manager | 01/09/2022 |
| Mr Johan Groenewald-Sterling | Male | 55 | White | Army; Community; Consultant; Human Resources Manager Packhouse Manager | Fresh Orchards Incorporated | Chief Executive Officer | 08/05/2019 |
| Mr Jannie Hendrick Wiese | Male | 53 | White | Bursar Financial Manager | Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd | General Manager | 09/05/2019 |
| Mr Jonathan Van Der Linde | Male | 46 | White | Farm Owner | Vrugteland Pakkers | Owner | 10/05/2019 |
| Mr Raymond Roos-Burger | Male | 48 | White | Fruit Trader | Vars Vallei Pak | Owner | 11/05/2019 |
| Mr Marnus Andre Liebenberg | Male | 58 | White | Army<br>Farm Owner | Koukamma Vrugte | Owner | 11/05/2019 |

### 4.5.4 RECRUITING LAND REFORM BENEFICIARIES

The names of the land reform beneficiaries and those of their organizations (who participated in this study) have been concealed using pseudonyms. Snowball sampling was used to recruit the land reform beneficiaries who participated in this study. Mr Van Tonder (from Kloof Fruit Company) recruited Mr Julio Baaitjies (from Kouakamma Nuwe Boere Trust) to participate in the study, as Mr Baaitjies was also an employee at Kloof Fruit Company. When the researcher returned to the Langkloof Valley to interview land reform beneficiaries, Mr Baaitjies had also recruited Mr Denzel Arries (from the Langkloof Werkers Plaas) to participate in this study. Although the two beneficiaries were willing to participate in the study because of information provided by Mr Van Tonder, the researcher still had to build a rapport with them by introducing himself and explaining the purpose of this study before they consented to be interviewed.

This interview took place at a guest house garden area in Joubertina, and once it was concluded, Mr Baaitjies recruited (via telephone) two land reform beneficiaries, Mrs Chrystal Wessels and Mrs Tamara January (from Koukamma Vrugte Trust), to participate in the study. The two beneficiaries agreed to meet the researcher for an interview at a stadium in Louterwater. Once again, the researcher established a rapport with Mrs Wessels and Mrs January by introducing himself and explaining the purpose of the research. The two beneficiaries immediately consented to be interviewed by the researcher, as Mr Baaitjies had briefed them about the study and their expected roles as research participants before the interview. After interviewing Mrs Wessels and Mrs January, Mr Baaitjies recruited Mr Dennis Fortuin (from Progressiewe Boerdery) to participate in the study, and the interview took place in the board room of the farm.

Before this interview could take place, the researcher also established a rapport with Mr Fortuin by introducing himself and explaining the purpose of the study. Like the previous two beneficiaries, Mr Fortuin had already been briefed by Mr Baaitjies about the research, hence his immediate consent to be interviewed after a rapport was established. The information provided by Mr Fortuin during the interview correlated with the responses given by other land reform beneficiaries who participated in this study, as such a saturation point was reached with beneficiaries. Table 4.7 provides a brief demographic breakdown of the five land reform beneficiaries who participated in this study.

**Table 4.7: Interviews with land reform beneficiaries in the Langkloof Valley**

| Name of Beneficiary | Sex | Age | Race | Employment Experience Prior to Current Position | Current Job Position | Current Employer | Land Reform Trust | Date of Interview |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dennis Fortuin | Male | 63 | Coloured | Farm Worker<br>Butchery Manager | Human Resource Manager | Progressiewe Boerdery | Progressiewe Boerdery | 04/03/2022 |
| Julio Baaitjies | Male | 56 | Coloured | Farm Worker<br>Supervisor | Farm Manager | Kloof Fruit Company | Kouakamma Nuwe Boere Trust | 05/03/2022 |
| Denzel Arries | Male | 47 | Coloured | Farm Worker<br>Supervisor | Farm Manager | Langkloof Werkers Plaas | Langkloof Werkers Plaas | 05/03/2022 |
| Tamara January | Female | 55 | Coloured | Farm Worker, supervisor, assistant<br>packhouse manager,<br>farm manager | Unemployed | Unemployed | Koukamma Vrugte Trust | 05/03/2022 |
| Chrystal Wessels | Female | 59 | Coloured | Farm Worker; supervisor, assistant<br>packhouse manager,<br>farm manager | Unemployed | Unemployed | Koukamma Vrugte Trust | 05/03/2022 |

## 4.6 COLLECTING DATA

Data in this study was collected through the following qualitative research methods: in-depth interviews, group interviews, observation and document analysis. The bulk of the data obtained in this study was collected through in-depth interviews, which were conducted face-to-face. The other methods noted above provided credible corroborative information. The most challenging aspect of collecting data for this study was the travelling, that is, from Makhanda to the Langkloof Valley and crisscrossing towns, townships, and farms (from Kareedouw to Haarlem). Securing interviews with the farm workers, the farmers and volunteers from the ANC office in Joubertina was straightforward. This process was not as sensational as some people (looking from the outside) would expect, considering the history of the agricultural sector of South Africa. Nevertheless, this process of securing interviews with the different groups of people is thoroughly described above. The fact that the researcher can understand and speak Afrikaans and Xhosa also made the interview process easier.

### 4.6.1 In-Depth Interviews

In-depth interviews are one of the most utilized methods of collecting data in qualitative research (Hopf, 2004).

Well-known ethnographers such as Malinowski placed great emphasis on the importance of capturing the subjective accounts of respondents when conducting qualitative research (Burgess, 1984). Bryman (2012:471) notes that with in-depth interviewing, the researcher uses the questions in the interview schedule as talking points to allow the interviewee to provide a non-restrictive account of their experiences about certain topics. In this study, the interview schedule designed for the fourteen apple farmers consisted of open-ended questions that sought to uncover their experiences and outcomes in the global apple value chain. Some neoliberal-inspired mainstream GC (GCC and GVC) scholars assume that engaging in GCs leads to economic upgrading opportunities for supplier firms in developing countries (Gereffi, 2019). By adopting open-ended questions, the selected apple farmers who participated in this study were able to explain how they achieved their different economic upgrading trajectories.

The questionnaire used to interview the seventy-five farm workers (who participated in this study) consisted of both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The questionnaires designed for the farm workers included both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Closed-ended questions helped the researcher quantify the data to highlight certain trends about the conditions of farm workers (in the study), whilst the open-ended questions uncovered the subjective experiences of the farm workers under the four pillars of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda (employment creation, rights at work, social protection, and social dialogue). The information obtained through this questionnaire is used to determine whether the farm workers (in this study) experienced social upgrading, as promised by the neoliberal-inspired mainstream GC (GCC and GVC) scholars and the Bretton Woods institutions (Selwyn, 2016). The interview schedule designed for the volunteers from the African National Congress (ANC) has open-ended questions focused on the employment relationship between commercial farmers and farm workers in the Langkloof Valley. This gives the ANC volunteers a unique perspective which supplements the data collected from the farmers and the farm workers in this study.

### 4.6.2 Group Interviews

This study also used group interviews as supplementary methods of collecting data. A group interview consists of a single interviewer interviewing multiple candidates at the same time (Frey and Fontana, 1991). In social research, group interviews and focus groups are often perceived as unitary interviewing techniques (Bryman, 2001). Bryman (2012:501), however, highlights three key differences between a focus group and a group interview.

Firstly, focus groups typically emphasize a specific theme or topic that is explored in depth, whereas group interviews often span very widely (Bryman, 2012:501). Secondly, group interviews are carried out so that the researcher can save time and money by carrying out interviews with several individuals simultaneously (Bryman, 2012:501). Thirdly, in a focus group, the interviewer is invariably interested in how individuals discuss a certain issue as members of a group rather than simply as individuals (Bryman, 2012:501). In other words, with a focus group, the researcher will be interested in such things as how people respond to each other's views and build up a view out of the interaction that takes place within the group (Gill et al., 2008).

With these considerations in mind, this thesis adopted a group interview technique, as the researcher was more interested in the responses of individuals within a group setting, rather than the dynamics among the participants in those groups. Group interviews (in this study) occurred spontaneously, as the researcher encountered some farm workers who preferred to be interviewed with their friends, spouses and family members; as such, their wishes were respected. Group interviews proved to be effective supplementary methods of collecting data, as diverse perspectives surfaced during these group interviews. It is worth noting that, in this study group, interviews were conducted with some farm workers and some of the land reform beneficiaries.

### 4.6.3 Observation

Observation in qualitative research involves collecting data using one's senses, especially looking and listening in a systematic and meaningful way (Adler and Adler, 1994; McKechnie, 2008). Direct observation is when the researcher observes events as they occur in front of their eyes. For this study, the researcher adopted direct non-participant observation that entails getting closer to the field of research while retaining the position of an outsider or a guest (Ciesielska et al., 2018; Kostera, 2007). The researcher applied direct non-participant observation whilst traversing the Langkloof Valley, recruiting and interviewing the people who participated in this study. This type of observation was unstructured, as it did not have a predetermined plan or set of criteria. During this process, the researcher observed (among other things) the living conditions of farm workers residing on the farms and in the surrounding townships, the production processes in the orchards and packhouses on the apple farms covered in this study. During the process of observation, the researcher made an abundance of notes and took pictures which complemented the data collected through other methods in this study.

These observations were analysed within the deductive thematic analysis framework outlined in this chapter. The observations merely supplemented the interviews and document analysis which were the core methods of collecting data.

### 4.6.4 Document Analysis

Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents that have been recorded without a researcher's intervention (Atkinson and Coffey, 2004; Bowden, 2009). Some of these documents include background papers, books, diaries and journals, newspapers, organisational or institutional reports, survey data, and various public records (Bowden, 2009; Mills et al., 2006). The different documents listed above can be found in libraries, newspaper archives and organisational or institutional files and websites (Bowden, 2009). In this study, secondary information was obtained from different online sources and organizational websites. Document analysis is often conducted in collaboration with other qualitative research methods such as interviews, group interviews and participant or non-participant observation (Denzin, 1970; Merriam, 1988; White, 2010; Yin, 1994). In this study, the secondary data obtained from the different websites complemented the data that was secured through in-depth interviews, group interviews and observations.

## 4.7 DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected in this study is analysed through deductive thematic analysis, which entails utilizing themes or concepts drawn from pre-existing theories to determine whether they correlate with the data collected (Bryman, 2012; Clarke and Braun, 2017; Fife and Gossner, 2024; Proudfoot, 2023). To perform deductive analysis, a codebook must be developed using the data collected in the study (Reyes et al., 2024). This codebook serves as a data management tool for organizing segments of similar text to help with the interpretation of the data and provide evidence for the credibility of the study (Reyes et al., 2024). According to Oliveira (2023), the codes in the codebook are identified by name, description or broad code categories depending on research methods and research questions. In adopting a deductive thematic analysis, the researcher drafted themes from the theoretical frameworks and literature in this study. This study is informed by three theories, which include the GCF, LPT and SLA. These three frameworks cover the following spheres of GCs: sphere of trade relations, sphere of production, and sphere of social reproduction.

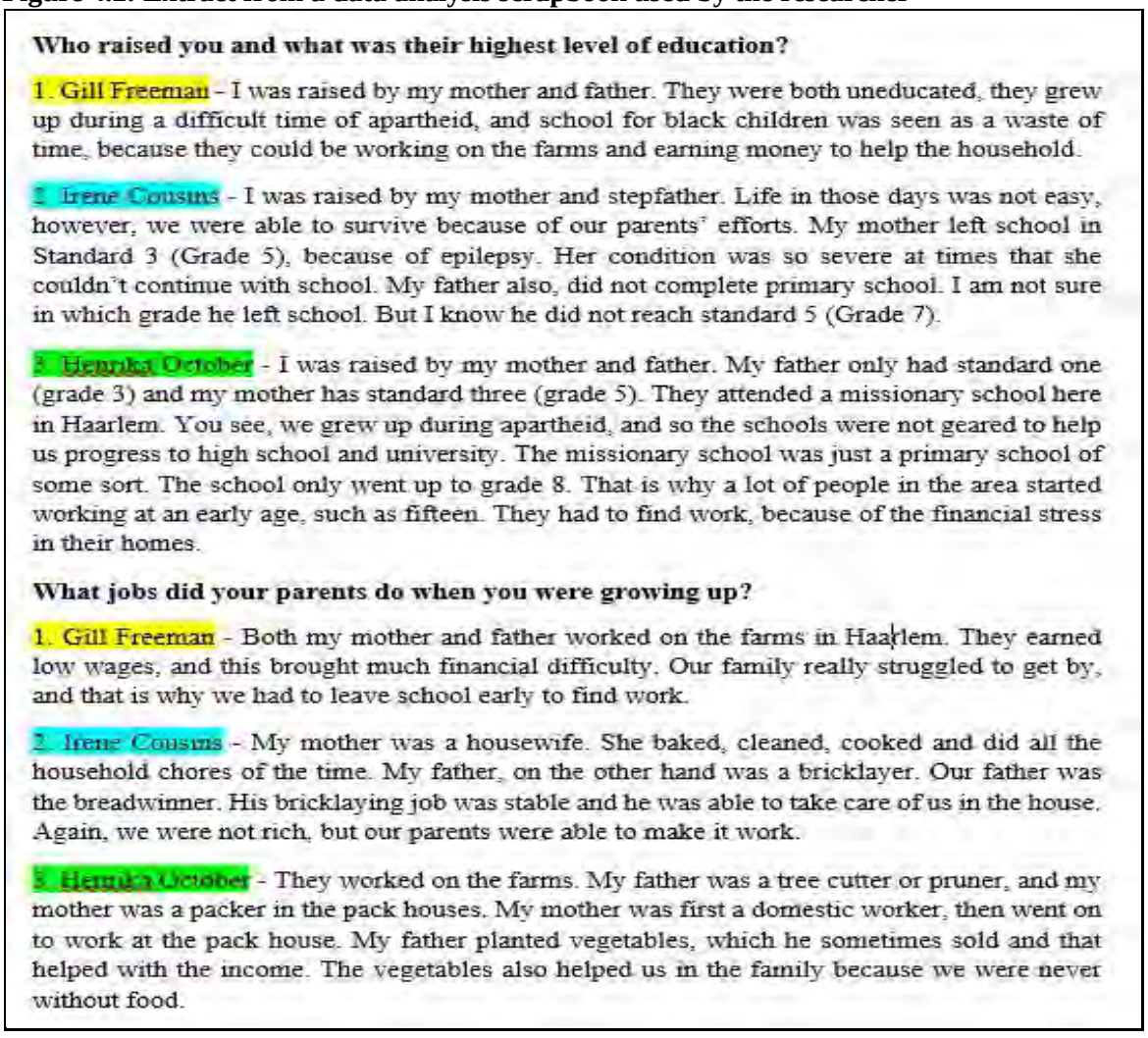
Some neoliberal-inspired GC (GCC and GVC) and Bretton Woods institutions assume that integrating into GCs leads to economic and social upgrading for participants from the global South as they will be trading with powerful lead firms that are endowed with economic resources, skills, best practices and access to lucrative markets (Gereffi, 2019; World Bank, 2022). As such, this study sought to determine whether integrating into the global apple value chain led to economic and social upgrading for the selected apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley. This research determines whether a profit-driven capitalist trading arrangement such as a GC can produce inclusive developmental outcomes for all its participants (Selwyn, 2017). The interview schedules (for selected apple farmers and volunteers at the ANC office in Joubertina) and questionnaire (for farm workers), which also included open-ended questions, were already divided into themes extracted from the trilogy theoretical framework, and this made the categorization of the responses from the participants easier. It is under these categories that the researcher was able to determine whether the responses match the preexisting themes and theories informing the study. Because of the nature of the research question, the codes are centred around economic upgrading and social upgrading. Economic upgrading is divided into four ideal types: process, product, functional upgrading and intersectoral upgrading. Table 4.8 shows a codebook (designed using deductive thematic analysis) with themes that were extracted from theories and literature informing this study.

**Table 4.8: Deductive Thematic Analysis Codebook**

| Sphere of Trade Relations – Power | Sphere of Production | Sphere of Social Reproduction | Economic Upgrading | Social Upgrading – ILO's Decent Work Agenda |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Market Governance | Control – Monitoring | Shocks – Internal vs External | Process Upgrading | Employment Creation |
| Network Governance | Agency | Social Capital | Product Upgrading | Rights at Work |
| Hierarchical Governance | Taylorism, Fordism and Neo-Fordism | Human Capital | Functional Upgrading | Social Dialogue |
| Public Governance | Labour Segmentation | Natural Capital | Intersectoral Upgrading | Social Security |
| Private Governance | De-skilling vs Up-Skilling | Financial Capital | | |
| Social Governance | Mechanization | Natural Capital | | |
| Value Accumulation vs Distribution | Value Creation | Embeddedness -Territorial, Social & Network | | |

Using thematic deductive analysis, the researcher analysed the extent to which commercial apple farmers from the Langkloof Valley experienced the four types of economic upgrading (process, product, functional and intersectoral) listed above. The experiences were analysed against the codes to determine the validity of the theories. Similarly, social upgrading stems from the ILO's decent work agenda, which rests on the following key pillars: employment creation, rights at work, social dialogue and social security. In this case, the researcher measured the experiences of the farm workers (in this study) against the four pillars of decent work to determine whether they experienced social upgrading. Below is an example of how the open-ended question interviews were transcribed and responses compared.

**Figure 4.2: Extract from a data analysis scrapbook used by the researcher**



**Who raised you and what was their highest level of education?**

1. Gill Freeman - I was raised by my mother and father. They were both uneducated, they grew up during a difficult time of apartheid, and school for black children was seen as a waste of time, because they could be working on the farms and earning money to help the household.

2. Irene Cousins - I was raised by my mother and stepfather. Life in those days was not easy, however, we were able to survive because of our parents' efforts. My mother left school in Standard 3 (Grade 5), because of epilepsy. Her condition was so severe at times that she couldn't continue with school. My father also, did not complete primary school. I am not sure in which grade he left school. But I know he did not reach standard 5 (Grade 7).

3. Hennika October - I was raised by my mother and father. My father only had standard one (grade 3) and my mother has standard three (grade 5). They attended a missionary school here in Haarlem. You see, we grew up during apartheid, and so the schools were not geared to help us progress to high school and university. The missionary school was just a primary school of some sort. The school only went up to grade 8. That is why a lot of people in the area started working at an early age, such as fifteen. They had to find work, because of the financial stress in their homes.

**What jobs did your parents do when you were growing up?**

1. Gill Freeman - Both my mother and father worked on the farms in Haarlem. They earned low wages, and this brought much financial difficulty. Our family really struggled to get by, and that is why we had to leave school early to find work.

2. Irene Cousins - My mother was a housewife. She baked, cleaned, cooked and did all the household chores of the time. My father, on the other hand was a bricklayer. Our father was the breadwinner. His bricklaying job was stable and he was able to take care of us in the house. Again, we were not rich, but our parents were able to make it work.

3. Hennika October - They worked on the farms. My father was a tree cutter or pruner, and my mother was a packer in the pack houses. My mother was first a domestic worker, then went on to work at the pack house. My father planted vegetables, which he sometimes sold and that helped with the income. The vegetables also helped us in the family because we were never without food.

Source: Kanyiso Ntikinca

The patterns identified from these transcribed texts were later grouped under the pre-existing themes and concepts that came from the pre-existing theories informing this study. The closed-ended parts of the farm worker questionnaire were documented in a spreadsheet format. Figure 4.3 below is an extract from a spreadsheet displaying the responses of farm workers to the closed-ended questions in the farm questionnaire.

**Figure 4.3: Extract from a data spreadsheet used by the researcher**

| Name and surname | Race | Gender | Employment Status | Securing work | How to get work? | Age start working | Training | Length of training | Skills upgrading | Highest level of growth |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gill Freeman | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Apply | 14 | Yes | 2 days | No | Supervisor |
| Irene Cousins | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Apply | 15 | Yes | 1 day | Yes | Supervisor |
| Hendrika October | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Experience | 16 | Yes | 1 day | No | Supervisor |

Source: Kanyiso Ntikinca

The data presented in the spreadsheet was subsequently quantified, presented and analysed through frequency tables and cross-tabulations. A frequency table provides the number of people and the percentage belonging to each of the categories for the variable in question (Bryman, 2012:337). In this thesis, frequency tables highlighted key patterns relating to the state of the selected farm workers who participated in this study. Cross tabulations, which are also known as contingency tables, are a method used to quantitatively analyse the relationship between multiple categorized variables. Cross tabulations are usually used in statistical analysis to find patterns and trends. In this study, cross-tabulation was employed to analyse the sample of farm workers based on race, sex and employment status. To calculate the proportion of a specific category within a sample, the formula using sample notation is as follows:

$$\hat{p} = \frac{n}{N}$$

Where:

- $\hat{p}$ (p-hat) represents the sample proportion.
- *n* is the number of observations in the category of interest.
- N is the total number of observations.

Cloutier and Ravasi (2021:113) note that in qualitative research, tables serve many purposes throughout the lifecycle of a research project.

Tables make it easy to navigate and sort large amounts of data in various ways, allowing researchers to examine them from multiple and diverse angles. Tables help researchers condense, bring order and make sense of data. In this study, therefore, comparing various aspects of the state of farm workers (in this study) by race, sex and employment status helps to uncover the heterogeneity of their outcomes on the selected apple farms (from the Langkloof Valley) that were engaged in the global apple value chain.

## 4.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter unpacks the qualitative methods that are used in this study. Purposive sampling was used to identify research participants, whilst snowball sampling was used to recruit these participants. Purposive sampling selects research participants (subjectively) according to features which align with the objectives of the research. The research participants included selected commercial apple farmers, farm workers and volunteers from the ANC office in the Langkloof Valley. Snowball sampling takes place when research participants recommend and recruit their industry peers to participate in the study. Data was collected via one-on-one in-depth interviews, group interviews, observation and document analysis. Once collected, the data was analysed via deductive thematic analysis, which entails utilising themes and concepts extracted from pre-existing theories informing this study to determine their correlation with the data. Overall, the qualitative research methods utilised in this study are ideal for uncovering the factors driving the subjective outcomes and experiences of selected commercial apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley in the apple value chain.

# CHAPTER FIVE
# WHITE APPLE PRODUCERS AND ECONOMIC UPGRADING IN THE LANGKLOOF VALLEY

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers a few topics related to the South African segment global apple value chain and the dominant commercial (white) apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley who participated in this study. This chapter first discusses the three-tiered (private, public and social) governance model of the apple value chain, both at an international and local level. This governance model needs to be unpacked as it has a direct impact on the outcomes of the apple farmers who participated in this study. It shows the direct application of the three-tiered governance model in the apple value chain, as outlined by some GC scholars (Alford, 2020; Bair, 2017; Gereffi and Lee, 2016). This section is followed by a brief description (that is accompanied by some diagrams) of certain aspects of the apple industry in South Africa. This chapter then discusses the position of the selected white apple producers (from the Langkloof Valley) who were engaged in the apple value chain in question, followed by a descriptive analysis of these six white-owned organizations. This study only covers six white-owned apple farms because the apple industry in the Langkloof Valley is dominated by a few large-scale commercial farms.

Three of these six organizations covered in this study are engaged in the production, packaging and exporting of apples, whilst the other three organizations are specialist packhouses. This chapter provides a brief analysis of how the white apple farms in this study used strategic partnerships to survive and compete in the global apple value chain. The last part of this chapter unpacks the economic upgrading experiences of the established large-scale white apple farmers (who participated in this study) from the Langkloof Valley to show how economic class determines outcomes in the global apple value chain. Selwyn and Leyden (2022) argue that profit-driven GCs are oligopolistic; as such, this chapter seeks to validate this contention by showing how the apple industry in the Langkloof Valley is dominated by large-scale, white-owned apple farms whose financial capacity (among other forms of capital) influences their economic upgrading trajectories. The outcomes of this study partly answer the question of whether a profit-driven trading arrangement such as the global apple value chain produces inclusive development.

## 5.2 GOVERNANCE IN THE APPLE VALUE CHAIN

Governance plays a major role in determining the outcomes of participants along GCs. The global apple value chain, which the apple farms in this study are a part of, is governed through three centres of power, which include private, public and social stakeholders (Alford, 2020). Private governance in the global apple value chain is buyer-driven with arm's-length market forms of coordination, meaning that supermarkets determine the nature of production and distribution along this GC. Mr Kobus Van Tonder, the product manager at Kloof Fruit Company, describes the trade relationship with global supermarkets:

> You must remember, the supermarkets overseas call the shots. They set the price, and we must accept; otherwise, they will get fruit from elsewhere. There's very little bargaining room for us farmers. The fruit is sold on a fixed-price basis. We take what we can get. Remember, their currencies on that side are stronger than our rand, so they know we are competing for shelf space in their stores. Therefore, when you are dealing with those supermarkets, you must do everything at a higher standard. I am talking about growing, picking, packing, and even storage must be of a high standard. If we pack the wrong fruit, the buyer will send a claim to us. That is why our orchards and packhouses are closely monitored because we cannot afford penalties from our overseas buyers. (07/05/2019).

As noted in the statement above, the global apple value chain is primarily driven by global supermarkets; hence, in GC terminology, this type of governance is known as buyer-driven governance with arm's length market coordination. This is due to the distant trade relations between the global supermarkets and the apple farmers, which are governed through product quality and price (Sturgeon, 2009). Exporting marketing agents play a governing role in the South African segment of the global apple value chain, as they mediate the trade relationship between the global supermarkets and the apple farmers. These agents study global consumer trends, identify buyers, and communicate their product specifications (among other requirements) to the apple farmers. This GC is also governed by public and social stakeholders. At the international level, the Bretton Woods institutions set the deregulated global trading rules that allow trade between global supermarkets and apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley, as the South African government has fully adopted neoliberal trading policies (Bond, 2000). For South African apple farmers to export their apples, they need to meet product and labour standards, hence, accreditation plays a crucial role in the production processes.

Accreditation is a third-party attestation related to a conformity assessment body (such as a certification body, inspection body or laboratory) conveying a formal demonstration of its competence to conduct specific conformity assessment tasks (such as certification, inspection and testing) (Barrientos and Visser, 2012). This third-party attestation involves the increasing role of collective or social power working in collaboration with institutional or public power to enforce international export standards (Barrientos and Visser, 2012). Global GAP is the most internationally recognized certification in agri-food value chains. Global GAP is a trademark and a set of standards for good agricultural practices. Although it was established in the 1990s, Global GAP has become one of the most visible private standards in global agricultural trade and has become mandatory for producers to access lucrative overseas markets (Barrientos and Visser, 2012).

Certification is based on food safety, traceability, environmental sustainability and worker occupational health (Barrientos and Visser, 2012). Supermarkets and international buyers often hire private (international or local) accreditation firms to conduct audits on farms and packhouses to ensure that they meet the desired product quality standards. in this study, the farmers do not mention any of the private accreditation firms. From the state's side, the Perishable Products Export Control Board (PPECB) Act (9 of 1983), the PPECB is responsible for the control of perishable products intended for export from the Republic of South Africa (DAFF, 2020). This mainly involves the control of the cold chain (including the shipping process) (DAFF, 2020). PPECB also acts as a government "assignee" in terms of the Agricultural Products Standards (APS) Act (119 of 1990) and is responsible for the control over the sale and export of agricultural and related products (DAFF, 2020).

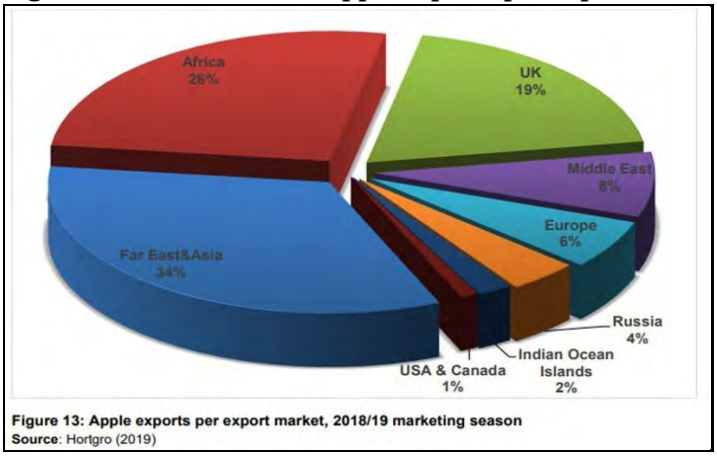
When producers have passed the accreditation process, the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) issues the applicable phytosanitary certificates (DAFF, 2020). These standards influence the meticulous production processes on the apple farms (in this study) from the Langkloof Valley. Apple producers who want to export their apples enlist the services of the Sustainability Initiative of South Africa (SIZA) to conduct labour audits. SIZA was established in 2008 to monitor compliance and best practices on deciduous fruit farms (SIZA, 2016). SIZA members must conduct audits to ensure that the apple farmers comply with South African labour legislation (SIZA, 2016). The government also conducts its own labour standards assessments. According to South African legislation, the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL) is responsible for monitoring and enforcement of labour laws.

The unit of the DEL tasked with monitoring and inspections is the Inspection and Enforcement Services unit. It is responsible for enforcing compliance with the Acts Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), Employment Equity Act (EEA), Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA), and Skills Development Act (SDA) (Visser and Ferrer, 2015). The Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) monitors compliance with labour legislation and resolves workplace disputes such as unfair disputes (Benjamin, 2011). Nevertheless, even though it operates in terms of a budgetary allocation from the DEL, the CCMA operates as an "independent statutory body" (Benjamin, 2011). Civil society organizations, which also form part of social governance, also play a role in monitoring labour standards. Overall, there is a clear intersectionality among the three strands of governance in the global apple value chain. Nevertheless, it is important not to forget that the profit-making agenda remains a central driving force in GCs because for apples to be exported, the apple farmers from the Langkloof Valley (in this study) must meet the standards required (Davis et al., 2018).

## 5.3 THE APPLE INDUSTRY OF SOUTH AFRICA

Apples are one of the most important deciduous fruits grown in South Africa, taking into consideration their foreign exchange earnings, employment creation and linkages with support institutions (DAFF, 2020:4). The South African apple industry is export-oriented, with approximately half of the apples produced being absorbed by the export market. Most South African apples are sold in many northern hemisphere countries during their winter and spring seasons (DAFF, 2020:4). On average, 43% of the production is exported, 28% enters the domestic market and 29% is processed (WWF, 2016:2). Figure 5.1 shows South African apple exports, per export market, in the 2018/19 season (NAMC, 2019).

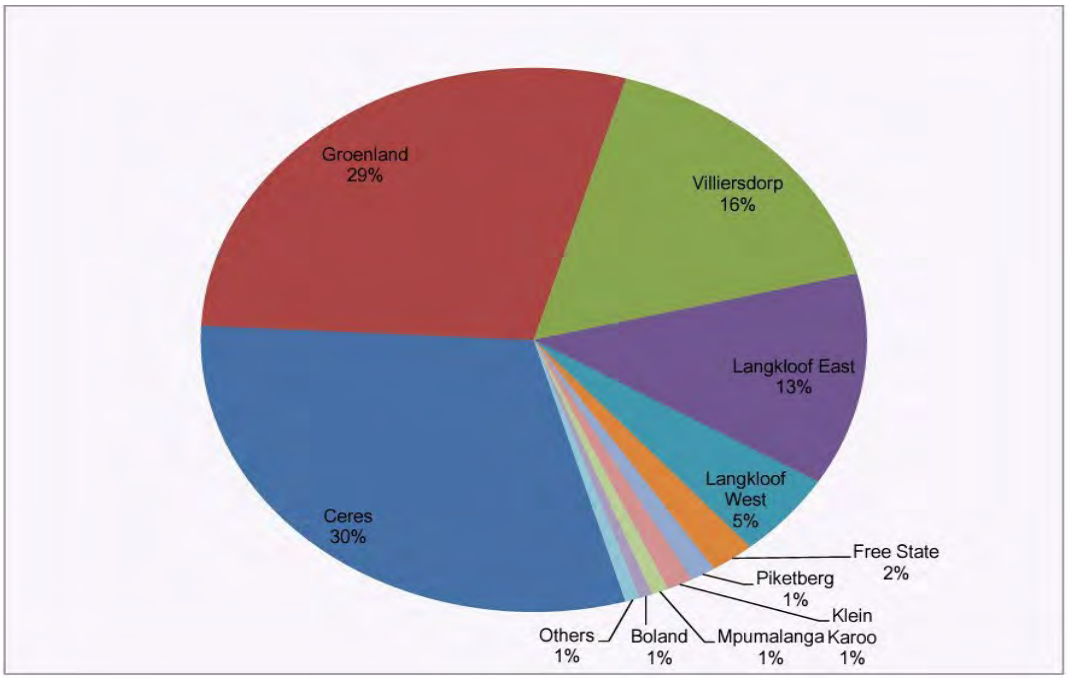
**Figure 5.1: South African apple exports per export market, 2018/19 marketing season**




Source: NAMC (2019:15).

The figure above shows that the top three export destinations for South African apples are the Far East and Asia (34%), Europe (including Russia and the United Kingdom) (29%), and Africa (26%). The industry operates in a deregulated environment where prices are determined by the market forces of demand and supply. In such a context, apple farmers are susceptible to the seasonality of price fluctuations. SLA scholars note that prices fluctuate according to seasons, and this induces the vulnerability of people, organizations and organizations (Carney et al., 1999). The bulk of the export destinations for South African apples have higher currencies, which places international buyers in a stronger bargaining position as local apple producers often concede to stringent buyer demands just to reach these lucrative markets. This has an impact on the voluntary governance deficits that result in precarious conditions for farm workers in the apple industry of South Africa (Visser and Alford, 2024). Using a Marxian approach, this thesis shows how the profit maximization strategies in the global apple value chain influence the voluntary governance deficits on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. South Africa's main apple-producing areas are Groenland, Ceres, Villiersdorp (all in the Western Cape) and the Langkloof Valley in the Eastern Cape (DAFF, 2020:5). The Western Cape accounts for more than half of all the apples produced in South Africa (DAFF, 2020:5). The Langkloof Valley is the largest apple producing region in the Eastern Cape. Figure 5.2 shows the apple-producing regions in South Africa in 2019.

**Figure 5.2: Apple-producing regions in South Africa in 2019**




Source: DAFF (2020:5)

## 5.4 PROFILES OF THE WHITE COMMERCIAL APPLE FARMS IN THIS STUDY

The apple industry of the Langkloof Valley is dominated by large-scale (white) agri-businesses, who, in addition to being bolstered by the state pre-1994, merged their assets in the early 1990s as a response to the removal of state support from the agricultural sector when the ANC government adopted neoliberal policies. Visser (2016) explains that the exposure to a highly competitive global agri-food value chain without state support compelled many (mostly white) farmers in South Africa to consolidate their assets to compete in these GCs.

### 5.4.1 Kloof Fruit Company

The Kloof Fruit Company is the largest fruit producer, packer and exporter in the Langkloof Valley. This company was established in Ceres (Western Cape) in the early 1900s and grew rapidly through forming strategic partnerships, building irrigation dams and introducing electronically powered machines (and technologies) in fruit production. The headquarters of this organization remain in Ceres, in the Western Cape, where its support functions (such as technical, administration, finance, human resources and marketing) are centralized. In 2005, Kloof Fruit Company expanded its production in the Langkloof Valley, where it purchased farming units and packhouses and started marketing its produce globally. Today, Kloof Fruit Company is one of the largest apple producers and exporters in South Africa, as it produces, distributes and markets 250,000 tons of fresh produce a year and employs 7,500 workers per season. Kloof Fruit Company owns fourteen farms (production units) that are spread throughout the Langkloof Valley. Kloof Fruit Company harvests 170,000 tons of fruit (apples, pears, nectarines, peaches, cherries and now blueberries) every year. The Kloof Fruit Company's range of apples includes Golden Delicious, Granny Smith, Royal Gala, Fuji, Braeburn and Pink Lady. Kloof Fruit Company has also expanded into vegetable production and export as well. Each production unit and packhouse has its management team, office staff, technicians and floor or orchard labourers (few permanent vs a large group of seasonal workers).

### 5.4.2 Fresh Orchards Incorporated

Fresh Orchards Incorporated is a fresh fruit producer, packer and exporter located in Misgund in the Langkloof Valley. This company was established in 2000 as an exporting agent, marketing and exporting fruit from the Langkloof Valley to different international markets. Over the years, the company merged with fruit producers and packers in the region (and other parts of South Africa and Namibia) to form a large-scale company owned by multiple partners.

Fresh Orchards Incorporated sources its fruit from its farms or those of its partners. Fresh Orchards Incorporated primarily produces and exports grapes, citrus, pears and apples. The company's range of apples includes Golden Delicious, Granny Smith, Starking and Top Red, Gala-types, Fuji varieties, Braeburn and Pink Lady/Cripps Pink and Sundowner/Cripps Red. Fresh Orchards Incorporated in the Langkloof Valley owns several farms and packhouses (number not disclosed), which have their unique organograms: supervisors (permanent), core staff (permanent) and seasonal staff (who constitute the majority).

### 5.4.3 Koukamma Vrugte

Koukamma Vrugte is a large-scale fruit producer based in Louterwater in the Langkloof Valley. This company was established in 1986 by the current owner, Mr Marnus Andre Liebenberg. Koukamma Vrugte specializes in the production and packaging of stone and pome fruits and has recently expanded to blueberries as well. The company utilizes the services of independent market agents to market and export its fruit. In 2002, Koukamma Vrugte partnered with AgriN22, one of South Africa's largest agricultural organizations known for exporting a myriad of agricultural commodities. Agri-N22 mainly farms tomatoes and avocados in the Limpopo Province, but also operates in the Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Gauteng, North-West, Mpumalanga and Namibia. Agri-N22 also grows mangoes, onions, dates, cherries, apples, pears, stone fruit, almonds and blueberries**.** It is worth noting that Mr Liebenberg's wife, Maria Liebenberg, is from the Van Der Kamp family, which owns Agri-N22; hence, the partnership materialized as both companies stand to benefit from the deal because they offer unique contributions. Koukamma Vrugte owns several deciduous fruit farms and packhouses (number not disclosed) throughout the Langkloof Valley. Each of these farms has unique organograms consisting of managers, technicians, office staff, supervisors, core permanent staff and a large seasonal labour force.

### 5.4.4 Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd

Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd is a fruit packing organization based in Louterwater in the Langkloof Valley. Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd was established in 1962 by twelve farmers as a cool room cooperative, which was later (1960) upgraded into a fully-fledged joint packing facility. The main varieties in those years were Jonathan, Ohenimuri, Starking, Golden Delicious, Winter Pearmain, Granny Smith and York Imperial.

Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd functioned as a cooperative until 1998, when it was transformed into a public company before transforming into a private company in 2007. Today, Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd has 27 shareholders, who are family members of the initial 12 founders of the organization. Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd packs the following apple range: Golden Delicious, Granny Smith, Starking, Starkrimson, Top Red, and African Carmine. The management of Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd consists of a board of directors consisting of six directors, the general manager, the management team, supervisors, 16 permanent workers, and 280-360 seasonal or short-term workers. The marketing of the fruit from Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd is done by independent export agents (names not disclosed).

### 5.4.5 Vrugteland Pakkers

Vrugteland Pakkers is a fruit packhouse based in Joubertina in the Langkloof Valley. This organization was established in 2009 by Mr Jonathan Van Der Linde after selling his family farms in the region. The ownership structure of Vrugteland Pakkers is not entirely clear, as the owner indicated some strategic partnerships but did not go into detail about this. Vrugteland Pakkers packages apples and pears for local producers in the Langkloof Valley. They are not responsible for marketing the fruit as this is done by marketing agents. Most packhouses traditionally have a management structure consisting of a general manager, a packhouse manager and supervisors. At Vrugteland Pakkers, however, Mr Jonathan Van Der Linde and his wife (name not disclosed) occupy these roles interchangeably, except for the supervisory role, which is occupied by two permanent workers in the packhouse. The rest of the workers (number not disclosed) at Vrugteland Pakkers are employed on seasonal contracts. Vrugteland Pakkers is a small organization compared to other packhouses in the Langkloof Valley and packs apples and pears for eight smaller farmers (in the region) who do not have packhouses. Unlike other large packhouses in the region, Vrugteland Pakkers did not have advanced cold storage facilities (during the time of the interviews with the owner, Mr Jonathan Van Der Linde) that could preserve fruit for long periods. Vrugteland Pakkers also hires the services of marketing agents to market apples and pears on behalf of producers to international buyers.
Vrugteland Pakkers, however, does its marketing for the local markets.

### 5.4.6 Vars Vallei Pak

Vars Vallei Pak is an apple and pear packing company located in Krakeel River in the Langkloof Valley.

This packhouse was established by Mr Raymond Roos-Burger in 2009, who started as a fruit trader before building Vars Vallei Pak. The organization has grown to such an extent that it has advanced technologies to boost efficiency and store fruits for extended periods. Vars Vallei Pak packs and stores apples and pears for smaller farms and the land reform farms (in the region) that do not have packhouses. Vars Vallei Pak does not market the fruit for its clients but rather passes this responsibility on to marketing agents. Vars Vallei Pak is also a small organization, and its management structure consists of the owner (and some strategic partnerships), a few managers overseeing different divisions in the organization and supervisors on the packhouse floor. Vars Vallei Pak employs four permanent workers, and the rest are seasonal workers. The number of seasonal workers employed at Vars Vallei Pak is determined by the volume of the harvest.

## 5.5 FORMING STRATEGIC LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

The profiles of the six white apple farms that participated in this study reveal several points that are related to certain themes in the literature and the broader research question as well. Before drawing the linkages between the data and the themes in the literature about white apple farms that participated in this study, it is worth highlighting the central research question informing this study. The central research question informing this study is whether a profit-driven capitalist trading arrangement such as a GC can facilitate inclusive economic and social development for participants from developing countries when the very notion of profit accumulation does not create an equitable distribution. This research question seeks to interrogate the assumption dominating neoliberal-inspired GC scholars and Bretton Woods institutions that perceive GC as channels for facilitating economic and social upgrading for participants from developing countries.

It is for this reason that this study seeks to determine whether integrating into the global apple value chain has resulted in economic and social upgrading outcomes for all the selected apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley who were engaged in this GC. This study has shown that white apple farms in the Langkloof Valley occupy larger plots of land (compared to land reform farms) and have formed large-scale organizations through the formation of strategic partnerships. Although not a representative sample of the entire apple industry in the region, this result correlates with the literature that indicates that white agribusiness dominates agri-food value chains in South Africa (Greenberg, 2013b, Greenberg, 2017; Sihlobo, 2023).

Pre-1994, Bekker et al.'s (1982) study (though not representative) also showed that white farmers dominated the fruit industry in the Langkloof Valley. The dominance of white farmers in the South African agricultural sector is a result of state policies that favoured and invested in white agri-business pre-1994 (Davenport and Hunt, 1974; Vink and Van Rooyen, 2009). Post-1994, the state fully adopted neoliberal policies and retracted its support from the agricultural sector, as such white agri-business consolidated and formed agricultural conglomerates which can survive highly competitive global agri-food value chains that are dominated by global supermarkets (Greenberg, 2013b). Participating in a global agri-food value chain requires vast amounts of money, which farmers in this study secured (largely) through the formation of strategic business partnerships, among other strategies. Mr Johan Groenewald-Sterling, the chief executive officer (CEO) at Fresh Orchards Incorporated, emphasised this point:

> Commercial fruit farming does not lend itself to small-scale farming. It is all about economies of scale. Gone are the days of a single farmer owning a small plot of land and selling some fruit through the help of the government. Today, fruit farming, especially the export business, needs a lot of money. That is why you'll see that we are all surviving through partnerships and shareholding schemes in this industry. I can't think of a single organization here in the Langkloof Valley that is owned by a single person and exports alone. You can't. You need strategic partnerships to farm, pack and export your fruit. You see, we here at Fresh Orchards Incorporated were a marketing agent but evolved into production and packhouses. All of this is made possible by partnerships, and it increases our position in the value chain. (08/05/2019).

The statement above shows how white apple farmers (in this study) used social capital (as per the SLA definition) to consolidate their assets to survive in the global apple value chain. Kloof Fruit Company, for example, started as a family farming business in the Western Cape but evolved to owning fourteen farms (with packhouses) in the Langkloof Valley. This was done by mobilizing their different forms of capital and using strategic partnerships to expand their business. The same goes for Fresh Orchards Incorporated, which started as an export agent and has evolved into production and packhouses as well. These achievements were made possible through strategic partnerships. Similarly, Koukamma Vrugte started as a family farm, and the owner, Mr Marnus Andre Liebenberg, bought more farms through strategic partnerships with his wife's family business, Agri-N22, which is one of the biggest agricultural enterprises in South Africa.

Even the businesses that focus on packing and storing of apples, such as Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd, Vars Vallei Pak and Vrugteland Pakkers have grown and continue to function through strategic partnerships with industry stakeholders. The apple farmers who participated in this study are also part of the industry association, which helps them in the global apple value chain. This point is emphasised by Mr Kobus Van Tonder, the product manager at Kloof Fruit Company:

> We are involved in numerous associations, such as Hortgro, the Langkloof farming association, the Eastern Cape Business Industrial, and AgriSA. These associations have no financial input on our business. What they do, however, is that they provide us with good information regarding the markets, cultivation and which varieties to plant, the export levies in different markets overseas, and the specific time slots for when to export our produce in specific markets. So, we need to be connected to certain bodies in this industry. (07/05/2019).

The use of social capital (as per the SLA definition) through the formation of these partnerships by the selected apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley speaks to the notion of clustering and strategic coupling (in the production segment of GCs) that was highlighted by GC scholars as a way of engaging, upgrading and capturing a higher profit share in GCs (Coe et al., 2004; Gereffi and Lee, 2016; Giuliani et al., 2005; Hassink, 2021; Hess, 2018:4; Trienekens and van Dijk, 2011; Yeung, 2009). Regardless of the consolidation or formation of strategic partnerships by the selected apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley, this has not reduced the gap between them and the global supermarkets, as the nature of the buyer driven global apple value chain with market forms of coordination is driven purely on product quality and price (among other factors). Willoughby and Gore (2018) emphasised that global agri-food chains are dominated by global supermarkets that are in a constant race to the bottom to appropriate a larger share of the profit distribution along the global apple value chain. This means that consolidation of assets helps a certain class of apple producers (in this study) to form large-scale businesses that enable them to trade in the global apple value chain but remain in a subordinated position of price takers to the global supermarkets who are price makers. In the context of the global apple value chain, the selected apple farmers from the Langkloof Valley are vulnerable because of pressures from the global supermarkets. From an SLA perspective, people or institutions in vulnerable contexts utilize various forms of capital to sustain their livelihoods. The apple farmers in this study utilized various forms of capital to reach the point of participating in the global apple value chain.

Briefly looking at the profiles of the white apple farms discussed in the previous section of this chapter, it is evident that the securing of land (which falls under natural capital) pre- and post-1994 was a key factor. Interestingly, pre-1994, colonialism and apartheid dispossessed indigenous people from their land and invested in the sector by providing vast tracts of arable land to Whites (Ngcukaitobi, 2021). After land dispossession, when the economy was in full swing during the colonial and apartheid eras, the purchase of land followed market prices, whilst the indigenous people were forced to the homelands, which were not as arable and had smaller tracts of land compared to whites (Ngcukaitobi, 2021). Post-1994, the government, through its market-based 'willing buyer-willing seller' approach to land reform, has retained the vast portions of land in the hands of white farmers as few are willing to sell their land and mostly white farmers can afford it when land is sold (Ngcukaitobi, 2021).

Land reform grants were not enough to secure vast tracts of land, hence the formation of 'Trusts' by beneficiaries to purchase small portions of land (Cliffe, 2000; Lahiff, 2002; Greenberg, 2013b). In addition to land, social capital also played a big role in helping the apple farmers in this study to secure more land and build their businesses through the formation of partnerships. The apple farmers in this study also had access to financial capital through accessing their finances, finances from partners, and loans from banks who could hold their land as collateral. ECSECC (2017:53) showed that in the Koukamma municipality, whites had higher per capita incomes than coloureds and blacks, which is also a legacy of colonialism and apartheid. It is, therefore, not a stretch to connect the racial income inequalities to evident economic disparities between large-scale white apple farms and land reform beneficiaries (in this study) in the Langkloof Valley.

Having access to vast reserves of financial capital also enables the apple farmers in this study to purchase physical capital (infrastructure) and employ human capital in the form of workers who are divided into a small core of permanently employed skilled, semi-skilled workers and a large group of seasonal workers. The combination of these various forms of capital by the apple farmers (in this study) agrees with the assertions of the SLA argues that people or organizations in vulnerable contexts mobilize the assets at their disposal to sustain their livelihoods or those of their organizations (DFID, 1999; Scoones, 1998). The mobilization of assets and consolidation by the apple farms (in this study) transformed them into large-scale commercial farms that export apples to foreign markets.

Participating in the global apple value chain requires vast amounts of diverse forms of capital, hence, scholars such as Selwyn and Leyden (2022) argue that GCs cater to big business. These scholars question the notion of inclusive development when participating in GC requires vast amounts of capital. One may argue that the formation of clusters has enabled apple farms (in this study) to participate in the global apple value chain, however, these clusters were informed by both race and economic class, which favoured the white farmers in this study. That is why Vicol et al. (2019) criticized the GPN 2.0 for failing to consider the various dynamics in the geographical territories where the clusters are located, as in the context of the Langkloof Valley, the apple production clusters mostly favoured white apple farmers who were able to consolidate and export apples to foreign markets. The socio-economic conditions in a society that has been defined through colonialism, apartheid and capitalism cannot ignore class analysis in the sphere of social reproduction outside the workplace as it is connected to the sphere of production and trade exchange in the global apple value chain as well.

Although the white apple farms in this study were able to grow their businesses by consolidating their assets, this opportunity is not open to the large numbers of black and coloured people residing in the Langkloof Valley because ECSECC (2017) showed that these two population groups have low levels of income compared to whites. Selwyn (2017) contends that the neoliberal global capitalist trading channel, such as GCs, benefits monopolies and large-scale businesses, even though at varying degrees (depending on locality, among other factors). The neoliberal assumption that GC can facilitate inclusive development is a little suspect at this point. Scholars such as Smith (2016) and Suwandi (2019) even label GCs as imperialist in that they allow multinational companies (such as global supermarkets in the global apple value chain) to exploit and dominate their trading partners in developing countries. Overall, it is evident that in a high-stakes environment such as the global apple value chain, the white commercial apple farms (in this study) managed to engage in this GC through the formation of strategic partnerships and mobilising various forms of capital.

## 5.6 GOVERNANCE AND ECONOMIC UPGRADING

Mainstream GC (especially the contemporary GCC and GVC) asserts that economic upgrading trajectories of supplier firms in GCs are determined by their governance model and the formation of clusters and strategic partnerships at the supplier base of GCs (Coe and Yeung, 2015; Giuliani et al., 2005; Humphrey and Schmitz, 2002b).

Supplier firms in *arm's-length market relations* often experience product, process and functional upgrading but often rely on their resources to upgrade and can be derailed by economic and political forces (Bair and Gereffi, 2001). This study has shown that the global apple value chain is governed through *arm's length trading relations* between global supermarkets and the apple producers from the Langkloof Valley.

### 5.6.1 Process Upgrading

Process upgrading can be defined as the upgrading of the technology and work organization to boost productivity and reduce costs (Humphrey and Schmitz, 2002a:1020). The apple producers in the Langkloof Valley have all upgraded their operations, as it is the only way to meet the stringent buyer demands and keep up with the intense competition from other producers. Apple producers in the Langkloof Valley are constantly upgrading their technology and work organization processes to boost their productivity and save costs. Mr Kobus Van Tonder, the product manager at Kloof Fruit Company, explains the drive behind upgrading their processes:

> You must remember that all the systems in our business are designed and implemented to get a better product, be more productive, and be better than our competitors. Input costs are going up every year, but the price of our apples is not going up fast enough. Say, for instance, when the wages go up by 7% and electricity goes up by 12%, you can't go to Tesco [a large British multinational groceries and general merchandise retailer headquartered in the United Kingdom] and say that you want a higher percentage for your fruit. So, the systems that we put in place are designed to keep input costs at bay. Our innovation is driven by this cost-saving logic. For example, in the cold rooms, there is a program called 'Cold Store', which centralizes the data from activities in all our packhouses and orchards. By centralising the system and archiving the data, we are investing intellectual capital in the business to upgrade our various systems and processes. I can monitor the activities in the cold rooms on my phone. (07/05/2019).

The statement above shows that buyers' demands are one of the main drivers of process upgrading on apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. This statement is further supported by Mr Johan Groenewald-Sterling, the director of Fresh Orchards Incorporated (Langkloof Valley):

> I know now everyone is going crazy for the 'Fourth Industrial Revolution'. I think it is overrated. Horticulture has been science-driven from the onset, and technological advancement goes hand in hand with scientific research.

> Technological advancements in our farms are necessary when competing with producers from other countries. For example, our fruit goes to markets such as Russia, Northern Europe, the Middle East, and China. Chile and New Zealand are our direct competitors from the Southern Hemisphere for these markets. Those guys typically move into these markets in the same time slots as us. To make our products more appealing, we provide top-quality apples at short lead times at the lowest cost possible. That is why we have been mechanizing and using Information Technology to help us boost productivity, whilst keeping costs at an all-time low. (08/05/2019).

Process upgrading is, therefore, a necessity for producers to keep up with the demands of international buyers. All the farmers who participated in this study indicated that their organizations have undergone various forms of process upgrading to remain competitive in global agri-food chains. Although orchards are scientifically and technologically driven, they are not as mechanized as the packhouses. The packhouses in this study are near replicas of Henry Ford's assembly line, where the commodity is assembled as it moves from one station to the next via an automated conveyor belt. In the packhouses, the apples move (via automated machines) from one station to the next until they reach the CA (Controlled Atmosphere) rooms where they are stored for the export market. Historically, packhouses hired a large pool of women (employed on seasonal employment contracts) who handled the apples throughout the packhouse assembly line, however, technological advances in these packhouses drastically reduced the number of employees in packhouses. The apple farmers in this study collectively agreed that the adoption of various technologies in their packhouses has boosted productivity and reduced errors and labour costs as well. Mr Jannie Hendrick Wiese, the general manager at Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd, explained the logic behind process upgrades in their packhouse:

> We are staying in touch with technological developments in the fruit packing industry. We have advanced to highly sophisticated electronic and optic fruit-grading equipment to grade fruit according to colour, defects and size. In 2014, we installed electromechanical bin infeed, tipping and sorting equipment. If we did not adopt the new technology in our packhouse, we would be left behind by the competitors. (09/05/2019).

Process upgrading is a necessity for apple producers to survive the export markets. In this study, study, only one small packhouse, Vrugteland Pakkers, did not have CA rooms, which forced them to dispatch apples after packing or hire space from other packhouses in the region.

Mr Jonathan Van Der Linde, the owner of Vrugteland Pakkers, described this situation as follows:

> I don't have cold rooms yet. I am using external cold rooms, from Kloof Fruit Company and other bigger packhouses. I rent their cold rooms, and then pull the fruit for packing and take them back to the cold room. The next project for me here is building a cold room. It is so expensive. To build a cold-room facility in a packhouse costs about R4 000 000. However, with that facility, I can pack a thousand bins in such a cold room. I usually rent out five to six Controlled-Atmosphere (CA) cold rooms per year. It costs R350 000 to rent a space for one bin for three months in a cold room. Having a cold room could save so much money, and we could gain more contracts from local apple farmers who cannot afford the services of big guys like Kloof Fruit Company.
> We are currently in the process of building a cold room here. (10/05/2019).

Picture 5.1 shows the construction of the cold storage facilities at Vrugteland Pakkers in 2020.

**Picture 5.1: Construction of cold storage facilities at Vrugteland Pakkers in 2020**

Source: Facebook (2021n).

The picture above shows the construction of a CA room at Vrugteland Pakkers in Joubertina. This is a classic example of process upgrading at Vrugteland Pakkers. Process upgrading by apple producers in the Langkloof Valley is driven by the stringent demands of international buyers and Global GAP standards, which are a prerequisite for exporting apples. The outsourcing of production by multinational companies to the global South is driven by a cost-reduction strategy (Smith, 2016). Marx (1967) argued that the secret of capitalist profit was the capitalists' ability to reap a greater portion of value from workers' labour power (surplus value) than the cost of its initial purchase.

The cost of labour power in the global North is much higher than in the global South, which is why multinational companies outsource production to the global South. The South African Rand is far lower than the currencies of economies in the global North, which is why it is a preferred supply destination by international buyers. South Africa has also proven itself as a credible exporter of quality apples at low prices (DAFF, 2020). Another benefit of outsourcing production to the global South is that their peak season takes place during the off-season in the global North. Producers in the global South can produce apples during the off-season at far lower prices than their global North counterparts.

Essentially, all the apple farms covered in this study experienced process upgrading, as it is a prerequisite for staying competitive and meeting the demands of global supermarkets in the global apple value chain. Although process upgrading is influenced by the international markets, apple producers in this study still had to mobilize different forms of capital to upgrade the processes on their farms. Apple producers in the Langkloof Valley have utilized their network of connections and industry partners to upgrade their processes to meet international demands. This outcome shows there is some truth to the point made by some GC scholars who contend that the formation of clusters and strategic partnerships helps suppliers' economic upgrading (Coe and Yeung, 2015; Giuliani et al., 2005). This section, however, has shown that process upgrading for the apple farmers (in this study) was not generalized but depended on the resources available to the farm.

### 5.6.2 Product Upgrading

Product upgrading can be described as the improvement of product quality and diverse product offerings to meet diverse customer preferences (Humphrey and Schmitz, 2002a:1020). Product upgrading usually stems from changes in customer preferences or the desire for higher value added, higher quality, and consequently more profitable product offerings on the side of the producers. The global apple value chain is market-driven, which means that producers export apples that are in demand in the international markets. Findings from this study show a direct causal relationship between process and product upgrading on the apple farms that participated in this study. Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd, for example, started its operations in 1962 with only 17.5 tons of apples. The main varieties in those years were Jonathan, Ohenimuri, Starking, Golden Delicious, Winter Pearmain, Granny Smith and York Imperial. Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd expanded its cold store facilities with six additional regular atmosphere cold rooms.

In 1983, Packing Fresh Pty Ltd built its first CA room and has subsequently added seven more CA rooms over the years to keep up with increasing crop volumes and to gain more flexibility about marketing options. Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd has managed to stay in touch with technological developments within the fruit packing industry and, as a result, has advanced its grading equipment to highly sophisticated electronic and optic fruit grading equipment. In 2009, Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd installed advanced electronic and optical equipment to grade fruit according to colour, defects and size with immense accuracy. In 2014, Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd also installed technologically advanced electro-mechanical bin infeed, tipping and sorting equipment. These different types of process upgrades have not only increased product volumes, but they have also expanded the offering of apple varieties, which include Braeburn, Cripps' Pink / Pink Lady, Fuji, Royal Gala, Golden Delicious, Granny Smith, Starking, Starkrimson, Top Red, and African Carmine. International market demands for additional apple varieties have been the main driver of process upgrading on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. Mr Raymond Roos-Burger, the owner of Vars Vallei Pak, explained how process upgrading enabled their company to pack different apple varieties:

> Well, I started with one pack line, and now I have got two pack lines. I also started without any cold rooms, and now I have built a couple of pre-cooling tunnels. Also, I built a regular atmosphere (RA) cold room for bins, as well. This growth has been influenced by the growth in my businesses. Every year, I have more and more producers coming to use my packing facilities because word spreads around that my services are good. The export company informs us about the type of fruit variety and the timing of the packing. For example, they can tell us to delay packing a specific variety for a certain period, and I will put the fruit in the CA rooms until such a time when the market demand for it increases. The more the volume increases, the more pressure we have to upgrade our machines. We also have fruit grading and sorting technology that will optimize your packhouse performance. (11/05/2019).

Apple farms in the Langkloof Valley produce and pack similar apple varieties because they are mostly exporting to the same international markets. This does not mean that these apple farms have similar financial capital and production capacity, hence, some farmers could not plant or pack all the apple varieties demanded by the markets.

Vrugteland Pakkers, for example, was smaller than the other packhouses in the region, and this limited the volume and the varieties of apples they could pack for international markets. Mr Jonathan Van Der Linde, the owner of Vrugteland Pakkers, explained why his packhouse was only packing one apple variety:

> We are currently packing Pink Ladies, so I am packing 50-100% colour. So, each packer will have two boxes, one with a high colour and one with a low colour, and then at the back, that is only Class One. Then we also pack a Class Two as well. So, each packer must differentiate between three classes of fruit as well. This work is quite challenging. But we would like to get cameras, but those are expensive. We do not have the cameras yet. When we have the right technology and the CA rooms, we can pack more varieties. (10/05/2019).

The statement above shows that economies of scale are necessary for upgrading production processes and product offerings in the global apple value chain. This shows there is great pressure on apple farmers to upgrade their processes and apple varieties, which is why smaller organizations such as Vrugteland Pakkers were in the process of upgrading their operations to pack more apple varieties. All the farmers who participated in this study indicated that they upgraded (or were upgrading) their processes and product offerings (varieties).

### 5.6.3 Functional Upgrading

Functional upgrading takes place when firms enter more profitable value-added activities higher up in the value chain (Humphrey and Schmitz, 2002a:1020). The apple producers who participated in this study experienced various forms of functional upgrading. Vrugteland Pakkers, for example, started as a family farm that produced apples for export before becoming a packhouse. Mr Jonathan Van Der Linde, the owner of Vrugteland Pakkers, explained this upgrading as follows:

> I have been farming all my life. We used to produce apples and pears on the farm. I farmed for 15 years with my dad, but farming is expensive, from the packing material to diesel, and so on. Ten years ago, I sold my farm. It was a small farm, and being a small farmer in the fruit export industry is tough. I decided to start a packhouse because I realised that several independent (smaller) farms in the Langkloof Valley needed their fruit to be packed. I saw this gap and opened the packhouse. I am packing for seven or eight smaller farmers who do not have any packhouses. (10/05/2019).

Vrugteland Pakkers markets apples destined for the local markets themselves but enlists the services of export marketing agents for the apples destined for international markets. Mr Jonathan Van Der Linde, the owner of Vrugteland Pakkers described this process as follows:

> I only deal directly with municipal buyers. I do the marketing myself for local markets. I used to send a lot of apples to the municipal markets, like Johannesburg, and so on. But I am not doing that anymore, as I was not seeing any great return in profit.
>
> Now, I am dealing with Woolworths, and Pick n Pay. SAFPRO does the marketing and deals with the clients overseas. (10/05/2019).

Vrugteland Pakkers experienced functional upgrading from apple farming to becoming an established packhouse and marketing apples locally. It does, however, enlist the services of export marketing agents for apples that are destined for overseas markets. The most profitable segment of the South African segment of the global apple value chain is occupied by marketers and marketing export agents. The objective of most apple producers is to cut out intermediaries and take on all the production, packaging and marketing functions. This undertaking requires vast amounts of financial resources. In this study, only Kloof Fruit Company and Fresh Orchards Incorporated produced, packaged and marketed their apples in overseas markets.

Kloof Fruit Company was initially established in the Western Cape and moved into the Langkloof Valley, where they bought fourteen farms. Kloof Fruit Company developed orchards and packhouses in the Langkloof Valley whilst also establishing a marketing division in Ceres in the Western Cape. These developments undertaken by Kloof Fruit Company signify functional upgrading. Mr Dawid Koos Van Zyl, the marketing manager at Kloof Fruit Company in Ceres, explained the benefits of having an in-house marketing division:

> This marketing division in Ceres is responsible for marketing all the fruit and vegetables produced and packed from our units both in the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape. You see, we are one of the few organizations in our industry that are in control of most of the movement of our apples. We do our own production, packing, cold storage and marketing. In this way, we are cutting out the middlemen, who are quite expensive. Smaller producers usually focus on either production or packing and storage and hire service providers for other value chain activities. We own most of our supply chain, which puts us in a leadership position. We are blessed to have investors and partners who understand this vision, and that's why we remain one of the top apple exporters in the country. (01/09/2022).

Fresh Orchards Incorporated started as a marketing agent and expanded (through mergers and acquisitions) to the production and packing of fruit. These strategic manoeuvres by Fresh Orchards Incorporated are a clear example of functional upgrading. Mr Johan Groenewald Sterling, the director of Fresh Orchards Incorporated, explained why they partner with certain companies:

> We plant and pack fruit for export, and our mother company does the marketing for export markets. We also do business with one or two independent companies. To avoid doing all the work, Fresh Orchards Incorporated also decided to invest shares in companies that service specific markets. For example, we could have a 50% shareholding in a company that specializes in the Eastern European and Russian markets. In this industry, you need a lot of fruit and a footprint, so we decided to buy shares in those specific companies. We also have shares with a company that has a footprint in America and Canada, that is, North America, instead of doing it ourselves. (08/05/2019).

The securing of 50% shareholding in a firm located overseas is also a form of functional upgrading, which has increased the international footprint of Fresh Orchards Incorporated. The formation of strategic partnerships with overseas players in the global apple value chain correlates with the notion of strategic coupling that GPN 2.0 scholars touted as a pathway to economic upgrading for suppliers from developing countries (Hess, 2018; Yeung, 2009). Nonetheless, functional upgrading of this nature requires vast amounts of financial capital. This shows that agri-food value chains in South Africa are dominated by large-scale agribusinesses (Greenberg, 2017). Companies without the financial muscle of Kloof Fruit Company and Fresh Orchards Incorporated have utilized other pathways to achieve functional upgrading. Instead of hiring the services of packing facilities at a steep cost, these farmers decided to upgrade their position within the value chain and built packhouses with state-of-the-art technology. Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd initially had a marketing division but could not keep up with the costs and resorted to hiring the services of independent export marketing agents. Koukamma Vrugte took a different path to functional upgrading, as explained by its owner, Mr Marnus Andre Liebenberg:

> After I graduated from Stellenbosch, I came back to Langkloof to start farming in 1986. I bought my first farm in 1986, and three years later, I bought my father's farm, and then I bought six more farms.

> We built packhouses, and our company has grown over the years. Now, we are an export business, competing with farmers from countries like Chile for lucrative overseas markets. In 2002, my wife's family asked me to merge with their corporate business, which is Agri-N22, although it is a company on its own, with its shareholders. (11/05/2019).

The buying of farms and building packhouses are forms of functional upgrading. Koukamma Vrugte achieved functional upgrading through mergers and acquisitions, thus validating the importance of the formation of strategic partnerships and clusters for upgrading GCs (Giuliani, Pietrobelli and Rabellotti, 2005; Yeung, 2009; Hess, 2018). This company, however, does not market its fruit but hires the services of export marketing agents. Mr Marnus Andre Liebenberg, the owner of Koukamma Vrugte, explained why his company used the services of export agents:

> For the local markets, we use our internal marketing team. For the export markets, we use agents. I think an individual cannot supply all the supermarkets in Europe or wherever, Ireland, Middle East. You can't just supply one market; it is too risky. You have to attract different currencies. We have a trusting relationship with the exporters. I mean, every relationship is based on trust. If we do not have this, then the contract is worth nothing. The exporters do the marketing for us because they are marketing specialists, and then they take a six per cent commission. (11/05/2019).

Vars Vallei Pak took yet another route to achieving functional upgrading. Mr Raymond RoosBurger, the owner of Vars Vallei Pak, started as a small-time trader, securing apples from farms in the Langkloof Valley and selling them in different parts of the country. This business grew to such an extent that he decided to build a packhouse catering to the land reform beneficiaries who could not afford the services of the more established packhouses in the Langkloof Valley. Vars Vallei Pak markets the fruit on behalf of the beneficiaries for the local markets but hires the services of export marketing agents to market apples for international markets. Overall, the apple producers in this study achieved functional upgrading by accessing diverse pathways depending on the types of assets/capital available to them. This shows that upgrading in GCs is not homogenous but is largely determined by the economic class and positionality of a business within a particular value chain (Selwyn, 2017).

### 5.6.4 Intersectoral Upgrading

Intersectoral upgrading takes place when an organization enters a new value chain or industry using knowledge acquired in the previous value chain or industry (Humphrey and Schmitz, 2002a:1020). Apple producers in the Langkloof Valley indicated that they could not solely rely on producing apples, as they had the production technologies and networks to produce and penetrate other markets. Most of the apple farms (in this study) from the Langkloof Valley also produced and packed other fruits and vegetables to meet the diverse product demands of international buyers. For instance, Kloof Fruit Company produces a wide range of fruits and vegetables for international markets. Mr Kobus Van Tonder, the product manager at Kloof Fruit Company, briefly describes his organization's diverse offerings:

> Our Forelle, the blushed pear, is showing significant growth. We grow some of the finest Abate Fetel, a favourite among European consumers. A new range of exotic-tasting nectarine varieties has also been added to our product offerings. The stone fruit range also includes a wide range of plums, as well as some traditional South African peach varieties. We also produce onions, sweet potatoes and ordinary potatoes in the Western Cape for both the export and local markets. We have recently obtained exclusive rights from the Zaiger Group in the USA to grow and market a series of cherry cultivars because our farms are situated in mild regions. (07/05/2019).

Another interesting finding in this study was that there is a growing demand for blueberries in lucrative markets in the global North; as such, some of the farmers were in the process of growing and packing blueberries for these markets. Mr Kobus Van Tonder, the product manager at Kloof Fruit Company, described this process:

> What we did in the Langkloof is that we diversified the existing fruits that we produce, that is: apples, plums and pears. Recently, we needed a higher-value product in the Eastern Cape, and we identified a specific farm near Kareedouw with the perfect climate for blueberries. What influenced this new venture was that blueberries are now the new superfruit in the markets. The land dedicated to planting blueberries has been tested, and we found the soil, water and climate to be ideal. Although we are still at a trial stage, the results are looking promising. (07/05/2019).

Fresh Orchards Incorporated have diversified its product offerings to include pears (Bon Chretien and Forelle), citrus (soft citrus, lemons, grapefruit, and Valencias) and table grapes.

Koukamma Vrugte produces pears, blueberries and some stone fruit (peaches, nectarines, plums). This company has a partnership with Agri-N22, which is one of the biggest agribusinesses in South Africa. Agri-N22 farms are mainly in the Limpopo Province, where they produce highly sought-after tomatoes and avocados. Agri-N22 also grows mangoes, onions, dates, cherries, pears, stone fruit and almonds. At the time of this study, Koukamma Vrugte was also in the process of producing and packing blueberries. Mr Marnus Andre Liebenberg, the owner of Koukamma Vrugte, explained why his farm is entering into this venture:

> We are also now going into blueberries because there is a growing demand for them. consumers want to live healthily these days, and there is a great demand for healthy, chemical-free products. We are busy doing away with seasonal work, and that is why we are introducing blueberries into our product range, so we can pack throughout the year. At the moment, we pack nine months in the year, and there are three months that we are not packing. So, with the introduction of the blueberries, we can fill those three months, and the packers can work. (11/05/2019).

The farmers engaged in the production of blueberries indicated that the introduction of this commodity provides jobs for many farm workers who experience a period of unemployment after the apple harvesting season. It is worth noting that only the organizations that owned both orchards and packhouses were engaging in the production of blueberries. The packhouses in this study (Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd, Vrugteland Pakkers and Vars Vallei Pak) were not packing blueberries at the time of this study. Most of their intersectoral upgrading involves the inclusion of pears in addition to the apples which they traditionally pack. Vrugteland Pakkers were only packing apples at the time of the study. Another form of intersectoral upgrading that some of the apple farmers in this study achieved was through working with some food and beverage companies that purchase apples from the Langkloof Valley for their product offerings. Mr Raymond Roos-Burger, the owner of Vars Vallei Pak, briefly explained this process:

> We don’t waste any of our fruit, even the bruised ones. We send our bruised apples to an agro-processing plant here in the Eastern Cape. This company processes and converts our apples into different foods and beverages. Our business owns some shares in that company, which is why we send our bruised apples to them.
> (11/05/2019).

This study showed that Koukamma Vrugte followed the same practice mentioned in the statement above. Mr Marnus Andre Liebenberg, the owner of Koukamma Vrugte, described this process as follows:

> Most of our fruit is exported to overseas markets, and only a small percentage goes to the local markets. The badly bruised apples are bought by companies that use apple concentrate for fruit juices, ciders and alcohol [among other value-added products]. (11/05/2019).

This section of the chapter has shown that the large-scale white apple farms (in this study) achieved different types of economic upgrading by accessing diverse forms of capital. Social capital plays a central role in mobilizing the different types of capital that were utilized by the farmers who participated in this study. This links with the assertions made by various GC scholars that the formation of clusters and strategic partnerships helps suppliers in the global South to engage and upgrade in GCs (Gereffi and Lee, 2016; Hess, 2018; Yeung, 2009). The economic upgrading pathways of the apple farms in this study varied depending on their access to various forms of capital. In this case, economic class determines outcomes in GCs, hence, Selwyn and Leyden (2022) labelled GCs as oligopolistic and unequal.

## 5.7 CONCLUSION

Mainstream GC discourse touted the formation of clusters or strategic partnerships as the most ideal way for suppliers in the global South to upgrade their operations and positions within GCs. This chapter shows that the white apple farmers who participated in this study formed variegated forms of clusters and strategic partnerships as well, hence, they were able to experience different types of economic upgrading. Mainstream GC discourse contends that the economic upgrading pathways of supplier firms in GCs are largely determined by how GCs are coordinated. The global apple value chain is governed through arm's length market forms of coordination, and the apple farmers who participated in this study experienced process, product, functional and intersectoral upgrading. This economic dominance by large-scale white apple producers is a product of colonialism, apartheid, and their strategic business manoeuvres (consolidation) post-1994. Surviving the global apple value chain without state support warranted the formation of strategic partnerships. Global supermarkets are price makers and dominate transactions with apple farmers from the Langkloof Valley, who are price takers.

These joint ventures are necessary as the demands of global supermarkets require hefty financial investments. The race for profit in the global apple value chain necessitates the formation of large-scale organizations, thus validating Selwyn and Leyden's (2022) argument that GCs are oligopolistic and not inclusive. This chapter partly answers the question of whether profit-driven GCs produce inclusive development.

# CHAPTER SIX

# SPECTRES OF SHARECROPPING IN THE LANGKLOOF VALLEY

## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter unpacks and situates the issue of land reform in the Langkloof Valley within the global apple value chain context. To achieve this, four prominent land reform apple farms that are engaged in the global apple value chain are analysed. As established in the previous chapter, white apple farmers (who participated in this study) from the Langkloof Valley consolidated diverse forms of capital (at their disposal) to build large-scale organizations that have the necessary capacity to meet the demands of global supermarkets steering the global apple value chain. When taking this into account, the ensuing logical inquiry is how land reform beneficiaries, who are generally known to have minimal resources (Greenberg, 2013b), can participate in the global apple value chain. This chapter shows how land reform apple farms (who participated in this study) from the Langkloof Valley engaged in the global apple value chain through the assistance of the white apple farms discussed in the previous chapter.

The relationship between the white farmers and land reform farmers (who happen to be all coloured) is interesting because it resembles elements of sharecropping that were practised in South Africa in the 1800s. This chapter unpacks the correlation between the sharecropping dynamics of the 1800s and the new-age type sharecropping relationships between the white apple farmers and the coloured land reform apple farmers who participated in this study from the Langkloof Valley. The relationship between these two groups of farmers is analysed within the context of the global apple value chain to show its connection to the broader research question informing this study. This chapter shows that a profit-driven trading arrangement such as the global apple value chain does not produce inclusive developmental outcomes, as assumed by neoliberal-inspired mainstream GC (especially GCC and GVC) scholars and multilateral institutions such as the Bretton Woods Institutions.

## 6.2 WHITE FARMERS' PERSPECTIVES ON LAND REFORM

The skewed ownership of land dominated by white commercial farmers in the Langkloof is merely a continuation of a trend that started during the colonial era (Ngcukaitobi, 2021). The adoption of neo-liberal policies by the ANC government forced white farmers in South Africa to consolidate their assets to form large-scale conglomerates (Visser, 2016).

Therefore, despite the myriad land reform policies initiated by the ANC government after 1994, the deregulated global agri-food value chains have made it difficult for vulnerable small-scale farmers to compete. As such, the apple industry in the Langkloof Valley is dominated by large-scale agribusinesses with shared ownership schemes. The smaller producers only survive through partnerships with these conglomerates. Mr Johan Groenewald-Sterling, the CEO of Fresh Orchards Incorporated in the Langkloof Valley, clearly points this out:

> This industry does not lend itself to small-scale farming. We are involved in an export-driven industry, and so you have to be competitive. I mean, you have to compete internationally. It is such an expensive industry. You need economies of scale to stay competitive. As I said earlier, we have several farming units with packhouses, but I still consider us a small company (compared to organizations such as Kloof Fruit Company) in this game. That is why many land reform farms fail. In the Langkloof, the only land reform farms that were successful were put up by white commercial farmers. These land reform farms succeeded because of the partnerships with the more established white farmers around here. Capital is a big issue. (08/05/2019).

Although this study was not focused on land reform farms in the area, the interviews with white commercial farmers highlighted the importance of land reform. The statement by Mr Johan Groenewald-Sterling (above) summarized the sentiment of the white farmers who participated in this study. These farmers believed that successful land reform could only be realised through partnerships between established white commercial farmers and land reform beneficiaries. This sentiment echoes the assertion made by some scholars (such as Manenzhe et al., 2016; Terblanché, 2011) that successful land reform can only take place through partnerships with established private white farmers. Mr Kobus Van Tonder, the product manager at Kloof Fruit Company, briefly described his organization's relationship with two land reform apple farms in the Langkloof Valley:

> Kloof Fruit Company has two land reform farms, which own 100% of their hectares. I'm not sure if you know them, but the two BEE [Black Economic Empowerment] farms under Kloof Fruit Company are Kouakamma Nuwe Boere Trust and Langkloof Fresh. These land reform farms were also under the previous owner, but Kloof Fruit Company decided to take them over and be their mentors so they could continue. So, in total, there are 14 units [farms], 12 under Kloof Fruit Company and two land reform farms. (07/05/2019).

On the surface, the mentorship dynamic between the white commercial farmers and the land reform farms seems like a logical step for small producers to survive in a context of intense competition in the global apple value chain. Kepe and Hall (2017) cautioned that the land reform programme in South Africa is reproducing paternalistic relations that echo apartheid practices and represent the 'colonial present'. The statement by Mr Johan Groenewald-Sterling (the CEO of Fresh Orchards Incorporated) below shows the paternalistic attitude that many white farmers in the Langkloof Valley have towards the success of land reform farms in the region:

> There is a land reform farm here in the Langkloof called Progressiewe Boerdery. It is the biggest land reform farm in the Langkloof. They have commercial pods that have a huge footprint in the Langkloof and are a good model. The CEO is a white guy called Wouter 'Bakkies' Meyer, and he has helped that farm succeed. (08/05/2019).

The general sentiment of the white farmers interviewed for this study was that land reform farms need partnerships with the established farms in the Langkloof Valley. The relationship between the land reform beneficiaries and the white commercial apple farmers in this study was unequal. Research shows that joint partnerships between land reform beneficiaries and private commercial (white) farmers have favoured the latter more than the former (Akinola, 2018; Bitzer and Bijman, 2014; Greenberg, 2015; Lahiff et al., 2012; Mayson, 2003). Where communities have entered into partnership agreements with government departments and/or the private sector, power imbalances are common. Such imbalances can work against community interests, especially where partners lack the skills and/or commitment necessary to manage complex transactions (Clarke, 2006:292).

The apple industry in the Langkloof Valley caters to large-scale businesses; as such, the smaller land reform apple farmers willingly enter highly unequal relationships with these conglomerates to participate and survive in the global apple value chain. The oligopolistic state of South African agri-food value chains leaves very little room for black and coloured small-scale farmers to compete on an equal footing with their more established counterparts (Akinola, 2018). The current land reform approach in South Africa is not geared towards transforming many small-scale farmers into successful commercial farmers (Biénabe et al., 2011; Cousins, 2016). The white farmers interviewed for this study also explained that the government's failure to issue title deeds to land recipients is one of the major barriers for emerging, indigenous farmers in the Langkloof Valley.

The lack of title deeds makes it difficult for financial institutions to grant emerging farmers loans since they cannot hold their land as collateral, hence, they seek financial and other forms of assistance from the white apple farmers in the region. This sentiment is captured wholeheartedly by Mr Johan Groenewald-Sterling, the CEO of Fresh Orchards Incorporated:

> I consider myself one of the smaller producers [compared to organizations such as Kloof Fruit Company] in the Langkloof, and I am sitting on 220 hectares of apples. I utilize so many costly implements. For example, I need 5-30 million for my production costs just to prepare for the next harvest. How can we expect a black farmer to succeed in this industry without capital or the ability to secure a loan because they lack a title deed? (08/05/2019).

Other white farmers interviewed for this study expressed similar sentiments concerning the issue of land reform in South Africa. These white farmers were not oblivious to the need for land reform in South Africa but rather criticised the way the government was rolling it out. The farmers pointed to the need for agricultural policies that were informed by the realities of global agri-food value chains. White farmers have managed to survive in these highly competitive chains via partnerships, and they believe that land reform in South Africa should be partnership- and market-driven. Mr Marnus Andre Liebenberg, the owner of Koukamma Vrugte, explained that the issuing of land is only a fraction of what is required for a producer to compete in global agri-food value chains. Producers need access to diverse forms of capital to build successful apple farms in the global apple value chain. There is a clear difference between the types of assets that are available to white apple farmers and the coloured land reform apple farmers in this study; as such, this affects their positionality and outcomes in the global apple value chain. The finding in this study shows class disparities in the clusters and strategic partnerships touted as developmental strategies for producers engaged in GCs (Giuliani et al., 2005; Gereffi and Lee, 2016; Yeung and Coe, 2015). It is for this reason that Vicol et al. (2019) criticized the notion of strategic coupling, as it did not pay careful attention to the regional class dynamics within the clusters, as evidenced in this study.

## 6.3 FOUR LAND REFORM FARMS IN THE LANGKLOOF

This section profiles four prominent land reform farms (commonly referred to as ‘trusts’) that were actively participating in the ‘export-driven’ apple industry of the Langkloof Valley in the Eastern Cape.

### 6.3.1 Progressiewe Boerdery

Progressiewe Boerdery is a 298-hectare commercial fruit farm situated near Misgund in the Langkloof Valley. This farm originally belonged to the Van Heerden family who owned several farms in the Langkloof Valley. When the Van Heerden family placed the farm on sale in the early 2000s, Mr David Cronje (local farmer and mentor in the Langkloof Valley) helped 240 senior workers from Progressiewe Boerdery to secure a portion of this farm through the 'Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development' (LRAD) grant. The farm is not fully owned by the beneficiaries, as they only own 60%, and Mr Cronje owns 40%. In addition to being a shareholder at Progressiewe Boerdery, Mr Cronje is also part of a company called Cool Valley Apples (PTY) LTD, which applied for R9,1 million to LRAD for Misgund Apples Incorporated, where his company owns 20% of the business.

Since then, Cool Valley Apples (PTY) LTD became involved in Trawal Fruit Corporative, a 120-hectare Table Grape farm in Trawal in the Western Cape. This organization also established a nursery in and a nursery in Citrusdal in the Western Cape as well. Despite his varied business interests, Mr Cronje still plays the role of a mentor and business partner at Progressiewe Boerdery. The farm only utilizes 140 hectares of land to produce apples, pears, plums and kiwi fruit. The company's most profitable exports are apples and pears. Progressiewe Boerdery is mostly export-driven, as it sells 60% of its produce to the following markets: Russia, France, China Thailand, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Indonesia. Only 40% of the fruit produced by Progressiewe Boerdery is sold to the local markets.

Unlike the white commercial farms that produce and pack their fruit (in the Langkloof Valley), Progressiewe Boerdery is solely focused on fruit production and outsources post-production activities (packing, storage and marketing) to white commercial farms that have the required facilities. Marketing and logistical services are costly, and even the white commercial farms in the Langkloof Valley (besides Kloof Fruit Company and Fresh Orchards Incorporated, which have the financial means) hire marketing agents to liaise with local and international buyers. Fresh Orchards Incorporated relies on the services of Three Valleys Marketing for marketing and logistical services. The specifics of this partnership, however, were not disclosed, but Three Valleys Marketing is responsible for handling the post-harvest services for Progressiewe Boerdery. Progressiewe Boerdery is also a credible job creator in the Langkloof Valley, as it employs 85 seasonal workers (who work six months in the year) and 60 permanent workers (who work throughout the year).

### 6.3.2 Kouakamma Nuwe Boere Trust

The Kouakamma Nuwe Boere Trust is a 160-hectare commercial fruit farm based in Misgund in the Langkloof Valley. Kouakamma Nuwe Boere Trust was established in 1996 under the guidance of Mr Charlie Van Heerden, an established white farmer in the area and the employer of all the beneficiaries at the time. The 134 beneficiaries of the trust received a grant through the Settlement and Land Acquisition Grant (SLAG) to buy Misgund Vrugte Boerdery, a 95-hectare farm which only used 35 hectares to plant apple and pear orchards. In 2002, using the LRAD grant, Mr Van Heerden further helped the same group of beneficiaries to purchase a second 65-hectare commercial fruit farm (called Mis-Fruit Incorporated) situated in the Misgund area. In 2005, Mr Charlie Van Heerden sold his other farming operations (in the area) to Kloof Fruit Company, which subsequently took over the mentorship of the trust. The Kouakamma Nuwe Boere Trust owns 100% shares in both the two farms they purchased with the assistance of Van Heerden.

The trust utilizes only 57 hectares of land to produce apples, pears and plums. Most of this produce is exported, and only a small percentage (not disclosed) is sold in the local markets. Unlike Progressiewe Boerdery, which outsources packing and cooling duties to independent packhouses in the district, the Progressiewe Boerdery owns 35% of a packhouse in Joubertina, which handles their packing, cooling and storing of their fruit before dispatch. Kloof Fruit Company owns 65% of this packhouse, and they also use their staff to manage it. Although Kouakamma Nuwe Boere Trust is completely (100%) owned by former farm workers, it relies heavily on Kloof Fruit Company for various types of assistance to produce, pack, cool and market their fruit as well. Several representatives from Kloof Fruit Company act as mentors on the board of the Kouakamma Nuwe Boere Trust. The close relationship with the Kloof Fruit Company is further strengthened by the fact that several beneficiaries from the Kouakamma Nuwe Boere Trust are employed on Kloof Fruit Company production units (farms) throughout the Langkloof Valley. The trust is also an employment creator in the region, as it employs 70 seasonal workers (who work six months in the year) and 50 permanent workers (who work throughout the year).

### 6.3.3 Langkloof Werkers Plaas

Langkloof Werkers Plaas is a 95-hectare commercial fruit farm that is situated on the outskirts of Louterwater, in the Langkloof Valley.

The farm originally belonged to Miriam and Brena Van Schalkwyk (white commercial farmers), who helped 30 of their most senior employees to purchase their farm through the LRAD grant from the government in 2003. After the sale of the farm, the 30 beneficiaries established the Werkers Plaas. Not long after the trust had been established, it amalgamated with the neighbouring Riebeek Workers' Equity Scheme, which consisted of 100 shareholders who were also helped by their previous owner to purchase the farm through the LRAD grant. When the Werkers Plaas and Riebeek Workers' Equity Scheme merged, they used the name Langkloof Werkers Plaas. The trust was completely (100%) owned by 130 land reform beneficiaries. Langkloof Werkers Plaas utilizes 70 hectares of land to produce apples (65 hectares) and pears (5 hectares). The trust exports most of its fruit to international markets whilst only selling a small batch in the local markets. Like Progressiewe Boerdery, which does not have a packhouse, Langkloof Werkers Plaas enlists the services of some packhouses (such as Vrugteland Pakkers, Louterwater Packhouse Company and Vars Vallei Pak) in the region to pack, cool and store their fruit before dispatch.

The role of Vars Vallei Pak, however, evolved from providing packhouse services to becoming a strategic commercial partner with the trust. The Managing Director of Vars Vallei Pak, Mr Raymond Roos-Burger (who also acts as a mentor of the trust) entered a commercial partnership with the trust in 2014 when they were running low on funds and could not continue fruit production. Since 2014, Mr Roos-Burger has been assisting the trust with production capital as well as mentoring when they require assistance. The trust also does not market or transport its fruit to the markets but relies heavily on credible marketers and logistics or freight-forwarding companies. The trust relies heavily on white investors such as Mr Roos-Burger, from Vars Vallei Pak, to sustain its operations as they cannot rely on the government's inadequate post-settlement support to beneficiaries. Langkloof Werkers Plaas is also a significant employment creator in the Langkloof Valley, as it employs 109 seasonal workers (who work six months in the year) and 31 permanent workers (who work throughout the year).

### 6.3.4 Koukamma Vrugte Trust

Koukamma Vrugte Trust was a 304-hectare commercial fruit farm situated west of Louterwater in the Langkloof Valley. The trust was established in 2005 after Mr Marnus Andre Liebenberg helped 100 of his most senior employees to purchase a portion of his land through the LRAD grant. Mr Liebenberg is the owner of Koukamma Vrugte, a large commercial fruit producer and exporter in the Langkloof Valley.

This company is in partnership with Agri-N22, a farming conglomerate which produces and exports not only their familiar 'brand' of tomatoes but also onions, mangoes, avocadoes, blueberries and dates, among others. The LRAD grant issued to the 100 beneficiaries was not enough to secure 100% ownership of the land on offer at the time; as such, the beneficiaries entered into a (32% to 68%) partnership with their previous employer, Mr Liebenberg. In addition to being a major shareholder, Mr Liebenberg also played the role of advisor and mentor to the trust. Not long after this transaction was completed, the beneficiaries secured another grant (from the government) to build cooling facilities (Koukamma Cooling) for their fruit. The grant proved highly insubstantial for this undertaking, thus necessitating another joint venture between the trust and Mr Liebenberg (and his wife Maria Liebenberg).

This joint venture differed from the first one, however, as the beneficiaries held the majority share ownership (at 75%), whilst the Liebenbergs held a 25% share ownership. Soon after the construction of the cooling facility, the trust secured yet another grant from the government, and together with the Liebenbergs (who held an undisclosed majority percentage in this venture) bought the neighbouring Louterwater Apples farm. Overall, Koukamma Vrugte Trust (in collaboration with the Liebenbergs) had two plots of land and a cooling facility. It is important to note that the addition of grants from the government came with more beneficiaries; as such, Koukamma Vrugte Trust had a total of 510 beneficiaries during the height of its operation. When the trust was in full operation, it produced 521 tons of Granny Smith apples and Forelle pears, 60% of which were exported to the European Union, United States and Asia, whilst 40% of its fruit was sold in the local markets in South Africa.

Koukamma Vrugte Trust was primarily focused on production and cooling, whilst the postharvest activities (such as packing, storing, marketing and transportation of fruit) were outsourced to external stakeholders in the apple value chain of South Africa. Like other land reform beneficiaries in the Langkloof Valley, Koukamma Vrugte Trust relied heavily on their previous employer (Koukamma Vrugte) for the production and cooling of their fruit. Mr Vosloo, the owner of Koukamma Vrugte, also helped the trust to locate and negotiate with many service providers for the trust's post-harvest services. Koukamma Vrugte Trust also relied heavily on Mr Jonathan Van Der Linde, the owner of Vrugteland Pakkers in Joubertina (in the Langkloof Valley), for the provision of affordable quality packhouse services. Mr Van Der Linde also helped the trust with financing through the provision of loans, which they paid back through the sale of their fruit to international and local buyers.

At the height of their operation, Koukamma Vrugte Trust was also a job creator in the Langkloof Valley, as they employed a total of 44 permanent (who worked throughout the year) and 68 seasonal workers (who worked six months in the year). Koukamma Vrugte Trust was thrust into national news in 2016 when their general manager, Ms Chrystal Wessels, won an award at a ceremony hosted by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) in Polokwane (Limpopo province) to honour the top female farmers in South Africa. Ms Chrystal Wessels was the overall winner out of eight categories presented at the event, and she was also awarded in the category of 'Top Entrepreneur' in export markets. The story of Koukamma Vrugte Trust, however, did not end on this high note, as it experienced financial liquidation after the hailstorms that hit the Langkloof Valley in 2018/2019.

Unlike the white commercial farms that have a strong financial base, Koukamma Vrugte Trust did not have the necessary financial strength to withstand the cost pressures incurred from the damages caused by the hailstorms. Government support, in such cases, cannot be relied upon because it is their inconsistency that has driven land reform beneficiaries to seek the help of white farmers (Kepe and Hall, 2017). Some land reform farms in the Langkloof Valley enlisted the help of their white commercial partners to install nets to protect their orchards from natural elements such as hail. Koukamma Vrugte Trust, however, did not have these protective nets and their orchards were exposed to the hailstorms. To address the damages caused by the hailstorms, the trust had accumulated too much of a debt for their white commercial partners to handle. Ultimately, Koukamma Vrugte Trust failed because it did not have the financial capacity to sustain its business through a period of natural disasters.

When the trust approached financial liquidation, the government offered them a short-term financial remedy through a 'jobs fund' that offers once-off grants in the areas of enterprise development, infrastructure, support for work seekers and institutional capacity building. A barrier to securing this fund, however, is that applicants must demonstrate the ability to match the funding from the 'jobs fund'. This is a tall order for struggling land reform farms, such as Koukamma Vrugte Trust, which did not have the financial capacity to recover from the damages caused by the hailstorms of 2018/2019, let alone produce a profitable yield to match the amount offered by the 'Jobs Fund'. Koukamma Vrugte Trust did not receive a grant from the 'jobs fund', and their white commercial partners were not willing to assist (as the debt was too large); as such, it closed its operations in early 2020.

The government bought back the land for residential purposes, and some of the beneficiaries from the Koukamma Vrugte Trust remain on the farm as residents. Overall, the failures of the government to provide consistent support to land reform beneficiaries in this study have driven them to seek help from white commercial farmers to participate in the global apple value chain. This relationship, however, is unequal and warrants further unpacking.

## 6.4 NEW AGE SHARECROPPING IN THE LANGKLOOF VALLEY

### 6.4.1 Dependency Syndrome

The stark racial and economic disparities that exist in the Langkloof Valley are a product of land dispossession and economic marginalization that was unleashed by the colonial and apartheid governments on the native peoples of the land (Thompson, 2001). In the rural commercial agricultural areas, most of the coloured and black people have limited career opportunities outside the agricultural sector (Visser and Ferrer, 2015). ECSECC (2017) shows that most of the people residing in Koukamma municipality do not have a post-matric qualification, thus limiting their employment options. In the same breath, the agricultural sector is the largest employer in Koukamma municipality, which means that a link can be made between low levels of education and the vast number of people in the region working in the agricultural sector. The lack of viable or lucrative alternative employment opportunities in the Langkloof Valley further induces the dependency of the local population on the white commercial farms for employment.

This dependency scenario is very profound, as it sets the tone for the interaction between the land reform beneficiaries and their white commercial partners (who happen to be their previous employers and current mentors as well). The relationship between land reform beneficiaries and white commercial farmers in the Langkloof Valley appears to be progressive. White commercial farmers in the Langkloof Valley not only provided employment to the land reform beneficiaries but also promoted them; helped them secure land through applying for land reform grants; provided them with commercial support; and helped them produce fruit for local and international markets. This seemingly progressive business relationship, however, masks a deeper power dynamic that is informed by racial (and class) paternalism that has been endemic to the South African agricultural sector for centuries. Both parties are essentially driven towards each other by default because the government's land reform policies do not equip beneficiaries to challenge the monopoly of white agribusiness in the agri-food value chains of South Africa.

Kepe and Hall (2017) contend that the current government's approach to land reform is reproducing paternalistic relations that echo apartheid practices and represent the 'colonial present'. In this context, beneficiaries rely on white farmers, who are not only their previous or current employers but their mentors and business partners as well.

### 6.4.2 Features of New Age Sharecropping

This study has shown that the relationship between land reform beneficiaries and white commercial farmers in the Langkloof Valley is marred by a power imbalance that resembles the exploitative 'landlord-tenant' sharecropping dynamic that was prevalent in South Africa in the 1800s. Sharecropping in South Africa was part of a larger colonial project of land dispossession, as it restricted indigenous people from owning land in areas designated for white settlers (Keegan, 1983; Van Onselen, 1996). The only way that indigenous people could remain on 'white land' was through sharecropping, that is, providing white landlords with agricultural output and labour in exchange for residing (and farming) on their land. The sharecropping system served white farmers more than their indigenous tenants, as they sold (and profited from) the surplus crops produced by sharecroppers in the urban markets (Keegan, 1983). This study does not claim that the relationships between the land reform beneficiaries and the white commercial farmers in the Langkloof Valley are identical to the sharecropping system of the 1800s, but the data does reveal some similarities that cannot be ignored.

This claim can be qualified on four counts. Firstly, the land reform projects in the Langkloof Valley are embedded within the broader structures of the white commercial farmers who act as mentors and commercial partners (or their former or current employers). This chapter has shown how the operations of land reform farms in the Langkloof Valley are largely sustained through the resources of the larger white-owned commercial farms. Without the financial and operational capacity of the white-owned commercial farms in the Langkloof Valley, the land reform farms (in this study) would not be able to participate in the global apple value chain because of the inconsistent and inadequate post-settlement support from the government. This incompetence on the side of the government indirectly forces land reform beneficiaries to depend on their previous (or current) white employers for production and post-harvest activities. It is worth noting that these white farmers also helped beneficiaries purchase small portions of their land by helping them apply for land reform grants. The dependence and proximity of the land reform beneficiaries to the more established white-owned commercial farm partners (in this study) show 'new-age sharecropping' and paternalistic arrangements.

Although the beneficiaries purchased the land, they still utilize (rented) the resources of the white farmers. The second feature that is reminiscent of the sharecropping of the 1800s in the Langkloof Valley is the provision of apples at low prices by the land reform beneficiaries to the more established white farmers supporting them. Below is an extract from a statement made by Ms Chrystal Wessels, the former general manager at Koukamma Vrugte Trust, explaining why their 'Trust' sold apples to their white partner at lower prices:

> You see, we can't export apples without the boere [white farmers]. For example, at Koukamma Vrugte, Meneer [Mr] Liebenberg let us use the tractors and other machines of Koukamma Vrugte for our operations at Koukamma Vrugte Trust. He even helped us with the packing and marketing of the apples overseas, you see. So, you can't expect us to sell him our apples at a high price or market price or whatever. We can't plant and pick our apples without Koukamma Vrugte, so it makes sense for us to give him a discount for our apples. It's not just us at Koukamma Vrugte Trust who got help from white farmers. You see, Julio Baaitjies at Kouakamma Nuwe Boere Trust also get help from Kloof Fruit Company. We all know this. That's why they are doing so well. (05/03/2022).

One of the main features of the sharecropping arrangement of the 1800s was the provision of excess crops from the indigenous tenants to their white landlords, who subsequently sold them in the markets at a higher price, thus gaining profit (Marcus, 1989; Thompson, 2001). In the Langkloof Valley, an analogous situation can be observed, as the land reform farms sell their apples at extremely low prices to their white partners, whose resources and facilities they use to produce the apples. Once the fruit is sold to the white commercial farmers, they take ownership of it and sell it to local and international buyers as their own. The land reform beneficiaries are mostly unaware of how much the white commercial farmers receive for the sale of their fruit. A third feature of the relationship between beneficiaries and white commercial farmers (in the Langkloof Valley) that is reminiscent of the sharecropping era of the 1800s is the fact that most beneficiaries share their labour in both the land reform trusts and in the white commercial farms that mentor and support them. For example, Mr Julio Baaitjies plays a dual role of being an employee at one of the farms owned by Kloof Fruit Company, whilst also being a shareholder at the Kouakamma Nuwe Boere Trust. He provides his labour and apples to Kloof Fruit Company.

One of the prerequisites of sharecropping in the 1800s was the provision of labour by indigenous tenants to the white landlord's farm whilst running their farming enterprise (Davies, 1990; Keegan, 1983). The example of Mr Baaitjies is fitting, therefore, as he not only provides his labour to Kloof Fruit Company but also sells the apples from his land reform farm to Kloof Fruit Company at a low price. The last feature of the relationship between white commercial farmers and land reform beneficiaries, which is reminiscent of the sharecropping of the 1800s, is the uneven distribution of profits. During the 1800s, the white landlords had greater access to land, which translated into larger yields than their indigenous tenants, who rented only small portions of land and had smaller yields (Keegan, 1983).

Even though the indigenous tenants were industrious and managed to compete in the markets despite the small patches of land allocated to them, their white landlords accumulated greater yields because the system worked in their favour (Atkinson, 2007; Davies, 1990). Although the farmers who participated in this study did not disclose their profit margins, it is evident from the data that the white farmers made more profits than the coloured land reform farmers. Land reform beneficiaries in this study noted that the downside of forming a 'Trust' with many shareholders is that the dividends are spread thin, whilst their white partners benefit from the 'Trusts' and their own farms. There are also evident disparities in the financial and operational capabilities between the two groups of apple farmers. If the beneficiaries (in this study) were securing the same profit margins as the white farmers in the region, they would not be engaged in the new-age sharecropping arrangements they find themselves in.

The white farmers in this study also had access to vast tracts of land, whilst the land reform beneficiaries had to combine their land reform grants under 'Trusts' to purchase smaller plots of land. For example, Kloof Fruit Company owns up to fourteen farms (and a couple of packhouses) in the Langkloof Valley alone and many other farms (and packhouses) in the Western Cape as well. The profit accumulated through their partnerships with a land reform farm such as Kouakamma Nuwe Boere Trust is purely excess, as they use the cheap apples from the land reform farm to absorb the cost pressures from the global supermarkets in the global apple value chain. This finding agrees with the points made by various scholars on how white landlords used the excess crops from their indigenous tenants to gain larger profit margins in the markets (Davies, 1990; Keegan, 1983; Marcus, 1989). White commercial farmers (in this study) from the Langkloof Valley, therefore, enjoy profits from both the land reform trusts and from their own commercial farming entities.

This uneven distribution of wealth has a cascading effect on the disparate livelihood outcomes of the land reform beneficiaries and white commercial farmers. Below is an extract of Mr Julio Baaitjies, from Kouakamma Nuwe Boere Trust, expressing his frustration about the inequality between beneficiaries and the white commercial farmers in the Langkloof Valley:

> I honestly think there need to be fewer people in a 'Trust'. For example, we are 134 people in our 'Trust'. The way forward is to make the group smaller and maybe then we will see a change in our lives. Another thing is that the white farmers here have vast tracts of land, and that is why they are continually increasing their production output and adding new varieties. When hail strikes one farm, they can recover the produce on the other farms. If you compare what we get and what they get, you will be surprised. I mean, we still live in RDP houses in the townships, and you are lucky if you have a car. But the white farmers here live better lives. Look where our kids go to school and where their kids go to school. (05/03/2022).

The statement by Mr Baaitjies above provides incredible insight into the consciousness of the land reform beneficiaries about their subordinate position to white commercial farmers in the region. Their continued dependence on white commercial farms in the region cannot be confused with complacency, as the beneficiaries have a deep desire to disentangle themselves from the web of paternalism. Land reform beneficiaries have been domiciled in their dependent state because the government failed to equip them to become independent and commercially viable farmers who can compete and challenge the monopoly of white commercial farmers in the region. Below is an extract from Mr Dennis Fortuin, from Progressiewe Boerdery, expressing his frustration about the government's inadequate support for their trust:

> The government gives us some support once a year in the form of diesel, fertilizer, and chemicals. Every year, we provide the extension officer a list of our needs for the season. The problem with support from the government is that it is inconsistent and does not come at the right time. For example, the government will provide us with diesel at the end of the season, whilst we need it at the beginning of the season. When this happens, we usually borrow money elsewhere to cover our costs. This also impacts the payment of wages. If we have limited finances, what will happen to the workers? Tell me, how can you grow a successful business when you are always on the back foot? That is why we are always asking for support from the white farmers here because the government is disappointing us. (04/03/2022).

The statement above shows that the government's post-settlement support to beneficiaries (in the Langkloof Valley) is inconsistent and inadequate for sustaining any serious commercially driven farming enterprise. The government's incompetence (in this regard) has reduced the land reform beneficiaries (in the Langkloof Valley) to the status of orphans who are dependent on their paternalistic white commercial farmer partners and mentors. From this context, it is no surprise that white commercial farmers in the Langkloof Valley credit themselves for the gains achieved by the land reform projects in the apple value chain. As shown in this chapter, however, the assets of land reform beneficiaries are inferior to those available to the white commercial apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley. Keep and Hall (2020:131) noted that "land reform in South Africa has not reversed the experience of land as a symbol of colonial and apartheid conquest, as well as of resistance against colonialism and apartheid. Rather, what can be observed in land reform thus far is what can be seen as the colonial present or continued colonisation". This assertion is validated in this study, as it shows that the relationship between land reform beneficiaries and white commercial farmers in the Langkloof Valley reflects a new-age type of sharecropping.

## 6.5 ECONOMIC UPGRADING ON LAND REFORM FARMS

Social capital (together with other types of capital) was utilized by the land reform beneficiaries who participated in this study to achieve various forms of economic upgrading. This study has shown that land reform farms experienced semblances of economic upgrading (process, product and functional upgrading) through the assistance of white commercial farmers in the Langkloof Valley. Below is an extract from Mr Denzel Arries' statement describing how his organization upgraded their operations through the assistance of white agri-business to supplement the inadequate support from the government:

> Our business operations have grown since we started. The previous owners/mentors got us some farming implements from the government. In 2015, we bought six tractors (one donated by Hortgro), one bakkie, two motorcycles and some spray pumps. On the production side, we added six hectares of apple varieties as well. Hortgro did some research and informed us that flash galas [apple variety] do well in the international markets, so that is why we added six hectares of flash gala apples. Hortgro also provided us with five hectares of Forelle pears, and they are growing and producing very well and are certainly helping with the farm's cash flow.

> Mr Raymond Roos-Burger [owner of Vars Vallei Pak] also helps us finance our production of old and new varieties. (05/03/2022).

Collaborating with white farmers has, without a doubt, helped the land reform farms in this study to experience semblances of process, product and functional upgrading in the apple value chain. These types of upgrading, however, cannot be celebrated as progressive because the partnerships between the land reform beneficiaries and the white commercial farmers in the Langkloof Valley benefit the latter more than the former. Land reform beneficiaries enter partnerships with the white apple farmers from a position of disadvantage because of their status as former (or current) farm workers. Similarly, Greenberg (2015:959) noted that "there are power dynamics between former farm workers and dwellers and farm owners, for example, which can shape the outcomes of private-sector partnerships and skew the benefits towards those with greater control and power".

The small size of the land reform grants and inadequate post-settlement support from the government have driven land reform beneficiaries into an overreliance (or dependence) on the well-resourced white apple farmers (in the region) for production and post-harvest activities in the apple value chain. Participating and upgrading in the global apple value chain does not necessarily translate into equitable distribution of profit gains because of the uneven contributions made by the actors in these partnerships. For example, a white farmer can individually hold 40% of shares in the 'Trust', whilst the other 60% of the shares are held by a large group of beneficiaries.

When dividends are distributed, the white farmer accumulates a larger profit than the beneficiaries who dissect their dividends into extremely small amounts to accommodate their large group. Lahiff (2016) criticized the share schemes or land reform 'Trusts' for perpetuating unequal relationships between white owner-managers and black worker-shareholders. The profit gains for individual land reform beneficiaries (in this study) are minuscule, hence the conclusion that the engagement of land reform farms in the global apple value chain (through partnerships with white farmers in the region) gives the illusion of progressive land reform but lacks substantive outcomes for beneficiaries. This finding correlates with those of other studies which observed that joint partnerships between land reform beneficiaries and private commercial (white) farmers have mostly favoured the latter than the former (Akinola, 2018; Bitzer and Bijman, 2014; Greenberg, 2015; Hall and Kepe, 2017 Lahiff et al., 2012; Mayson, 2003).

It is worth noting that none of the land reform farms in this study built their own successful packhouses, as they either enlisted the services of the local (white-owned) packhouses or held some shares in these packhouses. Ms Tamara January, from Koukamma Vrugte Trust, described the latter process:

> We received a grant from the government to build a packhouse. This grant had 150 beneficiaries of that grant. This grant allowed us to own 75% of the packhouse, which was in Koukamma Vrugte [white-owned farm], who owned 25%. The packhouse was extended, and the government gave another grant to include more workers to be part of the shareholders. This operation failed because we could not keep up with the costs, and the Liebenbergs [owners of Koukamma Vrugte] had to cover for us. With any business, you must provide your side of the agreement, or else it will fail. We lost the packhouse when we lost our other operations because we could not keep up with the costs. Now, Koukamma Vrugte owns that packhouse, and we are out of business as we speak to you now. (05/03/2022).

The statement above shows how land reform farms in this study did not have the required finances to build packhouses without the 'assistance' of white commercial farmers in the region. Land reform beneficiaries in this study also indicated that they fully relied on white commercial farmers to market their apples to international buyers. Mr Julio Baaitjies, the chairperson of Kouakamma Nuwe Boere Trust, explained this process as follows:

> We also have a 35% share in Kloof Fruit Company's Koukamma packhouse, which we got through a government grant as well. This took place in 2007. Currently, Kloof Fruit Company own 65%, and we own 35%. We, as the Kouakamma Nuwe Boere Trust, use the services of Kloof Fruit Company to pack, market and locate international buyers for us. At this stage, we do not have our own marketing agent. Our wish is that have our own marketing agent who can go with a marketing agent from Kloof Fruit Company in order to learn the ropes from them, and then we could have our own and cut the cost of paying Kloof Fruit Company for marketing services. We are old men, and we want the younger people to learn these new skills and help our operation to become less dependent on the bigger commercial farmers. (05/03/2022).

Progressiewe Boerdery also owned minority shares (percentage not disclosed) in a well-established white-owned company which packs and markets their apples for the export markets.

The economic upgrading trajectories of the land reform beneficiaries (in this study) revealed the unequal relations with white farmers that were identified in the previous chapter. This finding also aligns with Kepe and Hall's (2020:131) assertion that land reform in South Africa depicts a 'colonial present'. It is worth noting that none of the land reform farms that participated in this study experienced or achieved intersectoral upgrading.

## 6.6 LAND REFORM BENEFICIARIES IN THE GLOBAL APPLE VALUE CHAIN

This chapter has shown thus far that the notion of clusters and strategic partnerships at the supplier base where GCs are embedded needs further interrogation, as class disparities and socio-economic conditions determine their structural formations (Vicol et al., 2019). The strategic partnerships and clustering between apple farms in the Langkloof Valley have enabled their participation in the global apple value chain. This chapter has shown, however, that the relationships between white commercial farmers and land reform beneficiaries are highly unequal based on their socio-economic class backgrounds.

The SLA indicates that people or organizations in vulnerable contexts mobilize various forms of capital at their disposal to sustain their livelihoods (DFID, 1999; Scoones, 1998). The vulnerability context of the land reform beneficiaries is three-fold. First, they come from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, which means that they do not have the economic capacity that is required to participate in the global apple value chain. Secondly, the land reform beneficiaries were all farm workers before obtaining grants from the government to form a 'Trust' and purchasing land from their former and current employers. Kepe and Hall (2017) contend that this relationship is highly unequal and paternalistic, as the land reform beneficiaries enter the business partnership with their former employers from a point of vulnerability and desperation.

Thirdly, in the context of the global apple value chain, apple farmers (in general) are price takers, thus making them subordinate to global supermarkets, who are price makers. Apple farmers are faced with cost-cutting pressures from global supermarkets; as such, they adopt different methods to absorb these pressures. Unfortunately, land reform farmers are used by white apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley to absorb the pressures in the global apple value chain. This is done through the exploitation of new age sharecropping dynamics discussed in this chapter. DFID (1999) emphasized the interconnected nature of how various forms of capital are mobilised by people in vulnerable contexts to generate multiple livelihood benefits.

Within their vulnerability context, the land reform beneficiaries (in this study) utilized various forms of capital at their disposal to survive the pressures in the global apple value chain. Firstly, land reform beneficiaries (in this study) used their human capital to receive employment in the white apple farms before becoming land reform beneficiaries. They worked hard, received promotions (although sex also played a role) and were finally recognized by the white farmers who helped them apply for land reform grants. Here, there is an intersection between human capital and social capital, which helped the farm workers access financial capital (in the form of land reform grants) from a government department (social institution). The combining of land reform grants with other farm workers to form 'Trusts' entails using social capital to access financial capital to purchase land, which falls under natural capital and some farming implements, which fall under physical capital.

Entering the new age sharecropping type arrangements with the more established white farmers (in this study) is using social capital as well, as they have helped land reform beneficiaries with production and post-harvest functions in the global apple value chain. Although both groups of apple farmers are vulnerable in the context of the global apple value chain, their levels of vulnerability are not the same, as the beneficiaries are more vulnerable than white farmers. This correlates with the assertion of some scholars who perceived joint partnerships between land reform beneficiaries and established white farmers as unequal, favouring the latter over the former (Akinola, 2018; Bitzer and Bijman, 2014; Lahiff, Davis and Manenzhe, 2012; Mayson, 2003).

This chapter has shown that, as much as some GC scholars (Coe and Yeung, 2015; Giuliani, Pietrobelli, and Rabellotti, 2005) tout strategic partnerships and clusters as ways of elevating suppliers in GCs, the profit-driven activities in these GCs reproduce inequality. The dependency and world systems theories, however, focused more on the regional aspects of global inequality (Dos Santos, 1970; Frank, 1969; Wallerstein and Hopkins, 1986). Their core-periphery analogies are reflected at a business or actor level between global supermarkets and apple producers. During the era of mercantile capitalism, the colonized territories had pre-existing class and power disparities, which were exploited by the imperialist nations to use these nations as sites of resource extraction (Thompson, 2001). Global supermarkets in the global apple value chain did not create the disparities between the land reform beneficiaries and white farmers in the apple industry of the Langkloof Valley, but they benefit from these new-age sharecropping dynamics discussed in this chapter.

A golden thread in the vertical and horizontal trading relationship in the global apple value chain is that there is a golden thread of profit and maximization created by colonialism and capitalism. Rodney (1973) notes that colonialism was driven by a capitalist-imperialist motive to dominate and extract resources from colonies to empower their mother countries in Europe. This phenomenon played a significant role in creating global inequality (in terms of development, currencies and otherwise), which remains in the modern era (Wallerstein and Hopkins, 1986). Modernization theory scholars solely attribute underdevelopment in formerly colonized nations to internal governance issues (Bernstein, 1971; Chirot and Hall, 1982; Escobar, 2011), which can be seen in the inadequate land reform policies which do not equip the land reform beneficiaries for commercial success in the global apple value chain.

Nevertheless, modernization scholars blindly ignore the legacy of colonialism in the current local and global capitalist trading system which caters to large-scale businesses (Amin, 1976; Dos Santos, 1970; Evans, 1976; Frank, 1979; Furtado, 1973; Sunkel, 1972; Wallerstein, 1974) The global neoliberal policy framework facilitates the expansion of large-scale capital at the local level (countries who adopted these policies such as South Africa) (Bond, 2000). Even the East Asian nations which have upgraded to the point of competing with advanced economies have deep inequalities and cases of exploiting a large vulnerable labour force (Nathan et al., 2018). This shows that there is validity in modernization theory's assertions about poor internal governance in developing countries, however, the capitalist structures have a significant impact on the uneven developmental outcomes along the global apple value chain.

Similarly, mainstream GC (especially GCC and GVC) scholars also attribute inequality to governance deficits in GCs (Gereffi and Lee, 2016; Gereffi, 2019; Humphrey and Schmitz, 2004) but have very little to say about the oligopolistic nature of GCs. Even the World Bank (2020) touts 'superstar firms' (large-scale businesses) as a key to leading to economic and social upgrading in GCs, which is an elitist approach to development. Some scholars have noted how GCs thrive from the unequal trading patterns that were established during the colonial era, as some label the current GCs as neo-colonial or imperialist, as lead firms display predatory behaviour in their interactions with supplier firms from developing countries or former colonies (Langan, 2017; Smith, 2016; Suwandi, 2019). The relationship between global supermarkets and apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley displays the same features. Forming clusters and strategic partnerships does not mask the legacy of colonialism, which was driven by an imperialist capitalistic agenda.

Additionally, the colonies were involved in the GCs and were set up as pipelines of resource extraction (Rodney, 1973). Overall, the golden thread in the global apple value chain is the capitalist agenda to dominate and make a profit, whether vertically or horizontally in GCs. This study has shown that the top-down neoliberal prescriptions for economic development (in developing countries) do not consider the bias towards large-scale capital in GCs (Selwyn and Leyden, 2022) as some actors participate from a position of disadvantage. Even within this category, there are varying levels of vulnerability, as shown in this chapter. It is not a coincidence that the proponents of neoliberalism (Bretton Woods Institutions), which promote deregulated global trade which allows global supermarkets to dominate the global apple value chain, also influenced the development the market-based land reform policies in South Africa (Ngcukaitobi, 2021). In the global apple value chain, there is a preservation of the trading relationship between multinational companies and the large-scale white apple farmers, thus casting doubts on the inclusive development mantra of neoliberal-inspired GC scholars.

## 6.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter situates the issue of land reform in the apple industry of the Langkloof Valley within the global apple value chain. This study shows that the white farmers had mobilized their various assets or capital endowments to form large-scale apple-producing companies. Nonetheless, despite the formation of conglomerates in the Langkloof Valley, the gap between global supermarkets and the white commercial apple farmers remains vast. This economic disparity between these two business entities is driven by the profit maximization strategy (carried out by the global supermarkets) called the ‘race to the bottom’ which means that apple producers in the Langkloof are constantly under pressure to absorb cost pressures, meet the demands of supermarkets and make a profit as well. Some scholars who advocate for the formation of clusters and strategic partnerships at the supplier base have not thoroughly investigated the socio-economic conditions that determine which suppliers can participate in these partnerships and the actual class configuration. To absorb some of the pressures from the global supermarkets and to appear proactive about land reform, many of the white commercial apple farms (in this study) helped some of their senior employees to apply for land reform grants to purchase a small portion of their land. The limited nature of the land reform grants forced the beneficiaries to combine their grants to form ‘Trusts’ to purchase the small plots placed on the markets by their (previous or current) employers.

Even after purchasing these plots, the land reform beneficiaries have relied heavily on the white commercial apple farmers for financial, production and post-harvest assistance. The government has failed the land reform beneficiaries (in this study) as they provided inadequate and inconsistent post-settlement support, which is not enough to sustain a successful commercial apple farm engaged in the global apple value chain. This situation has regressed the aim of addressing land and economic disparities between white and indigenous (black and coloured) apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley. Land reform beneficiaries find themselves in new age sharecropping type relationships with the white commercial apple farmers, as they provide their labour and sell their apples at lower prices to the white farmers in exchange for receiving assistance in production and post-harvest activities.

Having access to cheap apples helps the white commercial apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley to absorb the cost pressures from the global supermarkets whilst increasing their profit margins. The land reform programme has not significantly altered the land ownership patterns in the Langkloof Valley. Access to deep reservoirs of diverse capital increases the positionality in the global apple value chain, whilst the inverse is true for those participants with access to shallow reservoirs of diverse capital. Land reform farms are vulnerable entities; as such, their economic upgrading pathways were heavily reliant on the white commercial farmers in the Langkloof Valley. The relationships between land reform beneficiaries and white commercial farmers are unequal and show semblances of new age sharecropping type arrangements that influence their economic upgrading trajectories.

The distribution of profits from their upgrading endeavours mostly benefited white commercial farmers rather than the land reform beneficiaries. In the context of the global apple value chain, the profit maximization strategies of both vertical and horizontal trade relations have created uneven economic upgrading outcomes for apple farmers who participated in this study. Overall, the uneven upgrading outcomes of apple farms in this study cast doubt on the assumption of inclusive economic development propagated by some neoliberal-inspired mainstream GC scholars and multilateral institutions. The findings in this study are answering the broader research question which interrogates whether inclusive development is possible in a profit-driven GCs when the very notion of profit accumulation does not lend itself to equitable distribution.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

# APPLE PRODUCTION IN THE LANGKLOOF VALLEY

## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter analyses the processes involved in the production and packaging of apples in the apple industry of the Langkloof Valley. The production and packaging of apples are determined by the demands of global supermarkets located in lucrative foreign markets. These global supermarkets issue apple producers from the Langkloof Valley with product and quality specifications, which they must meet within a certain timeframe using efficient production methods. The labour-intensive aspects of apple production and packaging are complemented by innovative methods used to boost the productivity of workers, such as direct supervision, quality control, targets and piece-rate systems. This chapter uses the global chains, labour process and sustainable livelihoods theories to analyse the production and packaging of apples in the Langkloof Valley. These theories cover the spheres of trade exchange, production and social reproduction. Although prioritizing the sphere of production (using LPT concepts), this chapter also shows how these three spheres interact to ensure the production demands of global supermarkets are met. This chapter also shows how the interaction between the three spheres impacts the production processes and the outcomes of workers on the selected commercial apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. This chapter covers the following areas: governing through standards, Taylorised and Fordist responses, apple production and packaging.

## 7.2 GOVERNING THROUGH SPECIFICATIONS AND STANDARDS

The apple value chain in South Africa is market-driven and governed through a tripartite association between private, public and social entities (Visser and Alford, 2024). The public and social entities in the global apple value chain serve the interests of the private stakeholders (large-scale businesses) such as supermarkets (in advanced economies) and apple-producing conglomerates in the Langkloof Valley even though they vary in scale and footprint (Davis et al., 2018). The market-driven nature of the apple value chain forces apple producers in the Langkloof Valley to stay abreast with global consumer and market trends. This task is usually conducted by internal marketing divisions within a given organization or by an independent exporting marketing agent (DAFF, 2020).

These two entities are responsible for studying global markets to determine the following: apple varieties in demand, the export window when the produce is required, the profitability projections of desired export destinations and measuring the capacity of producers to meet buyer demands (DAFF, 2020). Once export agents identify potential buyers in specific export destinations and are content with the producers' ability to meet their requirements and specifications, they communicate this information to producers down the value chain (DAFF, 2020; Humphrey and Memedovic, 2006:17). A product specification in the context of agrifood value chains consists of a list of non-negotiable prerequisites, such as product variety, size, temperature, colour, class, quantity, quality and packaging, which producers must meet (Humphrey and Memedovic, 2006:17). Buyer specifications are particularly detailed, thus leaving no room for guessing on the side of producers (Humphrey and Memedovic, 2006:28). The failure of a producer to meet even the smallest of the buyers' prerequisites leads to a penalty or a rejection of the stock (Humphrey and Memedovic, 2006:17). Mr Kobus Van Tonder, the product manager at Kloof Fruit Company, describes this process in detail:

> Supermarkets overseas do not tell us how to structure our production. They just send us the order, and the specifications and standards, and we create a system that can meet their demands at the quickest and most cost-effective way possible. We have to adhere to the food safety regulations as well. For European markets, we are audited by the British Retail Consortium (BRC). If you want to sell fruits directly to supermarkets in England for example, you need to be BRC approved and accredited. They have consistent specifications that they require from the producers and the packhouses, such as safety and so on. There is a huge thing on traceability. So, if they [the buyers] open a carton, and there is a problem with the fruit, there is going to be trouble. On every carton we pack, we have a specific code detailing when it was packed; from which packhouse and farm. I will usually receive an email from the buyer with a problem identified. If you look at my screen, you can see a report from the buyers who received our fruit. The buyer is complaining about colour issues. You see the colour is not so good on this box. Now I have to get the code of the box so that I can trace which packhouse in our company [farm] made this mistake. We will deal with the mistake internally, but we have to give this buyer a discount, or they will return our apples, which we don't want. It's frustrating, my friend, trust me. In this business, every cent counts. (07/05/2019).

Lucrative export destinations such as Europe have strict trade standards covering the following areas: health control (food law, hygiene, microbiological criteria, contaminants, pesticides); plant health (phytosanitary) control (harmful organisms); and marketing standards (general or specific) (Barrientos and Visser, 2012). Mr Dawid Koos Van Zyl, the marketing manager at Kloof Fruit Company, also confirms the points made in the previous two sentences:

> If you go into Europe and the UK, they are very strict on the type of pesticides that you use on your fruit. We call all the things that are harmful to the fruit but are invisible to the naked eye, Maximum Residue Limits (MRL). The phytosanitary standards set out by Global GAP are getting stricter and stricter now. So, besides the certification or accreditation that we get on the farm, certain countries are also strict when our fruit arrives on their shores. We at Kloof Fruit Company don't really mind the high standards because we can meet them, and it means less competition for us because we know some of the guys in this business struggle to meet these standards. (01/09/2022).

Global GAP plays a key role in setting globally acceptable agricultural standards and practices. It is the most widely accepted standard at the farm level to the extent that it has almost become a non-negotiable requirement for any fresh produce farmer who wishes to export agricultural produce. Producers are required to obtain verification by a certified private third party (farmers did not disclose these names), who conducts annual on-site audits. Global GAP requires farm (and packhouse) infrastructure to be of a certain standard. The state also enlists the services of the PPECB to conduct inspections and food safety services on the apple farms. The PPECB is recognized as an approved certification entity under the European Commission Regulation 543 of 2011 (DALRRD, 2021a, b). In the case of labour audits, which monitor adherence to labour laws, the apple farmers (in this study) enlisted the services of the Sustainability Initiative of South Africa (SIZA), whilst the government uses the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL). This study showed an interesting outcome in the monitoring of standards, as the governance deficits were identified in the compliance to social standards, whilst none were identified in the compliance to product standards. The issue of governance deficits in labour standards is unpacked further in this thesis, nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the conditions of the apples are prioritized more than those of workers in the apple farms that participated in this study.

## 7.3 TAYLORIZED AND FORDIST RESPONSES

The vertical and horizontal trade relations in GC are profit-driven; as such, the interaction between the various stakeholders should be viewed through this lens. The stringent international (product and price) demands of global supermarkets and international buyers compel apple producers to adopt the most efficient and cost-effective technologies and work organization methods to meet their standards. Marx (1967) argued that one of the ways that capitalists appropriated profit was through increasing relative surplus value extraction. This entails intensifying the working day through technological and managerial innovations and/or through reducing the costs of labour power (Selwyn, 2016:9). The former strategy concerns the introduction of new productivity-enhancing technologies, and the management of the labour process to increase labour productivity within a given timeframe of the 'normal' working day (Selwyn, 2016:9). The latter strategy concerns the reproduction of labour power outside the workplace. For this chapter, the focus is on the former strategy, as the latter strategy is discussed further in the thesis. When examining the production and packaging of apples through the lens of LPT, the notions of Taylorism and Fordism come to mind, as their proponents acknowledged that profit was the driving force behind the implementation of technological innovations within the capitalist production process. Recently, commercial fruit farmers have also actively employed more sophisticated technology and systems in their production processes (Chisoro-Dube et al., 2019). Mr Johan Groenewald-Sterling, the CEO of Fresh Orchards Incorporated, articulates this point from the perspective of an apple farmer based in the Langkloof Valley:

> Information technology (IT) is essential for apple production. No business runs without IT. All our processes have some form of IT in place. Even the spraying and application of chemicals on trees (to keep pests in check) is very costly. The use of spraying tractors and other related technologies is a crucial part of our business. That is to stay competitive and to produce the right quality of fruit. Technology in the packing and cooling process is also important because it helps to maintain the cold chain. There are a lot of new technologies we use in our business, but they are expensive. Here, we are talking about technologies such as controlled atmosphere cold rooms; processes like smart fresh, application of gas to preserve the lifespan of the fruit; and dynamic controlled atmosphere rooms. There is still more technology coming. The cold chain influences the quality of the fruit and puts you in a better position to ship your fruit in the available gaps.

> For example, if there is a hailstorm in Portugal and they cannot produce apples, you need to move in that supply gap, because your apples are kept in pristine condition because of the CA (Controlled Atmosphere) rooms. If you do not have these CA rooms, you cannot fill that export gap. Again, it is a question of economies of scale. A small apple farmer cannot build a Controlled Atmosphere (CA) room alone, because it is too expensive. (08/05/2019).

Taylorism focuses on the application of technologies and work organization systems to optimize production at the lowest cost possible. This is what the commercial apple farmers who participated in this study from the Langkloof Valley were implementing. In the apple industry, the application of technologies is informed by credible research that is done either internally or externally, depending on the farm's economic capacity (Hortgro, 2020). The adoption of scientifically driven production methodologies has become a prerequisite for producers to operate in the global apple value chain. As noted in the statement made by Mr Groenewald Sterling (above), apple producers in the Langkloof Valley can also be described as 'integrated fruit production' farmers. Integrated fruit production is the production of fruit utilizing technological and biological advancements to protect both human beings and the environment. Chisoro-Dube et al. (2019) noted that the fruit industry of South Africa is increasingly using biotechnology to improve crop insect resistance, enhance crop herbicide tolerance and facilitate the use of more environmentally sustainable farming practices.

This innovative feature in fruit production has been adopted by some apple producers in South Africa, as it helps generate crop yields with fewer inputs, lowers volumes of agricultural chemicals required by crops and thus limits the run-off of these products into the environment. Mr Groenewald-Sterling's statement (above) also concurs with Chisoro-Dube et al.'s (2019) observation that apple farmers in South Africa have adopted precision agricultural methods which use IT to ensure that crops and soil receive exactly what they need for optimum health and productivity (Chisoro-Dube et al., 2019). The goal of precision agriculture is to ensure profitability, sustainability and protection of the environment (Das Nair and Landani, 2020). Precision agriculture relies on specialized equipment, software and IT services to capture data (in real-time) about the conditions of the crops, soil and ambient air (Das Nair and Landani, 2020). Apple producers in the Langkloof Valley indicated that they use multiple data collection software, which communicates data to centralized computer systems.

Modern analytical software collects data for apple producers to make well-informed decisions about crop rotation, optimal planting times, harvesting times and soil management (Das Nair and Landani, 2020). Sensors in the fields measure the moisture content and temperature of the soil and the surrounding air (Future Farming, 2020). An example of this was seen in the drip irrigation system that was explained by Mr Gerald Goosen, a production manager at one of the farms owned by Kloof Fruit Company. Mr Goosen took the researcher on a trip around the orchards on the farm, during which the researcher made two notable observations. The first observation was the drip irrigation system, which involves placing tubing with emitters on the ground alongside the plants. These tubes have sensors that measure the moisture levels on the ground. The second observation was a computerized system used to irrigate the trees by using data collected through the sensors. Below is an excerpt from Mr Goosen explaining the connection between sensors and irrigation:

> You see, at the bottom of every tree in this orchard is a sensor that can sense the dryness or moisture of the soil. These sensors tell us when we must irrigate or when we should stop. This information is communicated to the centralized computer system in the computer room that I showed you earlier. (08/05/2019).

Another example of how sensors help with production decisions can be seen in the case of the packhouse owned by Kloof Fruit Company. Mr Schalk Matthias Venter, the packhouse manager at Kloof Fruit Company, showed the researcher a screen which displayed activities in the different units in the packhouse house. Mr Schalk Matthias Venter explained how the information from the sensors in the packhouse helped him make crucial production decisions:

> You see, this screen here shows every movement in the packhouse. From here, I see everything that is happening in the different departments in the packhouse. Even when there is an error somewhere or a machine breaks, I can tell from the screen. When a machine is faulty, for example, I will get an alert on the screen, and I will have to act swiftly to get engineers to attend to the problem. Or when the temperature in the cold rooms is not accurate, I can reset it here. But when that happens, I have to go to the cold storage and give the guy in charge of regulating the temperature a talking-to. So, this information on the screen helps me manage my packhouse nicely. (07/05/2019)

Technology plays a central role in apple production on farms in this study. Maluleke (2020) notes that satellites and drones also provide farmers with real-time images of individual plants.

The data captured via these mechanisms also helps farmers identify the fields that require treatment, the optimum amount of water required, and the amount and type of fertilizers and pesticides to apply (Das Nair and Landani, 2020). Precision agricultural methods are advantageous in the sense that they are not only time- and cost-effective but also accelerate production without harming the ecology of the apple orchards (Das Nair and Landani, 2020). Technology is a central feature of modern apple farming, and its applications are also seen in post-harvest activities such as sorting, grading, and cold storage. Mr Marnus Andre Liebenberg, the owner of Koukamma Vrugte, explained how technology has taken over their farming operations:

> When we started back in the 1980s, we didn't have cell phones or computers. Now, everything in the company is hi-tech. Everything is computerized, from the orchards to the packhouses and everywhere on the farm. The markets have driven technological advancement. As a farmer, your clients are the most important people in your business. You have to listen to what their demands are. If you do not want to listen to them and are arrogant, you will not go far in this industry because our business is market-driven. (11/05/2019).

Apple producers in the Langkloof Valley have access to different types of assets, which help them in their quest to meet international market demands. Apple producers use their financial capital to access the services of industry research institutions to help them identify globally recognized technology (physical capital) for modern apple production. Once they secure this knowledge, the producers purchase the necessary physical capital required to produce, package and store apples efficiently. The introduction of innovative technologies in apple production in South Africa is helping producers achieve improved yields, speed, shelf life and quality, and transparency and traceability along the value chain (Chisoro-Dube et al., 2019). The adoption of innovative technologies and systems (in the quest to meet the demands of international buyers) directly affects the division of labour (human capital) on the apple farms. Table 7.1 provides a breakdown of the farm workers who participated in this study according to employment status as it is linked to job categorization on the apple farms. Permanently employed farm workers mostly occupy the semi-skilled jobs, whilst the lower-skilled jobs are occupied by seasonally employed farm workers.

**Table 7.1: Employment status of the farm workers interviewed**

| Employment Status | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Permanent | 25 | 33.3 |
| Seasonal | 50 | 66.7 |
| **Total** | **75** | **100** |

Two-thirds of the farm workers (66.7%) who participated in this study were employed on seasonal contracts, whilst only 33% were employed on permanent contracts. The information in the table above correlates with the findings of Visser and Ferrer (2015), who reveal that farmers in South Africa are increasingly casualizing their labour force to (among others) save costs. This is done to reduce labour costs, which fits Smith's (2016) notion of 'global labour arbitrage', which drives multinational companies (global supermarkets in this case) to seek low-wage destinations around the world to maximize the extraction of surplus value. Braverman (1974) contends that the use of modern technologies and innovative systems stems from the appropriation of knowledge power from workers and centralizing within management (who install it in technologies) to optimize productivity, whilst saving time and money. Within a Taylorised workspace, workers are essentially not required to think independently but to follow the production plans that have been translated into simplified tasks.

Through this process, workers' skills are less of a priority, as most of them operate as mere appendages to the production process. It is for this reason that the core tasks in apple production have been technologized and are operated by a few semi-skilled permanent farm workers, whilst most of the lower-skilled seasonal farm workers perform simplified tasks. Workers employed on permanent contracts cost more to the farmers and they are also employed throughout the year. Seasonal workers (by the seasonal nature of the industry) are employed for shorter periods of the year, and they also cost less than permanent labour. Peck (1996) also argued that the division between skilled and low-skilled workers due to the introduction of new technology reduces the chances of collective worker action that can stall production. Nonetheless, the overarching point that needs to be noted here is that the profit maximization strategies commissioned by global supermarkets to apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley have forced them to adopt technologized production processes that have segmented their workforces.

These responses by apple producers (in this study) to global supermarkets are also profit-driven as well, which means there is a clear intersection between the vertical and horizontal profit-driven strategies in the global apple value chain in this study. In considering this point, it is worth highlighting the broader research question, which queries whether a profit-driven trading arrangement such as the global apple value chain can produce inclusive developmental outcomes. Global supermarkets are increasingly lowering the price of apples, and as such, apple producers in the Langkloof Valley are casualizing their workforces even further as a means of cost-cutting and remaining profitable in the global apple value chain. This information correlates with some literature that emphasizes the increasing casualization of farm work in the South African fruit industry (Barrientos, 2013; Du Toit, 2005).

## 7.4 APPLE PRODUCTION

It is worth noting that work in the orchards (in this study) is generally dominated by seasonal male farm workers and some females as well. This is a long-standing division of labour in the fruit industry of South Africa, as work in the orchards was perceived as more physically demanding than the work in the packhouses, which is dominated by females (Kritzinger and Vorster, 1996).

### 7.4.1 Selecting and Preparing Orchards

When selecting a site to produce apples, farmers must consider different factors. At the forefront of these factors is the climate in each geographical area. An area could have good soil properties but may be prone to extreme frost, which is an enemy of fruit production. Although there are innovative ways that apple producers avert or reduce frost damage on their apple trees, the best way to avoid it altogether is by identifying a site with an ideal climate that is not prone to frost. In many parts of the world, apple producers select orchard sites on sloping land above large valleys and terraces above rivers. The Langkloof Valley has a Mediterranean climate, thus making it ideal for commercial apple farming. Besides climate, apple producers must also consider the soil properties on their farms. This is done through the extraction of soil samples for laboratory testing to determine the apple cultivars most suited for their farms. Apple farms in the Langkloof Valley have designated portions of land, better known as ‘proof blocks’, which are allocated for research and testing areas such as climate, soil, diseases, pesticides and many other areas of apple production. Proof blocks are heavily monitored by researchers throughout the year to determine the most efficient and cost-effective way of planting apple varieties.

Mr Gerald Goosen, the production manager at a farm owned by Kloof Fruit Company, described the research process before planting commences as follows:

> There are a group of technicians at Kloof Fruit Company who analyze the different orchards on the farm. They look at what works on this farm and what doesn't work. So, it is a long process of testing and examining the quality of the land to determine which fruit would be suitable where for planting. These guys also examine trees and their leaves to take blister samples for examination at a laboratory in Stellenbosch. The reports from the laboratory will tell us what the cause of the blister is and what is required to eliminate potential blisters in future. So, research is important to us because it is too expensive to plant an orchard without analysing to test the ground, the specific types and sizes of the trees, the fruits, the colour of the fruits and so on. It costs about R500,000 to plant a hectare here, which is why we need to do our homework before we plant new apple varieties for the export markets. Farming is a long-term process. It goes on for years, to see profits and dividends. (08/05/2019).

Once the land has been tested and found suitable for planting specific varieties, the process of tillage begins, and it entails the mechanical manipulation of the soil for crop production. After clearing the land of previous vegetation or old orchard trees, farmers level the irregular surfaces on the site to make it easier for orchard equipment and irrigation systems to operate. The clearing processes are followed by fumigation of the site to remove any previous pathogens that can hinder the growth of new apple cultivars. When the site is ready, the apple farmers must select rootstocks of specific apple varieties.

### 7.4.2 Securing Rootstocks for Apple Cultivars

Apple producers in the Langkloof Valley rely heavily on organizations such as Culdevco and Hortgro for researching apple varieties and other aspects of apple production. Upon receiving information on apple varieties and how to plant them, the apple producers, again, enlist the services of industry specialists to secure rootstocks. Apple trees are not grown on their roots but propagated on rootstocks that control the tree. The selection of rootstocks is influenced by the following factors: vigour, precocity, yield, yield efficiency, disease and insect resistance, anchorage, fruit size and quality, suckering, grower experience and management skills.

Apple producers in the Langkloof Valley rely on the services of industry specialists, such as the South African Plant Improvement Organisation (SAPO) Trust, a plant improvement organization which provides producers with virus-free plant material that is compliant with the rules and regulations for certified plant material. SAPO Trust also offers the following services to apple producers: production, nursery, variety development and IP management, pathology, and nucleus and as an importer of plant material from various countries. SAPO Trust has a modern ISO 17025 plant pathology laboratory and maintains more than 400 different varieties at their head offices in Stellenbosch. The reliance of producers on industry stakeholders like Culdevco and SAPO Trust shows that they utilize their social capital to compete in global agri-food value chains.

This social capital is not free, however, as producers must pay certain fees to access their services. DFID (1999) notes that social capital also comes in the form of patron-client networks which are aligned to achieving a common goal, as is the case with apple farmers (in this study) and their relationships with other stakeholders in the apple value chain of South Africa. Research institutions provide apple farmers (in this study) with up-to-date information on apple varieties and innovative planting methods so that they can make evidence-based decisions in the planting of rootstocks. This helps apple farmers from the Langkloof Valley to remain competitive in global markets. What is evident in this chapter is that there is a clear interaction between the spheres of trade exchange, production and social reproduction in the global apple value chain. International buyers impose product, time, and price standards, which are communicated by marketing agents to producers, who in turn enlist researchers (internal or external) who supply up-to-date information on apple varieties and innovative planting methods.

Additionally, researchers also help producers with knowledge of innovative technologies that can help them boost productivity on their farms. Apple farmers rely on three major sources of information when planting apples for export. Firstly, farmers rely on their accumulated knowledge and experience. Secondly, they rely on industry practices, which change and evolve. Thirdly, apple producers also rely on information provided by industry research organizations, which provide farmers with information on planting, nurturing, managing, harvesting and packaging apples. It is important to note that the production steps highlighted below do not cover the entire spectrum of apple production but highlight key activities that speak to the broader research interests of the study.

### 7.4.3 The Planting Process

Orchards are traditionally planted in a rectangular fashion, closer in a row than between the rows. Apple cultivars that are grown for commercial purposes often require cross-pollination. Cross-pollination is the transfer of pollen from one variety to a different variety of the same type of (fruit) tree. All apple varieties require some cross-pollination to bear fruit, especially those varieties grown for commercial purposes. It is for this purpose that apple producers in the Langkloof Valley plant two to three different crab apple cultivars to better span the flowering period of the main cultivars. Farmers select crab apple cultivars that have the highest resistance or immunity to fire blight. Apple tree planting has evolved with the evolution of agri-technology. Apple trees were first planted by hand and shovel, and then this evolved to the use of augers to drill holes.

Apple farmers currently utilize modern planting machines to accelerate the growing process and reduce reliance on manual labour. The hole dug by the machines is measured to accommodate the growth of the roots, and the rootstocks should be two to three inches above the soil. Farmers only add fertilizers to the new apple trees after a month of planting to allow the soil to settle and the roots to start growing. Precision in the fertilization process begins with the selection of the correct plant nutrients required to support the growth of the apple tree. Young trees are fertilized with three ounces of nitrogen around the drip zone of each tree three to four weeks after planting. Research is the cornerstone of choosing the correct fertilizer. As mentioned above, apple producers in the Langkloof Valley utilise the services of researchers (some internal and some external) to test the soil before orchards are prepared for planting.

A month after planting, apple farmers start the process of staking their trees. Staking is a practice used to anchor, support, and protect recently planted trees. Apple trees are usually in a semi-dwarf and dwarf state, which means that they are not strong enough to resist natural elements such as rain and winds. Dwarf trees have limited root systems that are susceptible to damage from high winds and drought. Staking, therefore, prevents newly planted trees from bending, thereby causing damage to the roots. It also helps the trees to grow branches that will produce larger amounts of fruit. Irrigation is also an important part of apple production. Apple trees require a large amount of water to survive the hot summer months. In apple farming, orchards are watered either through sprinklers or drip irrigation. Sprinkler irrigation is not only less efficient than the drip irrigation system, but it is also more costly to install and operate. Drip irrigation is more efficient because it can direct water to the area around the base of the trees.

Irrigation begins immediately after planting, and the quantities of water used increase as the trees grow. The irrigation process is also driven by data obtained from volumetric water content soil moisture sensors, which measure the level of soil moisture in any given part of the orchard. Farmers are constantly monitoring their centralized computer systems to check the soil moisture and to determine when to begin the irrigation process. Picture 7.1 is an illustration of the drip irrigation system used by apple producers in the Langkloof Valley.

**Picture 7.1: A drip irrigation system used by apple producers**

Source: Facebook (2021a).

Irrigation is also accompanied by many other important tree-nurturing activities, such as pruning and training. Pruning can be described as the art and science of cutting away a portion of the plant for the following purposes: to improve tree shape, influence tree growth, flowering and fruitfulness, improve fruit quality, repair injury, contain the plant and encourage light and spray penetration. Pruning is responsible for indirectly increasing fruit size (heading cuts) because the reduction in the number of fruits allows for improved light conditions in the canopy (thinning cuts). Pruning is usually undertaken when the apple trees are dormant and this must be done economically, as excessive pruning of young trees hampers early profitable yields. Pruning is adjusted according to the vigour of the rootstock and the growth patterns of the cultivar. Picture 7.2 is an illustration of the pruning process at one of Kloof Fruit Company's orchards in the Langkloof Valley.

**Picture 7.2: Pruning process on a Kloof Fruit Company farm**

Source: Facebook (2021b).

Apple producers are primarily concerned with improving light distribution on the canopy of the trees, which is why this process is optimized during the summer months. Summer pruning is ideal for improving the colour and the quality of the apples. Apple producers also undertake root pruning, which helps to increase yield efficiency (yield per trunk cross-sectional area), fruit colour and soluble solids concentration. Training, on the other hand, is the process of manipulating the structural positioning of a tree whilst in its infancy so that it grows a particular way. Apple producers contend that it is more efficient and cost-effective to train trees earlier than pruning them at a later stage. Training accelerates the fruit-bearing of apple trees, and the manipulated frame can support a sizeable amount of fruit.

Pruning and training of trees is followed by 'thinning' or removal of young apples from the tree to create space for the remaining fruit to grow into bigger fruits. Fruit thinning is practised by apple producers in the Langkloof Valley to maximize yields, fruit colour, fruit shape and quality, tree growth and to maintain tree structure. Historically, fruit thinning was only done by hand, but now some farmers are using chemicals to save labour costs and the amount of time involved in the process. This process follows the cost-saving logic that informs the entire process of apple production. Nevertheless, in South Africa, hand thinning has not been eliminated because farmers still employ workers to thin apple trees on their farms. Mr Johan Groenewald-Sterling, the CEO at Fresh Orchards Incorporated, explained why they still use labour for this process:

> There is no way that we are going to use chemicals or machines to thin fruit properly in the thinning process. This is a labour-intensive sector and will remain so for a long time to come. It can become more labour-intensive as we increase our footprint. I mean, we are using new methods of farming, such as high-density farming.

> For example, we used to have a thousand apples per hectare a few years ago, and now we can plant up to two thousand apples per hectare. There is a guy here in the Langkloof Valley who plants up to four thousand trees per hectare. So, the ton per hectare increases, so we need more hands. Plus, our costs are also not so high that we need to rely completely on chemicals for thinning. (08/05/2019).

Apples are not immune to pathogens and diseases, which is why apple producers traditionally integrate different methods to prevent pests from damaging their fruit. Environmental and human safety are at the core of integrated pest management; as such, apple producers adhere strictly to Global GAP standards throughout their planting, nurturing, harvest and post-harvest activities. According to Marx (1967), one of the ways that capitalists appropriate surplus value (profit) is through increasing relative surplus value extraction through the intensification of the working day through technological and managerial innovations and/or through reducing the costs of labour power. It is important to note that apple farms in the Langkloof Valley only employ a skeleton staff because the production activities (outlined above) are so Taylorised. The early seasons of apple production require specialized skills such as (among others) truck drivers, chemical and pesticide operators, supervisors, and some casual workers. The workers with specialized skills are employed on permanent contracts and are employed throughout the year.

The seasonal or casual workers are employed for six months in the year. In addition to the technologically monitored production process on the apple farms, farm workers in the Langkloof Valley are also managed via strict monitoring by supervisors. One of the most popular ways of increasing the productivity of farm workers during the planting and nurturing season is through a target system. This system entails the allocation of daily tasks that workers ought to meet within a given timeframe. A daily target system is also the equivalent of the legal daily minimum wage for farm workers. Farm workers who do not meet the daily minimum wage rate incur a debt, which they must meet or exceed the following day. The failure to meet daily targets also carries a warning, which may lead to dismissal if repeated more than three times. Another monitoring mechanism that is used by apple producers in the Langkloof Valley to boost productivity is the piece-rate system. A piece-rate system entails paying farm workers per unit they produce (i.e., per tree planted or tree sprayed, etc.). Visser and Ferrer (2015:65) note that “piece-rate systems can lead to considerable wage differentials and payment below the minimum wage in some cases”.

The wage rate per unit produced is often very low, and farm workers must work very hard to exceed the legal daily wage. Marx (1967) argues that capitalists also optimize the appropriation of surplus value through immiseration (through pushing down real wages) and super-exploitation (through paying workers less than the costs of reproducing their labour power). The workers who do not meet the legal daily wage, in the form of units produced, receive warnings and run the risk of retrenchment if they exceed three warnings. The presence of supervisors, coupled with the interrelated target and piece-rate systems, increases productivity and keeps workers in check. Mr Marnus Andre Liebenberg, the owner of Koukamma Vrugte, explained how this process works on his farm:

> During picking season, we use electronic watches to measure the productivity of the workers. The workers pick the fruit and place it into the bag, and then offload the bag in a certain bin. We calculate each time he/she offloads the bag and clock it into the watch. At the end of the day, we print out the number of bags and money he/she has produced per day. I have people here who can make R350 per day. Unfortunately, when a person is lazy, we still have to pay him the daily minimum wage rate. But if he/she repeats this behaviour [of 'under-picking'], then I will provide him/her with a warning. On the third warning, we assign this worker to another job on the farm. Diligent workers can exceed the government's minimum wage. (11/05/2019).

The Langkloof Valley is plagued by an unemployment problem (ECSECC, 2017), and this induces worker productivity as they fear retrenchment, unemployment and poverty. The presence of supervisors and the target and piece-rate systems are powerful monitoring techniques, which, coupled with technologies, lead to increased productivity. The entire planting, nurturing and management processes are driven by precision agricultural methods, which utilize an array of software (sensors, drones, etc.) to collect data on all facets of the farm to help farmers make efficient production decisions. Apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley utilize centralized computer systems to gauge developments in different divisions on their farms. The information collected via the different types of software is communicated to the farmer to make well-informed production decisions. The design and structuring of the entire production process are pre-determined by farm management, who obtained their information from three major sources: personal experience, industry best practices and information secured from industry research institutions.

Supermarkets and international buyers are demanding top-quality apples at competitive prices, which transfers cost pressure down to the producers, who casualize their labour force as a way of reducing costs. The casualization of farm workers at the production node of the apple value chain is stimulated by pressures from the retail node of the value chains. Apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley only employ a large pool of workers during the picking season since this stage of the production cycle is labour intensive. Although there are producers in the global North who are experimenting with apple-picking machines to cut labour costs, the apple producers in South Africa have not reached that point. The cost of farm labour in South Africa is much lower than the labour costs in the global North; hence, apple producers in the Langkloof Valley have not yet considered using machines for apple picking. This practice will likely reach South African shores because the predatory pricing practices of supermarkets in the global North, coupled with rising labour costs, may force producers to adopt the use of apple-picking machines. Apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley employ their bulk of farm workers on short-term seasonal contracts during the harvest or picking seasons. This shows that producers are on the receiving end of global markets, which demand top-quality products at the lowest prices, which has a cascading effect on producers forced to adopt cost-cutting methods such as restructuring their labour force.

### 7.4.4 The Harvesting Process

Harvesting season is the busiest and most pressure-filled season for apple producers, as they need a labour force that will pick and pack apples for export. The picking programme is scheduled according to cultivar, maturity and ‘bruisability’. Figure 7.3 shows a farm worker picking apples at a farm owned by Kloof Fruit Company

**Picture 7.3: Farm worker picking apples at a farm owned by Kloof Fruit Company**

Source: Facebook (2021c).

Harvest season is highly labour-intensive, and farmers recruit a large pool of workers (pickers, sorters and packers) on seasonal or short-term contracts. During the harvest season, farmers are scrambling to export their produce while the international export window is open. This means that product quality, price and time are strong determining factors in the picking and packing processes. As noted above, apple producers in the Langkloof Valley do not use machines to pick the apples from the trees, which compels them to rely on labour. However, human beings are prone to fatigue, distraction and error, which is why apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley use a blend of technology and management techniques to operate at an optimum level. As mentioned above, farmers use supervisors, target and piece-rate systems to ensure that workers operate at an optimum level.

The difference between the early planting/nurturing season and the picking season is that, in the latter, farmers monitor the work rate of the farm workers through software. The most productive method of monitoring the collection of apples in the Langkloof Valley is the piece-rate system. Farm workers are monitored through a clocking system, which communicates information about the workers' performance to the farmers' centralized computer system. In this way, the farmers determine the 'strongest' and 'weakest' employees so that they can redeploy them to job categories that are most suitable to their respective strengths. This form of monitoring is reminiscent of Frederick Taylor's scientific management (Harper and Mousa, 2015; Locke, 1982). The piece rate system used by apple producers in the Langkloof Valley is a direct application of Taylor's methodology, which compels farm workers to work as hard as possible to earn as high a daily wage as possible.

Apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley perceive this practice as meritocratic and fair because farm workers can earn above the legal daily minimum wage if they work hard. Farm workers are, therefore, under pressure to perform at all costs because if they do so, they can exceed the legal minimum wage, but if they do not, then they can incur a warning and dismissal after three warnings. This system eliminates any thought of 'go-slow' or 'soldiering' because the clocking system produces a daily report of each worker's performance, and so any worker who attempts a 'go-slow' or tries to sabotage the pace of the production process in any way will be identified and dealt with accordingly by the farm management. Supervisors are also employed to monitor the movements of the farm workers, which adds another layer of monitoring and pressure on the workers to perform. Mr Marnus Andre Liebenberg, the owner of Koukamma Vrugte, described the methods they use to boost productivity:

> Apple farmers and other farmers who are exporting are under a tight grip financially because the government does not protect us like back in the day. The supermarkets in Europe are very demanding because they don't want mistakes but expect their ordered fruit on time. They don't care about your issues; they just want delivery. That is why we monitor everything on our farms. Our workers know that they need to play their part to help our company succeed.
>
> The piece-rate system is very effective because the workers earn their keep and can exceed the minimum wage through their productivity. I think this is fair because the workers want to make a lot of money, and we give them a chance to make the money they want. Other farmers use a target system, but the piece-rate system increases our productivity. We also use other technologies to monitor the entire production process. On our farms, supervisors are allocated a team they monitor to make sure that we eliminate mistakes and boost productivity. This is a fair process because both the workers and the company benefit. (11/05/2019).

Interviews with the farm workers in this study showed that the piece-rate system is not as fair as it seems because the money for each unit or bin is very low. The farm workers in this study indicated that they overwork themselves just to meet the daily minimum wage rate. Farm workers overexert themselves just to meet or exceed the legal minimum wage. The farm workers in this study also explained that the piece-rate system is connected to the target system because they incur penalties when they do not meet the daily minimum wage rate. When a farm worker does not meet the daily minimum wage rate through the piece-rate system, they have to make up for it the following day, including their expected legal daily wage rate. Ms Sonia Damons, a picker employed at Fresh Orchards Incorporated, describes the piece-rate system at her place of work:

> The farmer thinks he is clever because *stukwerk* [piece-rate system] is just more hard work for us. Every day you have to work very hard just to meet the target. The farmer says no, there is no target, but it is up to us how much we want to make. But you see, some workers are stronger than others, and they can load a lot of buckets per day. Some of us who are slower have to make up the bins we missed the day before. Basically, it's like you owe the farm if you do not fill a certain number of bins. If you struggle at this job, the farmer will move you to the cleaning department or some other job where he pays you less.

> Sometimes, they simply don’t call you back when you struggle or are slow in picking apples. I think that’s why we ladies enjoy the packhouse because it's easier to pack boxes than pick the apples. Every day when I go home, I am so tired, but I still have to cook for my family. But, anyway, I go to work because I have children to think about, so I work hard because I want the pongo [supervisor] can call me back next year. Otherwise, what will my children eat if I mess up? (24/01/2019).

The piece-rate systems and target systems used by the selected commercial apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley are designed to keep labour costs low because the farmers are intentionally reducing the amount paid to farm workers per unit produced. Additionally, even when the farm worker does not meet the daily legal minimum wage, the workers must work extra hard to make up for the shortfall. This study will show how most farm workers earn below the legal minimum wage, which shows that the selected commercial apple farmers in this study use the pie-rate system and the target system as a way of securing productivity and keeping costs low. This method works for them, as they are in the global apple value chain where the global supermarkets are increasingly seeking lower prices for their apples. This case shows that the vertical and horizontal profit-maximizing strategies in the global apple value chain induce the violation of farm worker rights. Visser and Alford (2024) contend that the exploitation of commercial apple farms in the Western Cape is caused by noncompliance and governance deficits. This paper, however, does not fully engage the profit maximization strategies that are one of the main drivers of noncompliance and governance.

The notion of the piece-rate and target systems is also true for farm workers employed in the packhouses on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. The statement by Ms Damons shows that workers are aware of the exploitative nature of these systems, however, they continue working on these farms because of their precarious economic situations and need to provide for their families.  In the post-Braverman wave of labour process theory, scholars theorized and debated the issue of worker control and consent, which is evident in this study (Burawoy, 1979; Edwards, 1982; Friedman, 1977). Although the monitoring mechanisms are in place, farm workers in the Langkloof Valley also voluntarily place themselves in the position of being monitored by the farmers to earn a wage and survive. Callinicos (1989) also asserted that socio-economic conditions contribute to voluntary subjugation by the worker, as precarious market conditions compel workers to accept control out of desperation.

As in the Foucauldian example of the panopticon, workers are equally aware of the fact that their movements are continually monitored (through software, quality control and supervisors) (Foucault, 1977; Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992). Consequently, they tend to work hard to avoid the penalties that come with 'poor' or sub-standard performance. Lastly, farm workers are also afraid to risk losing their jobs through acts of sabotage, as Koukamma municipality already has a high unemployment problem and limited job opportunities outside farm work (ECSECC, 2017). Callinicos (1989) also asserted that socio-economic conditions contribute to voluntary subjugation by the worker, as precarious market conditions compel workers to accept control out of desperation. This does not mean that farm workers who are employed on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley are completely docile and do not have channels or platforms to raise their grievances, because they do. The issue with accessing these platforms, however, is that farm workers fear being labelled 'troublemakers', which impedes future employment opportunities in the deciduous fruit industry in the region.

Nevertheless, the issue of social dialogue for farm workers who participated in this study is discussed further in this thesis. Overall, the apple producers in the Langkloof Valley use technology, supervisors, the target system and the piece-rate system (that uses clocking software) to increase productivity during the harvesting period. The combination of measures creates a labour regime that is subservient, disciplined and productive because failure to comply may result in retrenchment and unemployment. One of the biggest considerations for apple producers during harvest season is apple bruising, which occurs when the fruit is damaged or discoloured by external factors such as vibration, compression load and impact. Mr Gerald Goosen, the production manager at a farm owned by Kloof Fruit Company, explained the role of the quality control officers during the harvesting period:

> The most challenging part of production and picking is to produce fruit that has no bruising. What happens is that, throughout the day, the QC [quality control] people on the farm will take a crate and do an analysis of the sample, and then provide a brief report. In that report, they will say the size, the quality, the variety, and the amount of bruising on the fruit. This is to make sure that we are on the right track with our pickers. This is all about communication. The people also need to understand how to do the job. For example, we do not want people to have long nails and things like that. That is why we want them to wear gloves to avoid bruising the fruit. (08/05/2019).

Traceability is an important factor in the global apple value chain, which is why each division or block on the apple farm has a code to enable the farm managers to trace the cause of the errors or bruising on the apples. Knowing that errors or bruising can be picked up and traced via codes adds another dimension of worker surveillance and reduces any temptation to bruise apples as a means of protest or sabotaging the apple farm. Additionally, the off-loading stations in each block of the farm have sorters who are tasked with sorting apples into different bins for export and domestic markets. Picture 7.4 shows the offloading and sorting process on a farm owned by Kloof Fruit Company.

**Picture 7.4: Off-loading and sorting process**

Source: Facebook (2021d).

The badly bruised apples, as previously noted, are not thrown away but are sold to businesses downstream the apple value chain such as juice, alcohol or cosmetic companies. Supervisors constantly hover around the pickers in the orchards to limit the probability of bruising during the picking process. Farm workers (in this study) in the Langkloof Valley are so scared of retrenchment that they are extremely cautious not to make mistakes during the picking process. One of the best ways of eliminating bruising during the picking process is adequate training. Apple producers in the region are in a fortunate position when it comes to training because most of their employees have years of experience working on apple farms in the region. Regular pickers do not undergo training, but new pickers must shadow an experienced worker for a day. The monitoring processes in the orchards are so intense that workers are left with little room to make mistakes.

Farm workers who continually make mistakes or are slow apple pickers have a higher probability of receiving warnings and being retrenched after three warnings. Once the apples have been picked and loaded into crates, they are transported to packhouses located either on the farm or in nearby towns, where they are packed and stored, ready for export. Picture 7.5 shows apples being transported to one of the packhouses owned by Kloof Fruit Company.

**Picture 7.5: Apples transported to a packhouse owned by Kloof Fruit Company**

Source: Facebook (2021e).

## 7.5 THE PACKING PROCESS

The selected packhouses in the Langkloof Valley are mostly dominated by female seasonal workers. The males working in the packhouses are few, and their jobs are mostly techno-centric, whilst most women work in general jobs such as sorting and packing. The dominance of female workers in packhouses, as compared to the orchards, which are dominated by males, is a longstanding tradition in the fruit industry of South Africa (Kritzinger and Vorster, 1996). Within the context of the GC, several scholars note that the feminization of the workforce in supplier firms in GCs is yet another strategy used by capitalists to increase worker productivity, labour control (as they perceive women as less combative) and profit marking maximization (Dunaway, 2013; Mezzadri, 2016a, b; Nathan et al., 2016; Salzinger, 2003).

### 7.5.1 The Packhouse

A packhouse is a physical structure where the harvested apples are washed, sorted, graded, packed and stored in cold rooms awaiting dispatch to markets (Hortgro, 2021).

When apples arrive at the packhouse from the farm, they immediately enter a computerized process. The packhouse is managed by a packhouse manager, who usually has an office where he/she controls the movement of apples in the packhouses. Such a centralized computer system is connected to software that documents the movements of the apples in all the divisions of the packhouse, which are often structured according to their respective functions. Upon arrival, the bins from the different orchards are registered and logged into the system. This is done to ensure traceability in case damage or defects are detected further along the value chains. Once the apples have been registered, they are dumped into a water flotation device, which carries the apples to the sorting stations. Picture 7.6 shows the water flotation device used to transport apples from the off-loading bins (from the orchards) to the pre-sorting stations at a packhouse owned by Kloof Fruit Company.

**Picture 7.6: Apple flotation device at a Kloof Fruit Company packhouse**

Source (Facebook, 2021f).

Apples have sensitive external surfaces. As such, excessive human handling could damage and decrease the value of the apples. Once the apples lose their value, they cannot be sold lucratively in the international market, and the producers must settle for low-paying local markets. Picture 7.6 shows the mechanized nature of the packhouses in the Langkloof Valley, as the producers are in a quest to boost productivity and reduce labour costs (among other factors). Another important feature in the picture above is the location of the packhouse manager's office. Its location has a striking similarity to the Foucauldian panopticon, which, by its location, regulated the behaviour of prisoners (Foucault, 1977).

However, instead of observing workers from the windows of their offices, the packhouse managers rely on the data-capturing software around the packhouse to transfer information about worker productivity rates to a centralized computer system. Additionally, packhouse managers monitor the movement of the apples throughout the packhouse on the centralized computer system. Although the harvesting process in the orchards is also timed and monitored via electronic systems, the systems in the two areas of production are tailored for their unique activities. Nevertheless, the workers are monitored and timed in both settings. Picture 7.7 shows workers at a packhouse owned by Kloof Fruit Company.

**Picture 7.7: Workers at a Kloof Fruit Company packhouse**

Source: Facebook (2021g).

It is important to note that the movement of apples throughout the packhouse is mechanized, with apples moving in an assembly-line fashion. This type of design is reminiscent of the classic Fordist assembly line. The packhouses (in this study) use the assembly line method to move the apples from one station to the next whilst keeping them in a pristine state until they reach CA rooms awaiting dispatch to the markets.

### 7.5.2 Sorting

At the sorting station, the sorters are responsible for removing and placing bruised apples aside, whilst the ‘quality’ apples continue moving to the next station. Picture 7.8 shows workers at the pre-sorting station at Kloof Fruit Company.

**Picture 7.8: Pre-sorting station at a Kloof Fruit Company packhouse**

Source: Facebook (2021h).

The sorting process is time-sensitive, and the sorters are expected to remove all the bruised apples (whilst the belt is moving), and not let them go into the next station with the quality apples. Sorters are heavily monitored by supervisors to ensure that they do not make mistakes. In addition to supervisor surveillance, sorters are controlled by the moving belt, which means that their time to sort is limited as the apples are constantly moving to the next stations. Unlike in the orchards, the sorters are not paid according to the piece-rate system but through daily minimum wages. This is largely a product of the difficulties in measuring how many apples they are removing and at what pace they are doing so. Technologies are also increasingly taking over these tasks. In the past, the sorting process was reliant on manual labour.

However, with the introduction of technologies in the packhouses, the number of sorters required has been reduced. International buyers want quality apples without defects or bruising. As a result, packhouses in the Langkloof Valley have adopted new sorting technologies to increase the quality and speed of fruit sorting. The new sorting technologies are more accurate than hand-grading. Hence, they have increased the consistency, productivity and quality of the apples. These technologies are also ideal for helping packhouses comply with the stringent sanitary and phytosanitary standards that are a prerequisite for international market access. Upgrading technologies in packhouses to meet buyers' demands has become a necessity for farmers to remain competitive in the global agri-food value chains. This sentiment was echoed by Mr Schalk Matthias Venter, the packhouse manager at a packhouse owned by Kloof Fruit Company:

> Look, if we didn't invest in new technology, we would have fallen far behind the other packhouses. We are always trying to find ways of saving costs, and the new technologies are so efficient, and they help us curb the labour costs which are so high in this country. This packhouse business is like driving a car. Even though you like a particular car, there are always new and better cars being made with better features and apps than your old car. If you do not buy a new car, you will miss out and drive at the same level while other cars are beating you. Every year, companies visit our packhouses to sell the latest machines. We get our machines mostly from overseas. For example, this machine here [pointing at the new scanning machine] is from the Netherlands. (07/05/2019).

Apple producers in the Langkloof Valley are constantly hiring independent organizations or their internal marketing divisions to research the latest packhouse technologies. All of this is done to meet international demands whilst boosting productivity and keeping labour costs low. This shows that the stringent demands of international buyers have a direct impact on the labour outcomes of farm workers in the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. The purchasing of new machinery is not restricted to the sorting process since the bulk of the movement of apples in the packhouse has been mechanized. Workers are sporadically located along the assembly-line-like process in the packhouse. Workers are mostly found in areas such as pre-sorting, sorting and packing, and quality control (QC). The bulk of the process, however, is technologically driven. The packhouses in the Langkloof Valley have also installed optical graders and sizers, which use a camera system to classify the fruit into different grades and classes. In the past, packhouses relied on manual labour to grade and size apples, and this was prone to wasting time and making mistakes. In addition, the cost of labour was comparatively high in the context of global agri-food chains, which are increasingly demanding lower prices for top-quality apples. In such a context, a failure to cut costs will make it difficult for producers to break even or make a profit. Unfortunately, workers are always the first victims of cost reduction strategies, either through work intensification, casualization or dismissal.

### 7.5.3 Grading

During the grading system, the cameras can detect the colour, size and degree of defects inside the apple. After capturing this information, the apples are automatically divided according to their features (colour, size and class), and they are packed by packers. Picture 7.9 is an example of the grading process, where apples are divided by the machines according to quality, size, colour and class.

**Picture 7.9: Apple grading process**

Source: Facebook (2021i).

This process saves the time that the manual labourers took to examine the apple and allocate it to the correct tray. The introduction of this technology has eliminated the jobs of those workers who were responsible for grading the apples. Mr Marius Van Der Westhuizen, a director at Fresh Orchards Incorporated (Langkloof Valley), explains the impact of technology in their packhouses:

> Traditionally, packhouses employed people [mostly women] to identify apples with deficiencies on the sorting table. These days, packhouses have cameras that take three-dimensional photographs of the fruit to identify both internal and external deficiencies. In such a case, the introduction of these cameras can replace about 12 [mostly female] workers tasked with identifying deficiencies in the fruit to save costs. The market does not tolerate mistakes. (08/05/2019).

### 7.5.4 Packing

Although the packhouse is heavily mechanized and technologically advanced, one of the areas in the packhouse that is still labour-intensive is the packing station. This is where workers receive apples within a given category, and they place the apples into boxes. Each box has the relevant worker's staff number so that they can be fined if defects are found further down the packhouse line. Picture 7.10 shows three packers at a packhouse owned by Kloof Fruit Company taking apples from the lines and packing them into their respective boxes.

**Picture 7.10: Workers packing apples into boxes at a Kloof Fruit Company packhouse**

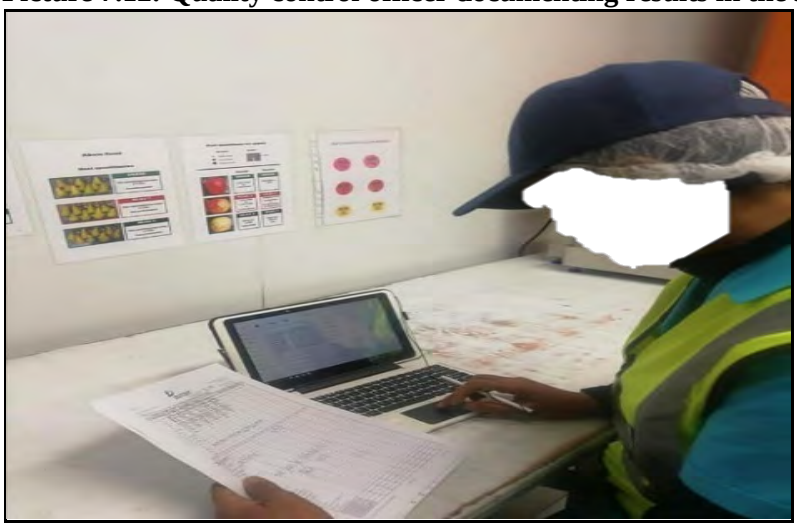
Source: Facebook (2021j).

The introduction of modern technologies and software in packhouses seeks to boost productivity, eliminate errors, and reduce costs. Packers are also closely monitored in several ways. Firstly, quality control (QC) officers are employed to take fruit samples regularly. The quality control officers check whether the apples have been packed correctly, according to the buyers' specifications. Pictures 7.11 and 7.12 show the quality control officers evaluating apples.

**Picture 7.11: Workers examining the quality of the apples**

Source: Facebook (2021k).

**Picture 7.12: Quality control officer documenting results in the system**



Source: Facebook (2021l).

Mr Raymond Roos-Burger, the owner of Vars Vallei Pak, explained this process as follows:

> Quality control [QC] officers determine whether the packers are doing an accurate job. Quality control officers inspect packed boxes by counting the fruit, inspecting defects, weighing the boxes, and checking whether the apple varieties and colours align with the orders. Should the QC officers find any problems with the boxes or the apples within them, they scan the sticker on the boxes, which has the packer's staff number to trace the source of the problem. (11/05/2019).

If the apples are incorrectly packed, the quality control will trace the box to the packer through the sticker on the box, which has the details of the packer. If a packer makes mistakes continually, they face the risk of incurring warnings and possible dismissal after three warnings. The fear of losing their employment contributes to the accuracy of the packing process. The presence of quality-control officers means that the packers cannot hide because their boxes can be traced. Picture 7.13 was taken by the researcher at a supermarket in Makhanda, where he identified a box from Kloof Fruit Company. The box had stickers with traceable information on it.

**Picture 7.13: Box of Kloof Fruit Company apples at a supermarket in Makhanda**

Source: Kanyiso Ntikinca (20/12/2021).

Apple producers in the Langkloof Valley are implementing electronic data interchange systems to integrate information in the packhouse and cold-chain facilities. This technology synchronises the information from the packhouse and cold-storage facility and then produces comprehensive reports. This information helps the packhouse manager make sound decisions. Secondly, some supervisors are constantly monitoring the packers the entire day, and this adds to the pressure and accuracy of the pacing process. Thirdly, the packers are paid via a piece-rate system, which is also an effective mechanism for boosting productivity and reducing errors. Since packers are paid for each box they pack, they are driven to pack as many boxes as possible to earn a decent wage. This process is also controlled via software, as the packhouse manager can monitor the packing abilities and performance of the packers. Packhouse managers receive daily reports on the number of boxes packed by the packer, the number of mistakes, the periods between boxes packed by each packer and so on. This is an application of Taylor's principle of time-and-motion studies, where employers measure the productivity of each worker. Mr Kobus Van Tonder, the product manager at Kloof Fruit Company, explained how they measure worker productivity:

> Throughout the chain, from the farm to the clients, we must make sure that this is done at the lowest cost possible without giving quality away. For example, we measure how many fruits are packed per person per day, constantly. This is to make sure that the workers are productive. Obviously, they are getting paid for that. So, there are systems in place to monitor the piecework system very closely, carton by carton.

> To achieve this, we have stickers with the workers' details and work numbers to make sure that we measure their progress and productivity levels. We do this to make sure that we maintain a certain level of productivity. (07/05/2019).

The reports help the packhouse managers determine their best and worst-performing workers. The piece-rate system is linked to the target system in that the workers must meet the daily minimum wage. If they fail to meet the daily minimum wage, the employer still must pay the packer the daily wage. In return, the packer must make up the shortfall and meet the target of the following day. Packers are motivated by the fear of retrenchment and the desire to make as much money as possible, which boosts productivity. Just as in the orchards, workers in the packhouses in the Langkloof Valley regulate their behaviour since they know their actions do not go unnoticed (either electronically or by supervisors).

There is little to no room for 'soldiering' in such a system, as low productivity comes with a penalty, as is the case in the orchards. Sorters and packers make up the bulk of the workers employed in the packhouses. These workers are employed on seasonal or short-term contracts. Only supervisors and specialists (forklift drivers, machine operators, and quality control workers) are employed on permanent contracts, which means that they can be called to work (a few times a week) even during the off-season. Packhouses in the Langkloof Valley are likely going to continue mechanizing and job shedding should the global supermarkets continue asking for lower prices for top-quality apples. The packing process is followed by final quality control before the apples are sent to the storage facilities, ready for the market. Picture 7.14 shows a quality control officer at a Kloof Fruit Company packhouse doing a final inspection before the apples are dispatched.

**Picture 7.14: Quality control officer doing a final inspection**

Source: Facebook (2021m).

Quality control is important because it is where apples are examined thoroughly before they are stored for the market. Mr Jonathan Van Der Linde, the owner of Vrugteland Pakkers in the Langkloof Valley, explained why quality control is important:

> Here, there are minimal mistakes. I have got two quality control people, on each side. Every time, they check the boxes. Also, twice a day we have people from PPECB who come here to the packhouse to pull samples from each pallet. That is a constant thing that you have to check. This is important because it costs a lot of money to ship the product, about R400 a box. If the inspectors overseas find problems with the product that you packed, then you will have huge problems. (10/05/2019).

Once the apples pass the quality control test, they are packed onto wooden pallets and stored in cold rooms. The length of storage depends on the export windows, that is, the international markets which are in their off-season and therefore need to source apples from the global South. Cold rooms are a crucial part of the agri-food value chains as they can keep apples in a pristine state for long periods. The major objective of the cold rooms is to decrease the rates of metabolism and, thereby, the rates of deterioration in the apples. The cold rooms in the packhouses are, essentially, controlled atmosphere (CA) chambers. The objective of CA storage is to lower oxygen and increase carbon dioxide concentrations to levels that will maintain fruit quality.

The carbon dioxide is regulated, as it should not reach levels that induce fermentation or damage. Cold rooms have software that measures the temperature and communicates this information to the centralized computer system. The technologies used in cold rooms are very expensive and are imported from leading manufacturers in France, the Netherlands, and New Zealand. South Africa has limited research, technical, and engineering skills to develop advanced packhouse equipment used in sorting, grading, and cold storage. In the cold rooms, there are quality control officers who are responsible for examining the fruit and making sure that the temperature in the cold rooms is up to standard. This is done in collaboration with the packhouse managers. International buyers usually hire the services of accredited independent organizations (based in their home country or South Africa) to conduct the certification process before the fruit is exported. Similarly, the government also sends out inspectors from PPECB to do daily fruit examinations to ensure that the fruit is up to international standards.

When the private and public certification processes have been concluded, the fruit will be deemed ready for export. The distribution of apples from the packhouses to overseas markets is controlled by export marketing agents. These entities can either be in-house, for those organizations with economies of scale, or external organizations who are hired for the specific services related to export and market research. Only two organizations (Kloof Fruit Company and Fresh Orchards Incorporated) had internal marketing divisions that organized the distribution and marketing of their apples. The other four organizations (Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd, Vars Vallei Pak, Vrugteland Pakkers and Koukamma Vrugte) enlist the services of independent export marketing agents. Mr Jannie Hendrick Wiese the general manager at Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd packhouse, explained why his organization uses external marketing agents rather than building its internal marketing capacity:

> We also have three international export marketing agents who liaise directly with the markets. We have no direct relationship with the buyers overseas, we deal with export agencies. I know some local people do their internal marketing, but we don’t. We tried it, but it was too expensive. You need a marketing department. We have decided on using the export marketing agents, as it is more cost-effective. If you do not have regular contact with your clients, then you are not in step with the market occurrences. This is why we have outsourced this function. (09/05/2019).

Economies of scale are a necessity for thriving in global agri-food chains, and producers make decisions based on cost viability.

Large-scale producers, who have economies of scale, can afford to have their marketing division, and this places them ahead of the competition, who pay a large portion of their profits to the export agents. Export agents are higher up in the local leg of the global apple value chain than apple farmers, as they incur less risk and accrue larger profit margins as well. Although expensive, having an internal marketing division helps retain the money within the business rather than haemorrhaging profits to external agents. Nonetheless, when the fruit leaves the packhouse, it is sent to the harbour, where further inspections are done by PPECB representatives. When the apples have been given the green light (of approval) by the inspectors, the apples are loaded onto the ships and transported overseas. Producers do not transport the apples themselves, as this is too costly; as such, they hire freight-forwarding companies to transport the apples to overseas markets. Mr Kobus Van Tonder, the product manager at Kloof Fruit Company, described the process of working with freight forwarding companies:

> For booking containers, we use a company that supplies us with details regarding the availability of vessels and so on. Once they provide me with those details, we book a vessel through them, and they send it to the freight forwarders that we have chosen. Once it has been booked, they usually give us a reference number and tell us what time the container will come out on the day that we have requested. Once our product is loaded on the ship and it has departed, then we complete a departure document that has information about the vessel and various information about the fruit and the destination and so on. That document needs to be signed by PPECB, which plays a pivotal role before the containers leave our shores. Once the ship is on the route, then everything must be in order fruit-wise and in terms of the paper trail. After this, the marketing team sends the clients the details about the vessel. (07/05/2019).

These companies must maintain the cold chain, that is, keeping the apples at a specific temperature from South Africa to the final consumer overseas. When the apples reach overseas markets, it is the job of importing agents, distributors, market agents and retailers to supply the apples to consumers. Within this apple value chain, about half of the income accrues within South Africa (at delivery to port), and a large part of this must cover production and packaging costs. The apple producer's share (net farm profit) of the profit is around 11% of the foreign sales price.

Supply and demand determine price and profit throughout the value chain, and international buyers have an advantageous bargaining power over producers from developing countries, such as South Africa. There are several reasons why international buyers enjoy this advantage. Firstly, the currency difference between developing countries and the market in the global North is immense, which is why producers want to export in the first place. Secondly, the consumers overseas have higher spending power than the consumers in developing countries. Thirdly, the supermarkets (in the global North) provide producers access to other lucrative international markets. Producing top-quality apples at low prices consistently for decades places South African producers high up on the list as a reliable apple-producing destination. Apple producers enter the trade relationship with global supermarkets at a point of disadvantage, and that is why global supermarkets offer predatory prices because they know that producers will concede, in fear of losing contracts to producers in other developing nations. The production manager at Kloof Fruit Company, Mr Kobus Van Tonder, explained the bargaining position of South African apple producers with international buyers:

> We are price takers, and we cannot set the price that the buyers offer. If our marketing department goes overseas, it is encountered by other factors that determine the price, such as the availability and the size of the stock in the area where we want to sell our products. When we sell the fruit during their season, it is difficult to bargain the price, as the competition is strong during their peak season. However, during the off-season or when their harvest is poor, we have a slight bargain chip in terms of price. But still, our room to bargain is so little, and we can't be arrogant because the buyers can source apples from other countries. So, it isn't like the price for Coca-Cola, which might have a consistent price worldwide. In our industry, there are many other mitigating factors (both on the demand and supply side) that determine the price of our products in Europe or wherever we sell our fruits. Buyers are asking less for our apples, which is why our production strategy is centred around cutting costs. (07/05/2019).

Sturgeon (2009) would identify the global apple value chain as market-driven, as it is coordinated through (among other factors) product quality and price. In the quest to accrue profits, global supermarkets are consistently demanding lower prices for apples from producers in the Langkloof Valley. This process is better known as a 'race to the bottom' (Willoughby and Gore, 2018), and it has forced apple producers in the Langkloof Valley to adopt innovative ways to optimize their production processes at the lowest cost possible to make a profit.

These changes have had a detrimental impact on the farm workers who are employed on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. Smith (2016) dubbed the search for the cheapest forms of labour in GCs as global labour arbitrage, which is the case in the global apple value chain being examined in this study. For Marx (1967), the 'secret' of profit accumulation lies in capital's ability to reap a greater portion of value from workers' labour power (surplus value) than the cost of its initial purchase. Firms can increase the surplus value appropriated from workers through the following means: Increasing relative surplus value extraction (through technological and managerial innovations) and increasing absolute surplus value (through lengthening the working day without increasing wages proportionately) (Selwyn, 2016:9).

Selwyn (2016:9) also notes that capitalists appropriate surplus value through immiseration (through pushing down real wages) and super-exploitation (paying workers less than the costs of reproducing their labour power). Overall, there is a clear intersection between the profit-driven strategies of global supermarkets and apple producers in the Langkloof Valley, which directly impacts the production of apples and labour outcomes as well. Most of the pickers, sorters and packers on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley are females employed on seasonal contracts. Their work has not produced any upskilling opportunities, whilst a small group of male farm workers employed on permanent contracts are tasked with techno-centric jobs. Piore and Sabel (1984), who coined the term 'flexible specialization', argued that new technology demanded a sophisticated degree of discretion and a skilled workforce.

Visser and Ferrer (2015) note that farm work in South Africa is becoming more sophisticated and requires a certain level of skill to handle rising standards, mechanisation trends, new niche crops and new packing requirements. These changes in the deciduous fruit sub-sector have made it almost mandatory for permanent farm workers to be multi-skilled in performing tasks such as pruning, irrigation, tractor driving, orchard monitoring, and supervising other workers (Barrientos and Visser, 2012:23). Neo-Fordist scholars argue that the multi-purpose machines that require an upskilled workforce have contributed to work intensification (workers performing multiple tasks for low wages), labour segmentation and increased insecurity for workers (Crowley et al., 2010; Coriat, 1980). This study has shown that the small group of permanent workers noted they often perform multiple tasks, which means that the casualization of work by the apple farmers has added more work for the 'upskilled' permanent workers. This group of workers are known as 'general workers' as they perform different tasks on the farm, as much as they are employed on permanent contracts.

The workload is intensified for these ‘general workers’ during the offseason when workers come in a few days a week and are expected to work on tasks instructed by their employers on the day. Davien Willemse, a permanently employed general worker at a Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd Affiliated farm, describes the experience of work intensification for permanent workers:

> Look, I thank God that I am permanent because many of the guys here are seasonal and only work a few months in the year. We work the whole year and at least we get paid during the off-season, unlike the seasonal guys. But us permanent workers earn every penny my *broer* [brother], because I’m a permanent general worker. General worker is just a fancy term for doing any job the farmer tells them to do. On this farm, I drive the tractor, prune when they ask me to, pick apples when it's harvest time, help the guys mix the chemicals, and also help with the fencing around the farm. We [permanently employed workers] do everything, man, but we still get peanuts. But what else can I do? I need the job. My kids need to eat and go to school, you check. (25/01/2019).

This study also shows that it is not only the general permanent farm workers who perform multiple tasks but even those who are employed for specific tasks (as noted in their employment contracts) who end up performing multiple tasks. Zain Booysen, a driver at Vars Vallei Pak, verifies this sentiment:

> I was employed to drive the workers to and from work. I collect them from different locations [townships], like Krakeel, Ravinia, Louterwater and those places to the packhouse and back. I also drive a forklift that transports the pallets which carry boxes of apples from one point to the next around the packhouse. During the picking season, I also help the guys who are building the pallets. So, I do a lot in that packhouse, but I get the same low pay. (26/01/2019).

## 7.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the processes that are involved in the production of apples on the selected apple farms in this study. The spheres of trade exchange, production and social reproduction interact with each other in the production and export of apples from the Langkloof Valley to international markets. In the sphere of trade exchange, governance plays a central role as it determines the way that activities are coordinated along the global apple value chain.

Public and social stakeholders work in tandem (through enforcing private standards) to ensure that the profit accumulation agenda of the private stakeholders in this value chain runs uninterrupted. Global supermarkets place stringent (product, price and time) demands on apple producers based in the Langkloof Valley. In response to the pressures from global supermarkets, apple producers (in this study) have adopted a series of technological mechanisms to boost productivity and reduce labour costs (among other input costs). Modernizing production processes requires a significant amount of financial capital, which the apple producers (in this study) were able to secure by mobilizing multiple forms of capital in the sphere of social reproduction.

Nonetheless, the technologization of the sphere of production in the orchards and packhouses has segmented the labour force into a small core of permanently employed workers who perform technocentric semi-skilled jobs and a larger group of lower-skilled seasonal workers who perform very general jobs. Apple production is regimented to such an extent that worker productivity is monitored through a combination of technological mechanisms and manual systems such as piece rate systems, targets systems and direct supervision. This multifaceted production monitoring system leaves very little room for production-based protests such as ‘soldiering’, as these are picked up by the technical system and warnings are issued to the culprits. An accumulation of three warnings results in direct retrenchment of the workers.

It is worth noting, though, that the precarious socio-economic conditions in the Langkloof Valley compel many of the farm workers to voluntarily subject themselves to the highly regimented employment conditions on the apple farms in the region. Overall, what is evident in this chapter is that the vertical and horizontal profit maximization strategies adopted in the global apple value chain have created uneven outcomes among the global supermarkets, apple farmers and the farm workers in this study. This outcome partly answers the broader research question, which interrogates whether a profit-driven trading arrangement such as the global apple value chain can create inclusive development when the foundation of profit creation does not lend itself to equitable distribution.

# CHAPTER EIGHT
# PROFILES OF FARM WORKERS IN THIS STUDY

## 8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the profiles of the seventy-five farm workers who participated in this study to draw linkages between their backgrounds and employment outcomes on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. Existing literature on GVCs often implicitly assumes that the economic upgrading of supplier firms in GCs automatically translates into social upgrading for their employees (Gereffi, 2019; Knorringa and Pegler, 2007; Puppim de Oliveira, 2008). Similarly, the World Bank (2020:77), a signatory of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, argues that GVCs positively affect employment creation in developing countries. Barrientos, Gereffi and Rossi (2010:14-15) note that labour outcomes in GCs are largely determined by the strategies adopted by supplier firms to meet the demands of the lead firms. In this regard, Milberg and Winkler (2011) outline three supplier strategies that affect worker outcomes, which include: the low-road approach (involves economic and social downgrading), the high-road approach (involves economic and social upgrading) and a mixed approach (involves economic upgrading, social upgrading and social downgrading).

Peck (1996) attributes the segmentation of labour markets to capitalists' drive to boost productivity, reduce labour costs and discourage worker unity. The division of labour in the production nodes of GCs is largely determined by the profit maximization strategies engulfing both the vertical (sphere of trade exchange) and horizontal (sphere of production) aspects of the global apple value chain. The geographical territories (part of the sphere of social reproduction) where GCs are embedded play a major role in providing a stratified low-cost labour force that reflects the social hierarchies and socio-economic conditions unique to those areas (Mezzadri et al., 2016). Rural farming communities in South Africa are reservoirs of cheap labour largely because of the lack of educational and alternative employment opportunities outside farm work (Christie and Gaganakis, 1989; Davies, 1990; ECSECC, 2017; Visser and Ferrer, 2015). Apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley have traditionally employed low-skilled cheap coloured and black labour, which is further segmented by sex (Bekker et al., 1982). This chapter shows how precarious socio-economic backgrounds push many vulnerable people into seeking employment on the fruit farms in the Langkloof Valley.

## 8.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE FARM WORKERS INTERVIEWED

### 8.2.1 The Age Composition of Farm Worker Interviewees

Age has long been an important demographic feature in South African agriculture. Historically, white farmers preferred younger farm workers because of their higher productivity levels (Atkinson, 2007). Pre-1994, the children of farm workers were expected to work on farms during the school holidays (Christie and Gaganakis, 1989; Harvey, 1980). This cohort served as a temporary source of cheap labour in waiting, as they would later become full-time farm workers once they had completed their primary education (Davies, 1990). During the apartheid era, high school education was not common in rural farming districts of South Africa, as the white farmers did not want the National Party government to invest in such education which would make the children desire higher education and better employment opportunities (Christie and Gaganakis, 1989; Davies, 1990; Harvey, 1980). Post-1994, farm workers are still younger, as many youths from rural farming communities either drop out of high school or do not pursue higher education (Visser and Ferrer, 2015:9-10). Table 8.1 provides an age breakdown of the farm workers who participated in this study.

**Table 8.1: Age distribution of the farm workers interviewed**

| Age Distribution | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| 18-34 years old | 38 | 50.7% |
| 35 years and older | 37 | 49.3% |
| **Total** | **75** | **100%** |

The youth in South Africa consists of people aged 15 to 34 years old (StatsSA, 2021). Slightly over half of the farm workers (50.7%) who participated in this study were between ages 18 to 34, while 49.3% of the farm workers were 35 years and older. Even though younger workers in this study enjoy only a 1.4% advantage over older workers, this difference cannot be overlooked, as studies focusing on farm workers in the agricultural sector have shown young workers have a slight numerical advantage over older workers (see Devereux, 2020; ECSECC, 2017; Visser and Ferrer, 2015). The state of young people in rural districts of South Africa is often precarious, as they face challenges such as unemployment and the lack of quality educational and employment opportunities, among other factors (ECSECC, 2020).

These socio-economic conditions often push young people into farm work, as the agricultural sector remains one of the key employers in rural districts of the country (ECSECC, 2022:5). The employment of younger people on the selected apple farms cannot be viewed as a product of happenstance, but the intentional strategy of recruiting an exploitable cohort of workers is ideal for the profit maximization strategies of global supermarkets and the selected apple farmers in the global apple value chain. The exploitation of a vulnerable group of workers (such as young people from rural regions) is not shown in mainstream GC literature. The employment of a vulnerable group of young people from rural districts of South Africa such as the Langkloof Valley amplifies some of the assertions made by scholars such as Clelland (2014) that profits in GCs are produced on the backs of often 'hidden' vulnerable groups of people.

Standing (2011) contends that the 'youth' makes up the core of the precariat, which is briefly defined as an emerging class of people facing lives of insecurity, moving in and out of jobs that give little meaning to their lives. Four in ten young workers are either unemployed or working but living in poverty, whilst (large-scale) corporate profits are at their highest levels in nearly a century (LeBaron et al., 2018:21). LeBaron et al. (2018:21) further note that most of the world's workers lack the certainty that they will earn a sufficient living from their work and that almost half of the world's working young people have minimal income security. This is not to discount the vulnerability of the older workers, as a large percentage of them (in this study) stem from poor socio-economic backgrounds and generational cycles of poverty they experienced from their youth.

Their employment outcomes on the selected farms (in this study) become segmented according to factors such as sex, employment status and association with supervisors (among other factors). Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that younger workers (especially females, seasonal workers and those without personal connections with supervisors) are in more of a vulnerable position than some older workers with work experience and a good rapport with their employers and supervisors who are central to the recruitment process on the selected farms in the Langkloof Valley. ECSECC (2017:14) indicated that the largest share of the population in Koukamma municipality is within the young working age (25-44 years) category with a total number of 14 800 or 33.5% of the total population. A previous study on the deciduous fruit sector of the Langkloof Valley showed that the farmers preferred employing local people (Bekker et al., 1982).

This is not to disregard the growing number of migrant farm workers in the region, however, the farmers in this study secured most of their labour force from the local population, which is dominated by young people (who are mostly black and coloured). Farm work is physically taxing, and apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley always seek the most capable individuals who can keep up with the productivity demands. Young farm workers are more likely to meet these demands because they have the physical energy and are desperate for money when they leave school. Although the participants in this study were 18 years and above, many started working informally on apple farms around the Langkloof Valley before they reached 18. The practice of hiring underage children on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley is still a common but hidden practice in the region. Mr Jordan Daniels, a general worker at a Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd-affiliated farm, had the following to say about child labour in the Langkloof Valley:

> When it is season time, the white man [farmer] will ask the *pongo* [supervisor] to recruit some youngsters [school-going age] to pick up fallen fruit under the trees. During school holidays, we also worked on farms, picking up fruit that had fallen on the ground, which was taken for juices or ciders and so on. We were paid according to the piece-rate system. The children who do not go to school often do this job for the whole picking season. Some of the farmers are very scared to hire these kids now, though. They say they don't want to answer questions from the government people. (26/01/2019).

Most of the farm workers who participated in this study indicated that they had begun working on the apple farms during school holidays whilst they were still in primary school or below the age of farm work on school vacations while in primary school [traditionally under the age of 14]. Mr Marnus September, a picker at Fresh Orchards Incorporated, echoed similar sentiments about child labour on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley:

> To be honest with you, my *broer* [brother], many of us grew up working on the farms here. My brothers and I worked on the farm where our parents worked and lived. I think I was in grade six when I joined the other kids on the farm, picking the apples on the ground and placing them in the bins. The money we got from the farmer was not a lot, but my parents encouraged us to do this work because we could help buy groceries and other stuff. Some of my friends dropped out of primary school and have been moving from farm to farm for many years now. This thing is normal here, man.

> The *boere* [farmers] are just careful because they don't want the government people on their case, you see. *Jy verstaan mos* [you understand], people don't want to make a noise about this thing because it will mess up their money, you check. (05/12/2018).

According to the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, it is a criminal offence to employ a child younger than 15, except in the performing arts with a permit from the Department of Labour. Children aged 15 to 18 may not be employed to do work inappropriate for their age or that places them at risk (RSA, 2024). Farm work, by nature, is hazardous, as workers are exposed to different kinds of danger throughout the production processes on the farms (Bitter Grapes, 2016). Farm workers are often exposed to pesticides, extreme weather conditions, and other types of danger (Bitter Grapes, 2016). This study will show that many farm workers employed on the selected farms do not have access to protective clothing that is provided by their employers, which means that the underage workers are also exposed to various forms of danger as their older colleagues.

The employment of underage children on some apple farms in the Langkloof Valley goes against the 'rights at work' pillar of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, which is the foundation of the notion of social upgrading. The use of underage children on some apple farms in the Langkloof Valley not only violates labour legislation but also shows a glaring weakness in the labour monitoring structures in the apple value chain in South Africa. This lapse in monitoring of labour standards cannot be divorced from the cost pressures placed on apple farmers who voluntarily respond by adopting cost-cutting mechanisms (which violate labour legislation) such as hiring children to absorb costs pressures and make a profit as well as pressures of race to the bottom, as farmers are using cheaper forms of labour to reduce (Willoughby and Hore, 2018).

The use of child labour in GCs is a growing trend around the world, as children (mostly from poor families) are extremely vulnerable and often enter GCs under duress (Ugarte et al., 2023). Producers in GCs use child labour to cut labour costs to optimize their profit margins drastically. Marx (1967) argued that capitalists maximize profits through the appropriation of surplus value through different means, and the use of child labour on the selected apple farms in this study is one of multiple profit-maximizing strategies. As noted by some farm workers in this study, the use of child labour on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley shatters the argument of inclusive social upgrading in the global apple value chain in question. Children constitute a hidden cheap labour force on some of the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley.

Nevertheless, the use of young people of legal age on the selected apple farms contributes to profit-maximization because they are vulnerable as well. Even those who were above the age of 35 came from backgrounds of vulnerable underage and youthful labour.

### 8.2.2 Composition of Farm Workers by Race and Sex

South African commercial agriculture is steeped in colonial and apartheid history, which dispossessed indigenous peoples from their lands and relegated them (through various means) to a low-wage labour force on the 'white-owned' commercial farms (Marcus, 1989; Wilson et al., 1977). The racially discriminatory policies of the time influenced the employment outcomes of coloured and black workers on the 'white-owned' commercial farms in the Langkloof Valley as well (Bekker et al., 1982). With this consideration, it is worth examining whether the notion of race still plays a significant factor in determining the employment outcomes of farm workers on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. Table 8.2 provides a racial breakdown of the farm workers who participated in this study.

**Table 8.2: Breakdown of interviewees by race**

| Race | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Black | 22 | 29.3% |
| Coloured | 53 | 70.7% |
| **Total** | **75** | **100%** |

In this study, coloured farm workers constituted a substantially larger share (70.7%) of the total sample of farm workers than black workers, who were slightly below one-third (29.3%). Historically (pre-1994), race played a significant role in determining the outcomes of farm workers in South Africa and the Langkloof Valley included (Bekker et al., 1982). This study, however, will show that the outcomes of farm workers, according to race, are mixed as different races experience favourable outcomes in different areas of employment and their livelihoods. Sex, on the other hand, continues to be a strong determinant of the employment outcomes of farm workers who participated in this study. From its inception, South African agriculture has always been male-dominated, as females mostly secured employment on the farms through their male associates (family members or partners) who were permanently employed on those farms (Atkinson, 2007; Marcus, 1989). Following this practice, apple farms in the Langkloof Valley consistently employed more male than female farm workers (Bekker et al., 1982).

When considering the employment outcomes of the farm workers in this study by sex, it is important to remember that the notion of inclusive social upgrading is questionable (in this study) as the selected farmers employ a largely vulnerable and segmented labour force to meet the demands of international buyers while increasing their profit margins as well. Table 8.3 provides a breakdown of the farm worker interviewees according to sex.

**Table 8.3: Breakdown of interviewees according to sex**

| Sex | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 40 | 54.7% |
| Female | 35 | 45.3% |
| **Total** | **75** | **100%** |

Slightly more than half the farm workers (54.7%) who participated in this study were males, while female farm workers constituted 45.3%. It is important to note that sex has played a major role in determining the outcomes of farm workers in South Africa, as male farm workers (especially those employed on permanent contracts) enjoyed slightly better employment outcomes than their female counterparts (Kritzinger and Vorster, 1996; Marcus, 1989). This is worth noting because sex (among other factors) is one of the major determinants of the employment outcomes and conditions of farm workers who participated in this study. This thesis will further show a continuation of the sexual division of labour on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley, which produces uneven outcomes for the different sexes in terms of social upgrading and downgrading.

### 8.2.3 Places of Origin of Farm Worker Interviewees

Bekker et al. (1982) note that in the 1980s, almost three-quarters of farm workers (72%) in the Langkloof Valley originated from the region as white farmers (in the region) found it cheaper to employ locals rather than migrant labour. Over the years, however, the demographics in the Langkloof Valley have gradually changed as more people migrate into the region from different parts of the country and outside the country. Table 8.4 shows the geographical places of origin of the farm workers who participated in this study.

**Table 8.4: Places of origin of the farm workers**

| Place of Origin | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Eastern Cape | 63 | 84% |
| Western Cape | 5 | 6.7% |
| Free State | 2 | 2.7% |
| Kwa Zulu Natal | 1 | 1.3% |
| Gauteng | 1 | 1.3% |
| Zimbabwe | 3 | 4% |
| **Total** | **75** | **100%** |

Most of the farm workers (84%) who participated in this study were from the Eastern Cape. From the early days of apartheid, the Eastern Cape served as a reservoir of cheap labour for the mines, farms and other white businesses (Wilson et al., 1977). Table 8.5 displays the geographical origins of the farm workers (in this study) who came from the Eastern Cape.

**Table 8.5: Places of origin of farm workers from the Eastern Cape**

| Place of origin | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Langkloof Valley | 53 | 84.1% |
| Other parts of the province | 10 | 15.9% |
| **Total** | **63** | **100%** |

Most of the farm workers (84.1%) who participated in this study from the Eastern Cape were natives of the Langkloof Valley, while only 15.9% came from other parts of this province. Bekker et al.'s (1982) study indicates that farmers in the Langkloof preferred workers from the area rather than those from outside the Langkloof. Figure 8.1 below is an extract from Bekker et al.'s (1982) study showing the regions where the farm workers employed on the farms in the Langkloof Valley were coming from.

**Figure 8.1: Region of seasonal (farm) labour recruitment, 1980**

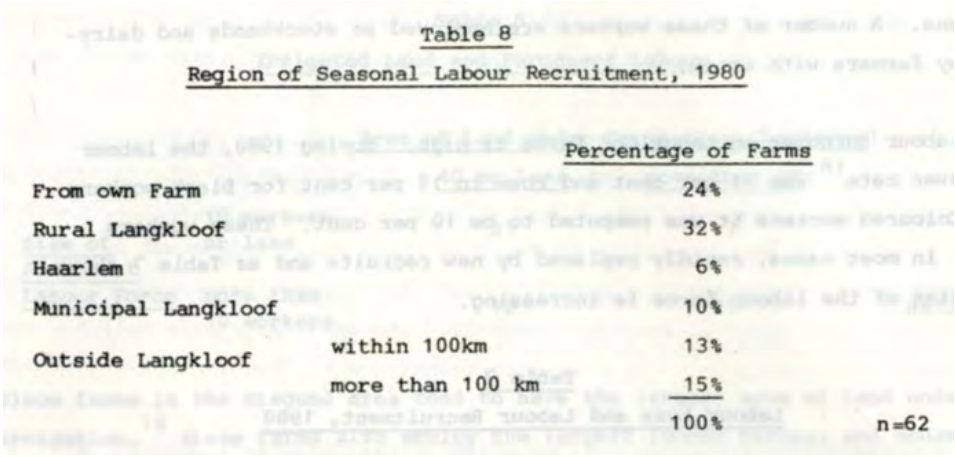


Table 8

Region of Seasonal Labour Recruitment, 1980

| | | Percentage of Farms |
|---|---|---|
| From own Farm | | 24% |
| Rural Langkloof | | 32% |
| Haarlem | | 6% |
| Municipal Langkloof | | 10% |
| Outside Langkloof | within 100km | 13% |
| | more than 100 km | 15% |
| | | 100% n=62 |

Source: Bekker, Humphries and Meterlerkamp (1982:14)

Figure 8.1 shows that slightly above a quarter of the farm workers (28%) in Bekker et al.'s study came from outside the Langkloof Valley, while in this thesis (with a different sample) 29.33% of the farm workers came from outside the region. When comparing the pre- and post-1994 eras (and acknowledging the differences in samples), it is evident that the percentage of farm workers from outside the Langkloof Valley has increased by 1.33%. This is a small growth rate, which shows that apple farmers (according to the sample in this study) in the region still have a high preference for local farm workers. Although the figures from the extract above are more than 40 years old, they show a level of consistency with the present study and overall stability in the migratory patterns of farm workers in the Langkloof Valley.

The preference for local labour by the selected apple farmers in this study is largely driven by a cost reduction strategy (among other factors), as they do not have to pay for housing and other extra costs. Furthermore, reducing costs of any nature is an added advantage for apple farmers who are constantly finding ways to reduce costs to absorb the cost pressures from the global supermarkets governing the global apple value chain. In their quest to meet the demands of international buyers and reduce input (mostly labour) costs, the selected farmers in the region have exploited the economically vulnerable, mostly coloured and black local labour force. The employment and preference for a vulnerable labour force is not to improve or socially upgrade the conditions of most of these farm workers but is driven by a profit motive which has a segmenting and exploitative effect by its very nature.

Nevertheless, this preference for local labour by some apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley is slowly changing as more migrants from Southern African countries (such as Zimbabwe) are finding employment on the farms in the region at a lower cost than local labour. Table 8.4 shows that 4% of the farm workers who participated in this study came from Zimbabwe. Research shows that there is an increasing trend of commercial farmers in South Africa employing Zimbabwean migrants on their farms (Addison, 2019; Rutherford and Addison, 2007). Barrientos and Visser (2012) further explain that South African farmers involved in the global horticultural value chains are increasingly employing vulnerable migrants from Zimbabwe and Mozambique to reduce labour costs.

Chirima's (2022:74) study indicates that the recruitment processes on fruit farms in Ceres in the Western Cape (South Africa) entails a cost-benefit analysis favouring Zimbabwean workers above South Africans, as there is huge pressure for the farms (producing for local and international markets) to remain competitive and productive. Recently, there has been a growth of Zimbabwean migrants coming into the Langkloof Valley in search of employment opportunities on the fruit farms. Table 8.4 further shows that an extremely low percentage (4%) of the farm workers who participated in this study came from Zimbabwe. A Zimbabwean field worker employed at Koukamma Vrugte Trust, Mr Jeremiah Mlenze, explained why he came to South Africa:

> I grew up fine in Zimbabwe, but life started being hard in the 1990s. When my family started struggling because of the economic situation in Zimbabwe, I could not study further, and I decided to come to South Africa in search of greener pastures. I first started working on citrus farms in Polokwane before I moved to the Western Cape to work on grape farms. I left the grape farms because the work was intense and the pay was very low, and I couldn't support my family back home. I then worked on citrus farms in Addo for a few years before I came here to the Langkloof. I have been here for many years now and can send money home, but life is still difficult, even now. (02/12/2018).

The vulnerability of migrant workers often compels them to accept extremely low wages, which is why they are an attractive labour force for apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley. Mr Matthew Reinecke, a supervisor at a farm owned by Kloof Fruit Company, explained why he thought the apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley were hiring more migrant workers from Zimbabwe:

> The foreigners accept R160 per day, whilst maybe we fight for R180, so the farmer prefers the foreign workers most times. The farmer will sometimes fire someone who has been working on their farm for years because the foreigner will accept a lower wage. They are desperate because they send money back home. (04/12/2018).

Farmers in South Africa increasingly favour foreign workers because they are a cheaper form of labour (they mostly accept wages below the minimum wage) and are less likely to embark on any form of strike action (Rutherford and Addison, 2007; Hågensen and de Jager, 2016). The statement (below) made by the CEO of Fresh Orchards Incorporated, Mr Johan Groenewald-Sterling, validates this point:

> We do not have a problem with strike action in our industry. The dissatisfied workers are few and far between. Sometimes, there are a few workers who complain, but they are usually lazy workers anyway. There is an abundance of unemployed people here in the Langkloof who would like to work, and so people with jobs wouldn't want to risk losing their work. There are a lot of Zimbabweans and people from other places that come here, and they are willing to work and not fuss. (08/05/2019).

Migrant workers are less likely to join trade unions and engage in strike action as they fear losing their employment. Some migrant farm workers may not have legal documents and may not want to access any formal channels to raise their employment grievances, as this may expose their cover. This level of vulnerability works in favour of the apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley, who are constantly seeking ways of decreasing labour costs without any opposition. The growing employment of migrant labourers on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley is triggering resentment among some of the locals who are also competing for the same jobs. This is evident in the statement made by Mr Garth Isaacs, a farm worker who is employed at Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd:

> For the people who are born and grow up in the Langkloof, work is harder to find. The people from the outside [foreigners] get jobs quickly because they are willing to take any amount of money. You see, this time of the year, foreign workers arrive in the Langkloof, from the citrus farms outside the Langkloof. When they arrive here, the crime rate also increases. So, I would say there is some tension between locals and migrants here in the Langkloof, firstly over jobs and secondly over their behaviour when they come into our communities. (21/11/2018).

Mr Isaacs' statement reflects an underlying tension that exists between the locals and migrant workers over securing jobs on the fruit farms in the Langkloof Valley. Apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley are benefiting from this competition for jobs because it is forcing locals to accept lower wage rates. Price pressures in the global apple value chain are forcing producers to seek cheaper and more vulnerable forms of labour, as evidenced by the employment of black, coloured and now Zimbabwean farm workers on the apple farms of the Langkloof Valley. The scramble for cheaper forms of labour warrants an interrogation of the backgrounds of the farm workers who participated in this study to identify some of the key drivers that led them to farm work.

Labour-centric global chain studies such as those of Mezzadri (2016a) and Selwyn (2016) (among others) show that people who are employed in the production node of global chains often come from 'generational cycles of poverty', which force them into accepting low-wage work. The section below explores the backgrounds of the farm workers who participated in this study. Examining the historical backgrounds of farm workers in this study is important, as it shows that supplier firms or producers in GCs prefer a vulnerable labour force which is desperate for employment and more likely to accept low wages (Mezzadri, 2016a; Selwyn, 2016; Willoughby and Gore, 2018).

## 8.3 EDUCATIONAL AND EMPLOYMENT BACKGROUNDS

### 8.3.1 Educational and Employment Backgrounds of Guardians

The finite educational and alternative employment opportunities (outside the agricultural sector) in the Langkloof Valley limit the upward mobility of the bulk of black and coloured people living in the area (ECSECC, 2017). This cycle of marginalization is not a new phenomenon but can be traced back to the inception of commercial agriculture in the region (Bekker et al., 1982). The colonial and apartheid regimes did not invest in the education of black and coloured people in the farming districts of the country, as they wanted to provide farmers with a contact supply of cheap labour (Christie and Gaganakis, 1989). Visser and Ferrer (2015:10), also show that the education levels and employment opportunities in the rural farming districts of South Africa are extremely low. To gain a better understanding of the backgrounds of the farm workers who participated in this study, it is important to analyse their guardians' educational and employment backgrounds. Table 8.6 shows the educational levels of the interviewees' parents or guardians.

**Table 8.6: Guardian's highest level of schooling**

| Level of Schooling | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| No formal education | 57 | 41.9% |
| Grade 1-7 | 49 | 36% |
| Grade 8-12 | 29 | 21.3% |
| Post-school qualification | 1 | 0.7% |
| **Total** | **136** | **100** |

A higher percentage of the farm workers' guardians (41.9%) in this study did not have any formal schooling, and almost a third of the guardians (36%) had a primary school education (grades 1 to 7). Slightly less than a quarter of the farm workers' guardians (21.3%) had a high school education (grade 8-12), and only 0.7% possessed a post-school qualification. The educational backgrounds of the guardians of the farm workers who participated in this study are very low. This is not surprising, as the colonial and apartheid regimes did not invest in quality educational institutions for most of the black and coloured people residing in rural farming districts, thus confining their employment options within the agricultural sector in those regions (Christie and Gaganakis, 1989; Davies, 1990; Harvey, 1980). Table 8.7 below outlines the employment backgrounds of the farm workers' guardians who participated in this study.

**Table 8.7: Guardian's jobs**

| Type of jobs | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Farm workers in the Langkloof Valley | 96 | 70.6% |
| Other economic sectors | 32 | 23.5% |
| Unemployed | 8 | 5.9% |
| **Total** | **136** | **100%** |

The findings in the table above point to a correlation between low levels of education and farm work in the Langkloof Valley, as almost three-quarters (70.6%) of the farm workers' guardians were employed on the fruit farms in the region. Additionally, less than a quarter of the guardians of the farm workers (23.5%) in this study were employed in other sectors in the region, and a relatively low percentage of these guardians were unemployed (5.9%).

The farm workers in this study indicated that their unemployed guardians were assisted by the income of their spouses (partners). Nonetheless, the agricultural sector (which is known for low wages in South Africa) was the main sector which employed the guardians of the farm workers in this study. Mr Jan Jaer, a supervisor at a farm owned by Kloof Fruit Company, described how the generational cycle of poverty in the Langkloof Valley channels thousands of black and coloured youths into agricultural work:

> My parents only attended primary school. My mother stopped in standard 5 [grade 7], and my father dropped out in standard 3 [grade 5]. My parents were also driven by difficult circumstances to drop out of school and search for work on this farm. I was born and raised here on this farm. Life was tough when we were young. We never had an opportunity to be educated and to have better employment opportunities. The difficulties of farm life made my parents consume a lot of alcohol. This was not good for us because money was spent on alcohol rather than on education. That is why my siblings and I ended up in farm work. (22/11/2018).

The general cycle of poverty is an ideal context for producing a vulnerable labour force with low levels of education and limited employment opportunities. Global agri-food value chains thrive and exploit vulnerable farm workers by placing cost reduction pressures on the farmers, who in turn transfer that pressure onto workers (Selwyn, 2016). The race to the bottom of the global agri-food value chain is seeking cheaper forms of labour (Barrientos, 2013), hence, apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley employ the most economically vulnerable labour force, which comes from families with low levels of education and a long history in farm labour. This is one of the reasons why GPN scholars called for a greater appreciation of the role played by the geographical territories where GCs were embedded, as they provide the local producers (involved in GCs) with a particular type of labour (Dicken and Malmberg, 2001; Liu and Dicken, 2006). The generational cycle of poverty is ideal for the vertical and horizontal profit maximization strategies in the global apple value chain.

### 8.3.2 Educational Backgrounds of Farm Workers Interviewed

The educational and employment backgrounds of the guardians of farm workers (in this study) constitute a generational cycle of poverty found in many black and coloured families in the Langkloof Valley, which restricts their ability to afford quality education for their children.

Farm workers in the Langkloof Valley cannot afford the former Model C (quantile 5) schools in Joubertina and Kareedouw, and as such, they send their children to poorly resourced primary and high schools located in townships throughout the region. Some farm workers send their children to schools in urban areas (outside the Langkloof Valley) where they reside with family or friends. Table 8.8 breaks down the educational levels of the farm workers in this study.

**Table 8.8: Farm workers' level of schooling**

| Level of Schooling | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| No formal education | 0 | 0% |
| Grade 1-7 | 13 | 17.4% |
| Grade 8-12 | 61 | 81.3% |
| Post-school qualification | 1 | 1.3% |
| **Total** | **75** | **100** |

A substantial percentage of the farm workers (81.3%) who participated in this study had a high school education but did not exceed grade 12, while only 17.4% did not exceed the 7$^{th}$ grade. Only 1.3% of the farm workers in this study had achieved a post-school qualification. Unlike their guardians, most of whom did not have formal education (41.9%) or exceed grade seven (36%) (see table 8.6), the farm workers in this study all had a level of formal education, and most of them had some form of high school education. One of the main factors driving this improvement is the establishment of high schools in some townships in the Langkloof Valley, which many farm workers (in this study) attended when their parents voluntarily migrated into the townships post-1994.

It is worth noting, however, that the availability of these high schools in some of the townships in the region does not necessarily mean that they provide quality education. Many of the farm workers in this study indicated that the township schools in the region were poorly resourced and did not prepare them for higher education, hence, some of them attended schools in towns and cities outside of the Langkloof Valley. Davies (1990:20) notes that during the apartheid era, some farm workers used their resources and social networks to send their children to urban areas to further their education, whilst many farm workers did not have the resources or social connections, and their children remained in rural or farm schools.

The consequence of sending children to rural schools or farm schools during that era was that they would end up dropping out of school and seeking employment on the white-owned farms in those rural agricultural districts. The whole system of education on the farms is not designed to empower the local population but to ensure a continuing supply of subservient labour. Ms Sullette Meyer, a sorter at Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd, described her experience of attending high school outside the Langkloof Valley:

> I attended primary school here in Krakeel and then went to Uitenhage for high school. In Uitenhage, I stayed with friends and attended a high school there. This was a very good school, and the teachers at the school were very dedicated. My grandmother paid for the school and also sent me pocket money to help out with groceries where I stayed with my friends. I stopped school in grade 11 because my grandmother died and could not send me money for school fees, groceries, and stuff. I left Uitenhage and had to come back and help my uncle, who was the only adult left in the house. (03/12/2018).

Mr Leroy January, a general worker at a farm affiliated with Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd, also described how the cycle of poverty in the Langkloof Valley pushes people into farm work:

> Krakeel has a lot of hardships that are driven by poverty. Krakeel River only has a primary school and no high school. People have to send their children to surrounding towns for high school. This makes life difficult, especially for those parents who do not have money to pay for boarding for their children in those towns. There are no recreational or developmental services for young people in Krakeel. Many children do not finish high school and become unemployed or look for work on the farms. This place is almost forgotten by the government. (21/11/2018).

The low levels of education among farm workers in this study induce their vulnerability and exploitability on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley.

### 8.3.3 Employment Backgrounds of Farm Workers Interviewed

Limited access to quality education and the generational cycle of poverty in many black and coloured families in the Langkloof Valley have a direct impact on the low educational levels of farm workers in the region. This cycle of poverty also restricts career opportunities outside farm work in the Langkloof Valley, which is largely exploitative.

In rural farming districts like the Langkloof Valley, the agricultural sector is one of the main employers in the Koukamma municipality (ECSECC, 2017). Table 8.9 outlines the employment experiences of the farm workers in this study before their current employment on the selected apple farms.

**Table 8.9: Employment history prior to current job**

| Sector | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Agriculture | 50 | 66.7% |
| Unemployed | 15 | 20% |
| Other sectors | 5 | 13.3% |
| **Total** | **75** | **100%** |

The employment history of two-thirds of the farm workers (66.7%) who participated in this study (before their current jobs) was solely in the agricultural sector. Only a small percentage of these farm workers (13.3%) have employment experience in other sectors outside of agriculture, while a fifth (20%) were unemployed. Like their guardians, this also shows a consistent correlation between low levels of education and farm work in the Langkloof Valley. The findings in table 8.9 confirm the previous point on the cycle of poverty being passed on from one generation to the next. Farm workers' guardians had low levels of education (did not exceed primary school), which limited their career options to farm work. The farm workers in this study also followed a similar pattern of having low levels of education (did not exceed high school) and being employed on farms in the region. This means that, although the farm workers had slightly higher educational levels than their guardians (or parents), they ended up doing the same type of work as their parents. The poor socio-economic conditions that plague most black and coloured people in the Langkloof Valley limit their educational and career options; hence, they resort to farm labour as their guardians had done before them. Mr Jan Jaer, a supervisor at a farm owned by Kloof Fruit Company, described how the cycle of poverty in his family forced him to work on the apple farms (in the Langkloof Valley) from a young age:

> My parents attended primary school but did not go further. My mother stopped in standard 5 [grade 7], and my father dropped out in standard 3 [grade 5]. My parents were forced by difficult circumstances to drop out of school and work on the farms.

> My father worked his way up to supervisor on this farm [owned by Kloof Fruit Company] and my mother was a seasonal worker at different packhouses. I stopped school in stand 8 [grade 10] because my father got very sick and I had to find a job to help support the family because my mother's wages were not enough to take care of the whole family. When is started working, it was not on this farm [owned by Kloof Fruit Company], but on another farm near Louterwater where I worked as a seasonal worker for about five years. Whilst working on that farm, the farmer on this farm [owned by Kloof Fruit Company] told me that I could not work on another farm and live here on this farm. I decided to leave that job and came to work here, where I have been working here for 23 years now. (22/11/2018).

The generational cycle of poverty ensures a continued supply of vulnerable and exploitable coloured and black labour force on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. Selwyn (2016) labels GCs (in different industries) 'global poverty chains' because they habitually utilize the most vulnerable workers in the global South because they are willing to accept low wages out of desperation. Furthermore, the generational cycle of poverty impacts the farm workers who later become land reform beneficiaries, where their vulnerability is exploited by their white commercial partners (in the Langkloof Valley) to absorb the cost pressures from the global supermarkets in the global apple value chain. This thesis is not in any way claiming that GCs are the sole driver of labour exploitation or labour rights violations in the global South, however, the race to the bottom strategies imposed by global supermarkets intersects with the profit maximization strategies of apple farmers (in the Langkloof Valley).

The combination of these profit maximization strategies in the global apple value chain transfers cost pressures onto a vulnerable black and coloured labour force stemming from generational cycles of poverty in the Langkloof Valley. It is for this reason that this study emphasizes the symbiotic relationship among the spheres of trade exchange, production and social reproduction in the global apple value chain. Lastly, on this issue, it is worth noting that the generational cycle of poverty in the rural commercial farming districts of South Africa was started by colonial conquest, which dispossessed indigenous people from their land and relegated them to becoming an exploited peasant class employed on farms exporting apples to Europe. Wallerstein and Hopkins (1986) indicate that GCs existed before the 1800s.

Therefore, using the concepts of dependency theory and world systems theories, it is important to note that colonies were established as sites of extraction, where European imperialists extracted resources from the colonies to develop their mother countries in Europe (Frank, 1979; Rodney, 1973; Wallerstein and Hopkins, 1986). This transfer of resources from the colonies to the European nations took place through rudimentary GCs, meaning that they contributed to land dispossessions and generational cycles of poverty among many black and coloured people residing in rural commercial farming districts such as the Langkloof Valley. Some critics may contend that modern global supermarkets (lead firms) do not create generational cycles of poverty in these districts, as they merely encounter them through trading relations with local producers.

Global supermarkets, however, in the global apple value chain, are exploiting and exacerbating the generational cycles of poverty among black and coloured people based in rural commercial farming districts, which were a part of the colonial GCs. Nevertheless, when coming from a generational cycle of poverty, farm work becomes a means to an end for most of the coloured and black people residing in the Langkloof Valley. Most of the people who seek employment on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley often come from vulnerable backgrounds and are desperate to make ends meet. This is evident in the statement made by Mr Foidal De Vos, a supervisor at a farm owned by Kloof Fruit Company:

> I was born here in the Langkloof but went to school in Cape Town because I had family there. I finished matric and enrolled for social development at the University of the Western Cape [UWC]. Whilst at the university, I got caught up in gang activity, which got me into trouble with the law. I got excluded from the university when I was charged with a crime that I cannot speak about. For that crime, I was sentenced to 14 years and nine months in prison. This stopped my career trajectory because I wanted to be a social worker. When I came out of prison, I got caught up again with the gang activity as an organizer. I did this for six to seven years. I decided to leave that life and searched for work here in the Langkloof. (03/12/2018).

The dominance of apple farms in the Langkloof does not necessarily mean that permanent or full-time work is readily available because the production of apples is seasonal. The apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley are constantly trying to reduce costs through downsizing and casualizing their labour force, thus increasing the competition for employment on their farms.

## 8.4 SECURING WORK IN THE LANGKLOOF VALLEY

One of the key pillars of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda is the creation of employment, which is seen as an inevitable outcome of participating in global chains (Selwyn, 2013). This assumption is supported by neoliberal institutions (such as the Bretton Woods Institutions) that perceive GCs as key to creating employment in areas where the supplier firms in the global South are located in developing countries participating in GCs (World Bank, 2020). Selwyn (2013) criticized this neoliberal logic for equating employment creation in GCs to social upgrading. A major flaw in this logic is that there is no serious interrogation of the quality of the jobs created and how the workers in developing countries secure work at the bottom end of GCs. The ILO's Decent Work Agenda does not fully appreciate the power contestations and class dynamics that define the methods of job recruitment for marginalized population groups in the global South nations that supply global chains. Table 8.10 shows whether the farm workers who participated in this study thought it was easy or difficult to secure work on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley.

**Table 8.10: Securing work on the selected farms**

| | **Race** | | **Sex** | | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Securing work** | **Black** | **Coloured** | **Male** | **Female** | |
| Easy | 27.3% (6) | 13.2% (7) | 22.5% (9) | 11.4% (4) | 17.3% (13) |
| Difficult | 72.7% (16) | 86.8% (46) | 77.5% (31) | 88.6% (31) | 82.7% (62) |
| **Total** | **100% (n=22)** | **100% (n=53)** | **100% (n=40)** | **100% (n=35)** | **100% (n=75)** |

Note: The number in parentheses indicates sub-group sample numbers

Most of the farm workers (82.7%) in this study found it difficult to secure work on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley, while less than one-fifth of the farm workers (17.3%) found it easy to secure work in the region. Comparing the sub-samples, a higher percentage of black workers (27.3%) than coloured farm workers (13.2%) thought it was easy to secure work in the Langkloof Valley. At the same time, a higher share of male farm workers (22.5%) found it easier to secure work in the region than their female counterparts (11.4%). Overall, table 8.10 clearly shows that only a small share of workers thought it was easy to secure work in the Langkloof Valley.

One of the main reasons given by farm workers is that apple farmers in the region are employing fewer people on their farms because of the government's minimum wage. This sentiment was expressed by a few scholars who indicated that the introduction of the minimum wage in the agricultural sector of South Africa has led to job shedding (Bhorat et al., 2014; Visser and Ferrer, 2015). BFAP (2012) also attributes job shedding on commercial farms in South Africa to the increased mechanization of core production processes, which has reduced their dependence on manual farm labour. Visser (2016) notes that the mechanization of the production processes on fruit farms in South Africa is profit-driven, as they can meet the local and global market demands whilst reducing the costs of labour.

The notion of job shedding on the farms in South Africa also intensifies the competition (among locals and even migrants) for limited jobs on commercial farms, thus increasing the chances of farm workers accepting lower wages to survive. ECSECC (2017) showed that Koukamma municipality has high levels of unemployment, low levels of education and low incomes among the black and coloured population who must compete for jobs with migrants who are willing to meet the demands of farmers for low-cost labour to absorb the race to the bottom strategies imposed on them by global supermarkets. This situation clearly shows an example of the intersection between the sphere of trade exchange and social reproduction (Baglioni et al., 2022:91-92; Dunaway, 2013). Mr Jilhandre Thomas, a general worker at Koukamma Vrugte, explained why work is not easy to find in the region:

> Back in the day, work was not difficult to find. Most of us had family members living on the farms, and we would always find jobs easily through them. But since the farmers chased a lot of our friends and families out of the farms, it is a bit trickier to find work. Also, the ANC government puts pressure on the farmers, especially with the R18 per hour (minimum wage), so the farmers do not want to employ a lot of people on their farms. Also, they hire foreigners because those guys don't ask for that R18 per hour. They work for whatever the farmer gives them because they have to send money to Zimbabwe. So now, the competition for jobs on the farms here is quite intense. I would say work is difficult to get, especially for us locals. (03/12/2018).

Both table 8.10 and the statement above show that work is difficult to secure on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. Table 8.10 shows that race does not play a significant role in securing employment in the Langkloof Valley as it did in the 1980s when the white farmers in the region preferred coloured workers over black workers (Bekker et al., 1982).

Interestingly, even during that period, there was a smaller percentage of white farmers in the Langkloof Valley who were employing black farm workers and did not pay attention to race. The findings in this study show that this latter sentiment has increased, as race is shown to be a lesser determinant of labour outcomes of farm workers (on the selected apple farms) in the Langkloof Valley. The consideration of sex in the outcomes outlined in table 8.10 shows a consistency with the literature on farm labour in South Africa, which indicated that males found it easier to secure work on farms than females (Atkinson, 2007; Bekker et al., 1982; Davies, 1990). Marcus (1989) notes that females in South Africa secured work on the farms through their male associates (family or partners).

Additionally, the literature on farm labour in South Africa shows that employment practices in the agricultural sector were patriarchal and that women were viewed as an extension of men rather than independent human beings who could secure work on merit (Atkinson, 2007; Marcus, 1989). The findings in table 8.10 also show that mostly black and male farm workers found it easier to secure work on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley, thus showing a discontinuation of race being a strong determinant of securing work on the farms and a continuation of sex being a strong determinant. Table 8.11 below outlines the most effective ways of securing work on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. It is worth repeating that the sample of 75 farm workers does not represent the experience of all the farm workers employed on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. Nevertheless, the responses and experiences of the farm workers who participated in this study are important.

**Table 8.11: The best way of securing work on the selected farms**

| The best way of securing work | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Personal connections with supervisor | 46 | 60% |
| Bribery | 11 | 14.7% |
| Experience and employment record | 10 | 13.3% |
| Apply at the organization | 8 | 12.3% |
| **Total** | **75** | **100%** |

Most of the farm workers (60%) who participated in this study identified personal connections with a supervisor as the best way of securing employment on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. It is worth noting that more farm workers (14.7%) in this study thought that bribery increased one's chances of securing work on the local farms than through employment experience (13.3%) and applying directly at the farm (12.3%). This does not mean that merit is not important to securing work on the selected apple farms in this study; however, having personal connections with and bribing the supervisors was more effective. Ms Martina Beste, a packer at Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd, explained why having personal connections with a supervisor is important for securing a job on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley:

> Work is hard to find in Langkloof. Most work in the Langkloof is seasonal, which means that you work for five to six months in the year. The rest of the year, people remain unemployed, or they find other ways to survive, like through family networks or odd jobs. Most people find work through knowing someone [supervisor] who works in a packhouse or an orchard. If you do not know anyone in such a position, you will find it hard to be considered for the following employment cycle when the new season starts. (22/11/2018).

The statement above summarizes the sentiment of most of the farm workers in this study, who identified supervisors as gatekeepers to employment on the farms in the region. This is a longstanding practice in the agricultural sector of South Africa (Davies, 1990; Marcus, 1989). From an SLA perspective, this finding shows that most of the farm workers in this study secured their jobs on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley by accessing social capital. The generational cycle of poverty and the limited availability of jobs on farms (due to mechanisation, job shedding and casualization to absorb pressures from global supermarkets) can be considered as a vulnerable context. In SLA discourse, vulnerability contexts (of any nature) compel people to utilize various forms of capital at their disposal to survive and sustain their livelihoods (Ballet et al., 2007; DFID, 2000; Portes, 1998; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). In this context, social capital is used by most participants in this study to secure employment to sustain their livelihoods. Once again, there is evidence of a connection among the spheres of trade exchange, production and social reproduction (Baglioni et al., 2022). This study also showed that some supervisors on the selected apple farms in this study also played the role of labour brokers, which also constitutes using social capital to secure employment on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley.

The use of labour brokers has been part of South African agriculture for many years. Bekker et al.'s (1982) study showed that white farmers in the Langkloof Valley hired their black supervisors to go into their homelands (such as the former Transkei or Ciskei) to recruit labour for the harvesting seasons. Labour broking is not illegal in South Africa, but the BCEA makes provision for joint liability between farmers and labour brokers for non-compliance to labour laws (Webb, 2017). Barrientos (2013), however, argues that labour brokers are used by farmers (engaged in global horticultural value chains) as a means of externalizing labour costs to transfer cost pressures from global supermarkets, thus inducing the precarity of an already vulnerable labour force on farms. The findings from this study also showed consistency with the labour broking system identified by Bekker et al. (1982) in the Langkoof Valley. This study showed that labour brokers (who are supervisors on the apple farms) in the Langkloof Valley are known to travel as far as the former Transkei and Ciskei in search of cheap labour for the apple harvesting season.

Once these individuals secure a group of workers, they head back to the farms in the Langkloof Valley, where they are housed in hostels on the farms or makeshift accommodations in the townships near their places of employment. This semi-indentured group of workers earn wages in two distinct ways. The most common way is through the farmer, who pays the workers directly, and they subsequently pay a certain percentage of this wage to the labour broker. The less common method of payment is through the labour broker; that is, the farmer gives the labour broker a lump sum of money every month, and the labour broker is responsible for distributing this money to his group of workers. The relationship between the labour broker and his group of recruited labour is known to be exploitative because the labour broker can either overcharge their portion of the wage or underpay the workers to increase their cut from the lump sum from the farmer. Mr Foidal Devos, a supervisor at a farm owned by Kloof Fruit Company, described the exploitative relationship between labour brokers and their recruits in Langkloof Valley:

> There is a group of these guys in the Langkloof Valley. Most of them are *pongos* [supervisors] like me, [but] some operate independently. I'm not a labour broker. But I know guys get guys from Transkei and bring them here. They provide these guys with transport and places to stay, and they even sell dagga to them on credit. But it's sad. You see, these guys have to pay the labour brokers ten or 20 per cent of their wages. I also know another pongo who pays the workers himself.

> I can't tell you the name, but this pongo cheats those guys. I feel sorry for them because they are young, and they are happy to get a little money for beer, *dagga* [cannabis] and girls in the taverns. I don't know how much they send home. I do not think they should operate. These guys also encouraged kids to leave school and work on farms. This is a problem. (03/12/2018).

It is important to note that not all supervisors on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley are labour brokers. However, most supervisors function as gatekeepers to securing work on the farms in the region. Labour brokers exploit the vulnerability of these farm workers, especially those who are not from the Langkloof Valley. The farm workers who operate under a labour broker often feel indebted to the labour broker and complain about being cheated or ill-treated because they will not be called for the harvesting cycle. The farm workers who participated in this study indicated that an alternative way of accelerating one's employment on the apple farms in the region is through bribery. The farm workers in this study indicated that bribery comes in the form of money or non-cash methods such as sexual favours, alcohol and other means depending on the demands of the gatekeeper. This shows that some farm workers utilize financial capital (money), human capital (in the form of their bodies), and social capital (in the form of the gatekeeper) to secure employment on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley to maintain their livelihoods. Mr Tendai Tshedzi, a field worker employed at Koukamma Vrugte Trust, explains:

> It is very difficult to find work in the Langkloof. If you want to find a job in this area, you must approach a *pongo* [supervisor]. When you approach this individual, you must have something in your hand to get a favour from him to get you a job. This could be money or something like whiskey or brandy. You are basically buying a job. Some women in this area can even use sex to get a job for the season. (02/12/2018).

When considering the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, it can be inferred that the notion of 'employment creation' for the farm workers (in this study) is far from ethical or decent. Social upgrading in terms of 'employment creation' is not inclusive for all the farm workers in this study. The decreasing number of jobs available on the apple farms, coupled with intense competition among locals and foreign nationals, throws a huge question mark on the fairness or decency in the creation of employment from participating in the global apple value chain.

Mainstream global chain scholars tend to focus on the number of jobs created rather than how marginalized people secure these jobs and their employment experiences (Selwyn, 2013; 2016). Although the voluntary violation of labour laws by some apple farms in the Langkloof Valley shows a clear (private and public) governance deficit, it would be disingenuous not to acknowledge the vertical and horizontal profit-driven practices that induce these violations. The generational cycles of poverty and the migratory statuses of farm workers in the Langkloof Valley are not caused by global supermarkets. However, they benefit from this worker precarity, which is further exploited by the selected apple farmers. That is why this study emphasizes the interaction between the spheres of trade exchange, production, and social reproduction in the global apple value chain.

## 8.5 EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF THE FARM WORKERS IN THIS STUDY

Workers' employment outcomes and experiences at the bottom end of GCs are not homogenous but rather segmented at different levels. For Rossi (2013), the labour force at the bottom-end of GCs is traditionally divided into two distinct groups: a small group of semiskilled (decently paid) workers and a larger pool of low-skilled (poorly paid) workers. Research on farm labour in South Africa's export-oriented agri-food value chains supports this viewpoint, as farmers are increasingly casualizing their labour force and employing fewer workers on permanent employment contracts (Visser and Ferrer, 2015; Visser, 2016). This labour force segmentation is not a phenomenon that started after 1994. Davies (1990:22) notes that during the apartheid era, "the most drastic consequence of the mechanisation and restructuring of South African agriculture has been the destabilisation of the workforce.

A small core group of workers has acquired new skills as machine operators and supervisors, and since farmers must pay higher wages for skilled work, they have sought to reduce the cost of unskilled labour. The answer has been to rely more and more on seasonal or 'part-time' labour". This study shows that the sphere of production is influenced by the sphere of trade exchange and the sphere of social reproduction as well. Table 8.12 shows the employment status of the farm workers who participated in this study. It is worth noting that most of the permanent semi-skilled jobs in the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley are technocentric in some way, whilst the seasonal low-skilled jobs are generally manual.

**Table 8.12: Employment statuses of farm workers**

| | Race | | Sex | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Employment status** | **Black** | **Coloured** | **Male** | **Female** | |
| Permanent | 45.5% (10) | 28.3% (15) | 55% (22) | 8.6% (3) | 33.3% (25) |
| Seasonal | 54.5% (12) | 71.7% (38) | 45% (18) | 91.4% (32) | 66.7% (50) |
| **Total** | **100% (n=22)** | **100% (n=53)** | **100% (n=40)** | **100% (n=35)** | **100% (n=75)** |

Note: The number in parentheses indicates sub-group sample numbers

Two-thirds of the farm workers (66.7%) who participated in this study were employed on seasonal contracts, while only one-third of the farm workers (33.3%) were permanently employed. In terms of race, coloured farm workers (71.7%) constituted a higher percentage of the farm workers who were employed on seasonal contracts than black workers (54.5%). On the other hand, black farm workers (45.5%) constituted a higher percentage of the workers who were employed on permanent contracts than coloured workers (28.3%). Unlike the pre-1994 employment practices on farms in the Langkloof Valley, this study will also show that race is less of a determinant of employment outcomes on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. Regarding sex, a higher percentage of males (55%) were employed on permanent contracts than females (8.6%). Additionally, females (91.4%) constituted a far greater percentage of seasonal farm workers than their male counterparts (45%).

This study will show that sex and employment status are strong determinants of whether farm workers experience social upgrading or downgrading, thus shattering the notion of inclusive social upgrading in the global apple value chain. The dominance of seasonal farm workers in the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley speaks to the industrial reserve army of labour, as they experience periods of unemployment annually. It is important to note that according to ECSECC (2017:46), KouKamma Local Municipality experienced an average annual increase of 2.95% in the number of unemployed people who constitute the reserve army of labour in the region. Apple farmers having access to a reserve army of labour in the Langkoof Valley is part of their profit maximization strategy of paying low wages whilst trying to meet the demands of global supermarkets, which are in a perpetual race to the bottom demanding top-quality apples at the lowest price possible from these apple farmers in the region.

For Marx (1967), the expansion of a reserve army of labour is an inevitable outcome of capital accumulation. As capital accumulated, it threw certain workers out of employment into a reserve army; conversely, to accumulate, capital needed a reserve army of labour. Without such a reserve, capital accumulation would cause wages to rise, and the process of accumulation would itself be threatened as surplus value was squeezed. Colombini (2020) contends that, at the turn of the twenty-first century, modern global production networks have consolidated new forms of work to optimize profit margins for capital. For example, both the active working class and the industrial reserve army are constituted in a much more fluid way. The coexistence between permanent and seasonal workers in this study is evidence of this fluidity between the two classes of workers.

The employment of two-thirds of seasonal workers on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley shows the 'dark value' (Clelland, 2014) or the 'hidden abode' of production in the global apple value chain. This value chain is held up by farm workers who are vulnerable and in a precarious state of existence, as they find themselves in and out of employment on apple farms and are desperate to such an extent that they experience exploitation at the hands of their employers in this study. The ILO's Decent Work Agenda, which is the foundation of 'social upgrading' in GCs, must integrate seasonal employment, which breeds income insecurity or uncertainty because it is questionable that income insecurity can socially upgrade the lives of workers employed in GCs (the global apple value chain included).

The findings in Table 8.10 partly answer the underlying research question as they show that only a small percentage of farm workers in this study are employed on permanent contracts. This means that there is no inclusive social upgrading for the larger group of farm workers who are employed on seasonal contracts. One of the main criticisms that Selwyn (2013:8182) levelled against the ILO's Decent Work Agenda is that it is relatively devoid of analysing the causes of indecent work and processes contributing to its amelioration. Similarly, Visser and Ferrer (2024) solely attribute non-compliance (to labour laws) by apple farmers in the Western Cape to governance deficits alone and ignore the profit-driven mechanisms that drive the global apple value chain and induce non-compliance. This study shows that the ILO's Decent Work Agenda caters to permanently employed workers (who are in the minority), rather than the bulk of the seasonally employed farm workers employed on the selected export-driven apple farms based in the Langkloof Valley.

Mr Johan Groenewald-Sterling, the CEO of Fresh Orchards Incorporated, expresses his opinion on why apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley are employing more seasonal workers:

> Unfortunately, for political reasons, the government has abandoned support for farmers. Our competitors in France, for example, get subsidised to plant trees and create jobs. We can't even retain a large percentage of our workers during the off-season. Where are we going to get the money to keep the guys employed during the off-season? So, we only employ permanent workers, who also come in maybe three times a week during the off-season. We are even employing fewer of these workers now because the labour costs are increasing in this country. That is another reason we are investing in technologies, which can help us reduce labour costs. Unfortunately, politics has a negative and uninformed way of intervening in agriculture. A lot of farmers feel unsure whether they are welcome in this country. (08/05/2019).

This study shows that apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley are caught in a pricing crunch, and the state's lack of support is forcing farmers to restructure the labour force to the detriment of the rural farming communities. Visser and Ferrer (2015:7) contend that the "government's failure to take a value chain perspective of the industry's woes has resulted in a macroeconomic policy that is increasingly weakening producers' bargaining power in the market. Supporting farm workers without simultaneously supporting producers will be an exercise in futility. It is necessary to strengthen the bargaining power of both producers and workers to ensure that profit is distributed more equitably along the value chain". This study asserts that the profit maximization strategies at both the vertical and horizontal levels need to be authentically addressed as they compromise the possibility of Decent Work for a large group of workers. The ILO's Decent Work Agenda seemingly caters to a stable standard (permanent) labour force, rather than the reality of seasonal workers who dominate global agri-food chains. In the case of race (although using a different sample), Bekker et al.'s (1982) study showed that there were more coloured farm workers employed on permanent contracts than their black counterparts. This study shows that race is not a strong determinant of employment outcomes on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. The sexual disparities in the employment statuses of the farm workers in this study align with the outcomes of other studies on farm labour in South Africa which indicate that permanent job positions on farms were mostly dominated by males from the early days of colonialism to the present democratic era (Davies, 1990; Du Toit and Ally, 2003; Kritzinger and Vorster, 1996; Marcus, 1989).

This division of labour is common on commercial fruit farms in South Africa, as research shows that, during peak seasons, deciduous fruit farms in the Western Cape often hire large numbers of female workers on seasonal contracts (Eriksson, 2018). Bekker et al.'s (1982) study showed that most of the farm workers employed on permanent contracts in the Langkloof Valley were male. This study shows a continuation of this trend, as males dominate the category of permanently employed farm workers. Table 8.12 shows that the farm workers (in this study) who were mostly permanently employed were black and male. This finding shows that race is no longer a strong determiner of being employed on permanent contracts, whilst sex remains a strong determiner. A developing pattern in this study is that female workers who are mostly employed on seasonal contracts are vulnerable, and the notion of Decent Work as per the ILO is questionable. Mezzadri A. (2016b) argues that lead firms in GCs seek the most vulnerable workers (who are mostly female) in developing countries to reduce costs and appropriate profits, which makes it difficult for this group of workers to achieve decent work.

## 8.6 INDUCTION TRAINING FOR EMPLOYMENT

Induction training is an essential part of starting any form of employment, as this process helps new employees familiarize themselves with the organization and their key responsibilities. The duration and intensity of the induction training depends on (among other factors) the nature of the job and the skills required for it. Table 8.13 shows the duration of the induction training that farm workers underwent before starting work.

**Table 8.13: Length of training for employees interviewed**

| Length of training | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| More than 3 days | 6 | 10.5% |
| Less than 3 days | 51 | 89.5% |
| **Total** | **57** | **100%** |

This study has shown that the duration of induction training for most of the farm workers (89.5%) in this study was less than three days, whilst almost one-tenth (10.5%) of the farm workers experienced more than three days of induction training. Most of the farm workers in the Langkloof Valley have a long history of working on the farms and are familiar with the jobs, hence the minimal number of days dedicated to induction training by most apple farmers.

The bulk of the work performed by seasonal farm workers is low-skilled and involves tasks such as picking, sorting and packing apples. This does not mean that these tasks are less intense, as they are strictly monitored, and farms differ in how they expect farm workers to perform their tasks. Barrientos and Visser (2012) note that South African farmers engaged in global agrifood value chains are cautious about spending money on training, as they are in a financially constrained situation and are continuously seeking ways of cutting costs. Advanced training for the more technical jobs is reserved for permanent farm workers. The lack of adequate training for the seasonal farm workers places them in a pressure-filled environment where they must quickly adjust, or they may risk being penalized through warnings, which, after accumulating to three, results in retrenchment. Ms Florence Kaap, who is employed at Fresh Orchards Incorporated, explained how training periods are a widespread practice in the packhouses and orchards in the Langkloof Valley farms:

> Training for farm work in the Langkloof is very short. A lot of us have been working on the farms since we were young, so we know farm work. The training is very short. When the new guys come, they have to learn fast. The pongo usually shows them how to pick an apple, and they monitor them for a day. The second day, you have to know what you are doing. In the packhouse, it's the same. My lady works there, so I know. Most of the ladies have been working in the packhouse their whole lives. The lady pongos [supervisors] also teach the newbies how to pack the apples and monitor them the whole day. On the second day, the ladies have to work like other experienced packers. So, we get training for a day or two, then we have to sink or swim. (19/11/2018).

The race to the bottom imposed by global supermarkets on selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley has a direct impact on the quality of employment on these farms. The short training sessions for the seasonal workers (some of whom have no experience) place negative pressure on farm workers, which may impact their performance and psycho-emotional state as well. Vertical and horizontal profit maximization strategies in the global value chain compromise the notion of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, which appears to cater to stable, permanently employed farm workers rather than seasonal farm workers who constitute the bulk of the labour force on the apple farms covered in this study. It is worth noting (again) that the sample in this study does not represent the entire population or experiences of farm workers on the apple farms in the region.

## 8.7 OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Mainstream GC (especially the contemporary GCC and GVC) discourse assumes that workers employed at the bottom-end of global chains will automatically experience skills and career upgrades due to their firms upgrading their operations through global chain participation (Knorringa and Pegler, 2007; Puppim de Oliveira, 2008). Visser and Ferrer (2015:65) contend that farm employment can offer the potential for upward social mobility into the ranks of supervisors, managers, machine operators and other specialist jobs. This social mobility, however, is often contingent on workers acquiring the skills to use these opportunities. Table 8.14 determines whether the farm workers interviewed (in this study) experienced skills and job upgrading.

**Table 8.14: Skills and job upgrading**

| | **Race** | | **ex** | | **Employment Status** | | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Skills and job upgrading** | **Black** | **Coloured** | **Male** | **Female** | **Permanent** | **Seasonal** | |
| Yes | 22.7% (5) | 28.3% (15) | 37.5% (15) | 14.3% (5) | 44% (11) | 18% (9) | 26.7% (20) |
| No | 77.3% (17) | 71.7% (38) | 62.5% (25) | 85.7% (30) | 56% (14) | 82% (41) | 73.3% (55) |
| **Total** | **100% (n=22)** | **100% (n=53)** | **100% (n=40)** | **100% (n=35)** | **100% (n=25)** | **100% (n=50)** | **100% (n=75)** |

Note: The number in parentheses indicates sub-group sample numbers

Most of the farm workers (73.3%) who participated in this study did not experience skills and job upgrading in their places of employment. Just over a quarter of the farm workers (26.7%) in this study reported skills and job upgrading, and there are notable differences between subsamples. For example, a far lower percentage (18%) of seasonal workers reported skills and job upgrading relative to permanent workers (44%). This outcome corresponds with Barrientos and Visser (2012:23) who found that farmers are more likely to provide training for permanent workers than seasonal or casual workers, primarily because rates of staff turnover are generally lower for permanent employees (often only 5-15% per annum) than for seasonal workers (up to 40% per annum). At the same time, a much larger share of men than women in the sample received skills training and job upgrading (37.5% and 14.3%, respectively). This finding shows clear discrimination by sex, as males are favoured for training and career advancement opportunities over their female counterparts.

This finding also aligns with Visser and Ferrer's (2015) assertion that there is a bias based on sex in the agricultural sector in the provision of training and promotion opportunities. For example, Kritzinger and Vorster (1996:345) found that while approximately half of all men on Western Cape fruit farms received formal training through attending courses, the corresponding percentage for women was only 30%. Ms Caroline Conrad, a general worker employed at a farm owned by Fresh Orchards Incorporated, gave an account of her experience with gender bias in skills and job upgrading opportunities:

> I've been working on this farm for many years, but I'm still a general worker. I would say that the men are luckier than us because some are sent to courses and come back with certificates. These guys quickly become permanent after they attend these courses. Some of them came to work on this farm after me, but they overtook me and many other ladies. There are about three guys I know who are now *pongos* [supervisor], but they arrived here after me. I think the *boer* [farmer] likes the men more than us. Even though we see these things, we don't complain out loud because we don't want to rock the boat or make the farmer angry. (19/11/2018).

This study indicates that sex remains a strong determinant of employment outcomes on these selected apple farms. In the agricultural sector of South Africa (and in this study), employment status is closely linked with sex, as males have a higher chance of receiving upskilling and job upgrading opportunities than females (Kritzinger and Vorster, 1996). The differences by race appear to be much smaller where 28.3% of coloured workers and 22.7% of black workers reported skills and job upgrading. This finding (and others in this study) shows that race is becoming less of a factor in determining employment outcomes on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley than during the apartheid era (Bekker et al., 1982). A finding that will remain consistent in this study is that a small group of mostly male workers employed on permanent contracts experience better employment outcomes than the larger group of workers who are mostly female seasonal farm workers. Although race is becoming less of a factor in determining labour outcomes on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley, this supposed development is countered by a growing casualization of the labour force as fewer workers are employed on permanent contracts, and many females continue to experience worse employment outcomes. Labour-centric global chain studies, however, have shown that labour outcomes at the bottom end of global chains are highly segmented and increasingly casualized (Barrientos et al., 2011b; Rossi, 2013).

The upgrading of operations within any firm requires a few skilled workers to operate the new technocentric systems; however, most of the workers in production remain low-skilled and often underpaid (Rossi, 2013). Barrientos and Visser (2012) indicated that the South African farmers engaged in global horticultural value chains only provide upskilling and job upgrading opportunities to a small group of employees. Table 8.14 collectively shows that the farm workers in this study who had an opportunity to upskill and upgrade their job profiles were mostly coloured, male, and employed on permanent contracts. The uneven opportunities for upskilling and job upgrading are a result of cost-reduction strategies adopted by the selected apple farmers in response to the cost pressures from the global supermarkets. These findings increasingly show that decent work (as per the definition of the ILO) is experienced by a small group of farm workers, whilst the majority experience social downgrading. Milberg and Winkler (2011) labelled this outcome 'a mixed approach', that is, a combination of the low and high road approaches. This is a consistent finding in this thesis and strongly answers the underlying research question as it shows that the profit-driven global apple value chain has not created inclusive social upgrading for farm workers who participated in this study.

## 8.8 THE VALUE OF A VULNERABLE LABOUR FORCE

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the bulk of lead firms in GCs purchase their products from supplier firms located in developing countries that are endowed with natural resources, low currencies, and low production and labour costs (Suwandi, 2019). Marx (1967) argued that the secret to profit accumulation lies in the appropriation of surplus value, which is evident in the vertical and horizontal trade linkages in the global apple value chain. Smith (2016) contends that global labour arbitrage (the substitution of relatively high-wage workers in imperialist countries with low-wage workers in the Global South) is one of the key drivers of the globalization of production, which is a defining feature of the neoliberal era. Smith (2016:189) also cites Stephen Roach (a senior economist at Morgan Stanley), who indicated that "offshore outsourcing that extracts product from relatively low-wage workers in the developing world has become an increasingly urgent survival tactic for companies in the developed economies". In this context, the vulnerable state of low-wage workers in developing countries is ideal for multinational companies who use decreased wages as a profit-making and survival strategy. Both global supermarkets and the apple farms (in this study) are consistently seeking ways of appropriating as much surplus value as possible; as such, farm workers are the most affected by the race to the bottom cost pressures on them.

This phenomenon threatens the idea of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, as the search for cheaper forms of labour induces worker precarity rather than upgrading their working and living conditions. The violation of labour laws by apple producers (in the Langkloof Valley) should not be only blamed on governance deficits but on the entire GC, which is driven by a profit motive. Many producers in the global South compete to sell their produce in lucrative foreign markets; as such, they employ the most vulnerable population groups who they can employ at extremely low wages to gain a competitive edge. A vulnerable labour force is, therefore, ideal for producing profit in GCs (Clelland, 2014). Other GC studies have shown that supplier firms prefer employing a large pool of non-standard workers and a smaller pool of standard workers (Barrientos and Visser, 2012; Barrientos et al., 2016; Rossi, 2013). The division of this labour force is also determined by pre-existing social hierarchies in each geographical area.

The supplier firms merely exploit these pre-existing hierarchies. These hierarchies determine the outcomes and division of labour in the geographical territories where the supplier firms are located. Milberg and Winkler (2011) outline three supplier strategies that affect worker outcomes, which include: the low-road approach (involves economic and social downgrading), the high-road approach (involves economic and social upgrading) and a mixed approach (involves economic upgrading, social upgrading and social downgrading). Apple farmers (in this study) adopted a mixed approach, which includes economic upgrading, social upgrading and social downgrading. Economic upgrading is a necessity for participating in GCs, as this study showed that all the apple farmers (in this study) interviewed experienced different types of economic upgrading. Social upgrading is reserved for a small core of permanent farm workers, whilst most of the seasonal farm workers experience social downgrading. The increasing casualization of the labour force on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley is accompanied by the social downgrading of these farm workers. This social downgrading experienced by most of the farm workers who participated in this study goes against the principles of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda.

## 8.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a detailed discussion of the profiles of the farm workers who participated in this study. The farm workers who participated in this study came from poor socio-economic backgrounds perpetuated by a generational cycle of poverty (among other factors).

This generational cycle of poverty creates a group of vulnerable coloured and black people who are desperate for employment, as Koukamma municipality has high unemployment. Commercial apple farmers are continually mechanizing their operations and casualizing their labour force to reduce costs. This pressure to reduce costs is directly influenced by the global supermarkets that are imposing race-to-the-bottom strategies on the apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley who circumvent this pressure by transferring the costs onto labour. The drive for cheaper forms of labour in the global apple value chain makes the vulnerable group of black and coloured people residing in the Langkloof Valley an ideal labour force. This study also showed that race is becoming less of a determinant in the employment outcomes of farm workers, whilst sex (females being worse off than males) remains a significant determinant.

Most of the farm workers in this study were also younger with low levels of education, thus inducing their vulnerability. This race to the bottom is also seen in the increasing employment of migrant labourers who are willing to accept low wages (below the minimum wage), thus creating fierce competition with the vulnerable group of locals for the limited jobs on farms in the region. In addition to migrant labour, there are also labour brokers who are exploiting farm workers whom they recruit from the former homelands (such as the former Transkei and Ciskei). These recruits either must pay a portion of their low wage to the labour broker, or the labour broker is given a lump sum of money which they distribute unfairly to the recruits.

The labour brokers (mostly supervisors) also play the role of gatekeeper, as many farm workers secure their work either through personal contacts with these supervisors or through bribery (cash and noncash payments). This method of securing work induces the precarity of the farm workers in this study, who receive limited induction training. Thorough training and opportunities to upgrade skills and jobs are provided to a small core of permanently employed farm workers, whilst most seasonal farm workers do not get training that is longer than three days. The employment statuses of the farm workers show a mixed bag of outcomes, that is, economic upgrading followed by social upgrading and social downgrading. Overall, the vertical and horizontal profit maximization strategies in the global apple value chain are not only segmenting the labour force but are increasingly employing cheaper forms of labour.

# CHAPTER NINE

# EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS ON THE APPLE FARMS

## 9.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines (through the responses of farm workers who participated in this study) the extent to which the apple farms adhered to some of the key labour laws applicable to the agricultural sector of South Africa. As a signatory country of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, South Africa has a constitution that provides fair labour practices in all sectors of the economy. Farm workers in South Africa, for example, are protected by the following legislation, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (Act 75 of 1997), the Occupational Health and Safety Act (Act 85 of 1993), the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (Act 61 of 1997), the Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998), the Labour Relations Act (Act 66 of 1995) and the National Minimum Wage Act (2018). Sectoral Determination 13 is a legislative framework that typically outlines minimum employment conditions, such as wages, working hours, leave entitlements and other essential benefits specific to the agriculture sector (SAHRC, 2020). Research shows that farm workers continue to experience exploitation at the hands of their employers despite the existing labour legislation that is meant to protect farm workers (Devereux, 2020). This chapter covers the following key areas: employment contracts, working hours, income, health and safety, sanitation and water. By examining these respective areas of employment, this chapter connects the issue of compliance to the broader framework of GCs. This chapter shows how vertical and horizontal profit maximization strategies induce large-scale non-compliance and exploitation of farm workers on the selected commercial apple farms in the Langkloof Valley.

## 9.2 EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS

An employment contract is an agreement that covers the relationship between an employer and an employee. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) stipulates that employment contracts may be concluded orally or in writing and expressly or by implication (Labour Guide, 2021). There is no legal requirement for the employer to provide a written contract, but employers are well advised to draft written employment contracts with their employees to reduce any disagreements regarding the terms of employment (Western Cape Government, 2020).

An employment contract also helps employees to fully understand what is expected of them in the job position in which they are employed. Table 9.1 shows whether the farm workers who participated in this study signed an employment contract.

**Table 9.1: Signed employment contract**

| Employment contract | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 72 | 96% |
| No | 3 | 4% |
| **Total** | **75** | **100%** |

The signing of employment contracts seems to be a regular practice among the selected commercial apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. This is evident in the fact that the vast majority of the farm workers (96%) who participated in this study had signed employment contracts. In comparison, only 4% had not signed contracts before commencing their employment, showing a lack of inclusive social upgrading. This finding is consistent with that of Visser and Ferrer (2015:22), who indicated that 99.3% of those farm workers described as being formally employed had written employment contracts. During the apartheid era, formal written employment contracts were not the norm in the agricultural sector of South Africa. Davies (1990) notes that one of the main submissions made by the Farm Labour Project to the National Manpower Commission was to make written employment contracts enforceable. Nonetheless, signing an employment contract does not mean that the individual employed has read it or was given a chance to read it by their prospective employer. Table 9.2 shows whether the farm workers in this study read their employment contracts before signing them.

**Table 9.2: Read the employment contract**

| Employment contract | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 28 | 37.3% |
| No | 47 | 62.7% |
| **Total** | **75** | **100%** |

The information in the table above shows that almost two-thirds of the farm workers (62.7%) in this study did not read their employment contracts, and over one-third (37.3%) had read their contracts.

Some farm workers who participated in this study attributed this failure to read their employment contracts to the fact that their employers did not allow workers to read their contracts or consult an independent person/s to explain the contents. This sentiment was captured by Ms Claudine Augustus, a general employed at Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd:

> We do not really read the contract. The manager calls you into the office, and they do not give you a chance to read the contract. The contract is two whole pages, and it is in English and Afrikaans. Some workers cannot speak or understand both languages, and they struggle. Even those who do understand both English and Afrikaans are not given enough time to read the contract. You are expected to come into the office and sign and go back to work, simple and *klaar* [finished]. You need the job, so you do not rock the boat. (21/11/2018).

Some farm workers indicated that their employers read out the employment contracts to the workers during their induction. As Mr Glenden Montvoer, a chemical sprayer employed at a farm owned by Kloof Fruit Company, explained:

> When you arrive on the farm, the farm manager goes through the contract with the new workers during inductions. They even translate the contract into Xhosa and other languages because the contract is in Afrikaans. We are not allowed to take the contract home, however. I don't think that this is fair because I think some workers might not hear everything during the induction, and they may need to take the contract home to understand it better. You know, the whites think they are clever because sometimes they come to you whilst you are working, and they make you sign. Sometimes, they call you to the office to sign right there in front of the boss. (05/12/2018).

The two statements above show that some farm workers (in this study) employed on the apple farms of the Langkloof Valley are not allowed to take the employment contracts home for further perusal. Even in cases when the farmer reads out the contracts to the farm workers during induction, the farm workers are still not allowed to go outside the farm gates with the contracts to get a third opinion. Devereux's (2020:388) study indicated that some farm workers claimed they were forced to sign employment contracts despite disagreeing with the contents. In such instances, the supervisor or farmer reads the employment contract to the farm workers and orders them to sign it immediately and are not allowed to take it home.

Most of the farm workers in this study signed their employment contracts without reading them because they were desperate for employment and did not want to be seen as ‘difficult’ by the farmers. It is important to note that fear of unemployment and poverty shapes the behaviour of farm workers on the selected apple farms in this study. Anner (2015) referred to the fear of unemployment by workers in exploitative employment conditions as ‘market control’ because these conditions discourage worker activism. The farmers in the Langkloof Valley are well acquainted with each other, and they exchange notes about problematic farm workers, whom they label troublemakers. These workers are usually blacklisted, and they struggle to secure jobs on the apple farms in the region. The fear of being blacklisted or unemployed for extended periods regulates the behaviour of farm workers in this study.

Social dialogue is one of the key pillars of the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda because it promotes engagement between workers and their employers regarding employment-related issues. Nonetheless, the culture of fear evident among the farm workers who participated in this study raises questions about whether they have some leeway to engage with their employers about workplace issues and grievances. This fear of unemployment induces their vulnerability and discourages them from engaging in social dialogue with their employers, which contradicts the ethos of the ILO’s notion of decent work. The notion of inclusive social upgrading in the context of the farm workers (in this study) reading their employment contacts is not inclusive, because not everyone gets the opportunity to read their contracts, and many of those who do, are not given enough time to educate themselves about the nature of their employment contracts.

Profit maximization cannot be excluded from the reading of this finding, as the farmers (in this study) fear that workers who are well acquainted with their employment contracts may lead to various forms of protests when their contracts are violated. Even though many of the farm workers in this study were riddled with fear of engaging in social dialogue with their employers, the farmers wanted to suppress any form of protests which may halt production and their chances of making a profit as well. This partly answers the underlying research question of whether a profit-driven trading arrangement such as the global apple value chain leads to inclusive social upgrading because the evidence in this study suggests that inclusive social upgrading is not a reality.

## 9.3 WORKING HOURS

According to the BCEA, “an employer may not require or permit a farm worker to work more than 45 hours a week, nine hours if the farm worker works for five days or less in a week or eight hours if the farm worker works for more than five days in any week” (SAHRC, 2020:4). According to the Basic Condition of Employment Act (BCEA), an employer must pay a worker one-and-a-half times the ordinary rate for overtime worked (Van De Wall, 2015). Table 9.3 indicates the number of hours the farm workers in this study worked per week.

**Table 9.3: Working hours per week**

| Working hours per week | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Less than 45 hours | 25 | 33.3% |
| More than 45 hours | 50 | 66.7% |
| **Total** | **75** | **100%** |

Davies (1990) outlined how, during the apartheid era, farm workers in South Africa worked very long hours, which were largely determined by the farmer. Because no labour laws protected farm workers during that era, farmers could make their employees work very long hours. Two-thirds of the farm workers (66.7%) who participated in this study indicated that they worked more than 45 hours per week, excluding the weekend, and one-third of the workers (33.3%) worked less than 45 hours per week. The BCEA makes provision for workers to work longer than 45 hours per week if their employers compensate them. This finding prompted an interrogation of whether the farm workers were compensated for working overtime. Table 9.4 shows whether the farm workers who worked more than 45 hours per week (overtime) were compensated for working overtime.

**Table 9.4: Compensated for working overtime**

| Payment for overtime | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 4 | 8% |
| No | 46 | 92% |
| **Total** | **50** | **100%** |

This study shows that most of the farm workers (92%) who worked more than 45 hours a week were not compensated for working overtime, and only 8% received compensation.

This is a clear violation of the BCEA, which states that workers should be compensated for working more than 45 hours per week. Marx (1967) contends that one of the methods of appropriating surplus value (profit) is through increasing absolute surplus value (which entails lengthening the working day without increasing wages proportionately). Working overtime (without compensation) during the harvest season is the norm for many farm workers in the Langkloof Valley. Mr Gilmore Mere, a general worker at Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd, expressed his frustration over not being paid for overtime:

> During picking seasons, we work from 06:00 am – 18:00 pm per day, Monday to Friday. This is 60 hours per week. When we come back from work, we are tired, and our bodies ache. We work inside a packhouse, which can be so stuffy sometimes, especially when you are wearing that work uniform. We work so hard to make sure that the fruit is delivered in the best condition. Look, I wouldn't mind working these hours if we were paid overtime. But the farmer does not pay us for overtime. At Packing Fresh Pty Ltd, we only get paid overtime when you come to work on a Saturday or public holiday, then we get double. During the week, we work long hours, but we don't get paid for that. The money we make as farm workers is not enough, and most of us live with loans. (24/01/2019).

According to most of the farm workers who participated in this study, some apple farmers in the region do not compensate farm workers for working overtime during the week. Davies (1990:11) explained that, during the apartheid era, farm workers in South Africa usually worked extremely long hours without being compensated for overtime. Naidoo et al.'s (2007:37) study indicated that some farm workers in the Eastern Cape were not compensated for working overtime. This shows that some farmers in South Africa do not pay employees for working overtime. The findings in this study show that some apple farmers violated labour laws by not compensating their employees for working overtime. This is part of the cost-cutting strategies that some of these farmers are using to transfer the cost pressures imposed on them by global supermarkets in the global apple value chain. Smith (2016) and Willoughby and Gore (2018) identified global labour arbitrage and the race to the bottom as methods used by lead firms to maximize profits in GCs. Marx (1967) notes that one of the methods used by capitalists to increase profit or surplus value is through increasing absolute surplus value, that is, lengthening the working day without increasing wages proportionately.

The case of farm workers not being compensated for working overtime in this study is a classic example of the assertion made by Marx (1967). This vertical profit maximization strategy (imposed by global supermarkets) intersects with the horizontal profit-driven strategies adopted by apple farmers in this study. These conditions induce the voluntary violation of the labour laws about compensating employees for working overtime. This continued violation of labour laws shows loopholes in the public and private institutions that are tasked with monitoring labour standards on farms in South Africa. Inclusive social upgrading concerning workers being compensated for working overtime is not a reality for many of the farm workers in this study.

## 9.4 INCOME

### 9.4.1 Minimum Wages

According to Sectoral Determination 13, employers must pay their farm workers a minimum wage, which should be adjusted annually (SAHRC, 2020). Farmers must pay their employees daily, weekly, fortnightly or monthly in cash, or it can be deposited directly into a bank account chosen by the farm worker. Farm workers are also entitled to a payslip on every payday. In 2018/2019, when this study was conducted, farm workers were entitled to a minimum wage of R18 per hour, R162 per day, R810 per week and R3240 per month (IOL, 2018). Table 9.5 shows the monthly amount of money the farm workers who participated in this study received.

**Table 9.5: Monthly wages**

| | **Race** | | **Sex** | | **Employment Status** | | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Monthly wages** | **Black** | **Coloured** | **Male** | **Female** | **Permanent** | **Seasonal** | |
| More than R3240 | 41% (9) | 32% (17) | 40% (16) | 28.6% (10) | 48% (12) | 28% (14) | 34.7% (26) |
| Less than R3240 | 59% (13) | 68% (36) | 60% (24) | 71.4% (25) | 52% (13) | 72% (36) | 65.3% (49) |
| **Total** | **100% (n=22)** | **100% (n=53)** | **100% (n=40)** | **100% (n=35)** | **100% (n=25)** | **100% (n=50)** | **100% (n=75)** |

Note: The number in parentheses indicates sub-group sample numbers

Almost two-thirds of the sample (65.3%) earned less than the minimum wage, whilst just over one-third of the sample (34.7%) earned more than the minimum wage. Comparing between sub-samples, a higher percentage of black workers (41%) than coloured workers (32%) earned more than R3240 per month.

At the same time, a greater share of male workers (40%) earned above the minimum wage compared with their female counterparts (only 28.6%). Finally, a greater share of permanent workers (48%) earned above the minimum wage relative to seasonal workers (28%). The payment of extremely low wages in the agricultural sector of South Africa is not a new phenomenon. Pre-1994, farm worker wages in South Africa were not regulated by any legislation; as such, farmers paid their employees extremely low wages, which they justified through minuscule payments in kind (Bekker et al., 1982; Davies, 1990). Post-1994, despite Sectoral Determination 13, many farm workers (mostly employed on seasonal contracts) in South Africa are paid below the legal minimum wage (Devereux, 2020; Visser and Ferrer, 2015).

These findings signal a violation of Sectoral Determination 13 by the selected apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley, thus reflecting a strong governance deficit in the public and private stakeholders in the global apple value chain. Marx (1967) argues that capitalists also extract surplus value (profit) through immiseration (pushing down real wages) and super-exploitation (paying workers less than the costs of reproducing their labour power). From a GC perspective, Smith (2016) notes that lead firms utilize global labour arbitrage to meet what Marx noted above. In the global apple value chain, there is an intersection between the vertical and horizontal methods of surplus value extraction. The fact that most farm workers who participated in this study earned less than the (already low) minimum wage means that most of their livelihoods (and social security) are threatened in some way, hence, this study shows that most of the farm workers rely on multiple forms of capital to sustain their livelihoods.

Some critics seek to absolve the global supermarkets from the lack of compliance with the minimum wage laws by the apple farmers (in this study), however, the cost pressures they impose on apple farmers cannot be ignored. Although the non-compliance by some apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley is voluntary, it is worth noting that the agricultural sector of South Africa is export-dependent, a dependency dynamic which was established during the colonial era. Farmers engaging in global agri-food value chains are price takers, whilst global supermarkets are price makers, thus cementing their superior bargaining position in the trading relationship between these two entities. Global supermarkets are constantly seeking lower production prices, which leads to a reduction of labour costs and the violation of labour laws. The race to the bottom strategies imposed by global supermarkets on the selected apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley create an uneven distribution of wages and underpayment.

Figure 9.1 is an extract from an arbitration award issued by the CCMA, which shows concrete evidence that some farm workers in the apple industry of the Langkloof Valley are paid less than the applicable minimum wage.

**Figure 9.1: Extract from CCMA arbitration award, 2018**

25. *The Applicant seek compensation as a relief. I see no reason why the Applicant should not be compensated taken into account the nature and extent of the unfairness of his dismissal. He earned R140.00 per day and he worked five days a week. Calculating a week's salary would be as follows; R140.00 x 5 = R700.00. One month's salary amounts to R3031.00 (R700.00 x 4.33). I considered that six weeks has passed since the Applicant's dismissal. His dismissal was procedurally and substantively unfair. I therefore find that three months remuneration would be a fair and equitable relief. Calculating three months compensation would be as follows: R3031.00 x 3 = R9093.00.*

Source: CCMA arbitration award (2018).

It is important to note that there is an extremely low (below 5%) report rate of farm worker cases that are sent to the CCMA from the Langkloof Valley. The data from the interviews conducted with farm workers suggests that the fear of being retrenched and blacklisted by the farmers in the region deters many farm workers from approaching the CCMA. According to Anner (2015), market control (fear of retrenchment and unemployment) deters workers in GCs from raising their workplace grievances directly with their employers. The finding in table 9.5 by race is consistent with other findings in this study, which show that race is becoming less of a factor in determining employment outcomes on the selected apple farms in Langkloof Valley as in the apartheid era (Bekker et al., 1982). Visser and Ferrer (2015:32) also support this finding as they show that there is little difference in hourly income between black and coloured farmworker populations in South Africa.

In terms of outcomes of the farm workers by sex, table 9.5 shows a long-standing practice of the marginalization of women in the South African agricultural sector. Research shows that during the colonial and apartheid eras, female farm workers secured work through their male associates (family or partner) and in most cases, they were paid through these male associates (Davies, 1990; Marcus, 1989). Women were not treated as equal to men; as such, their wages were lower than those of males. Kritzinger and Vorster (1996:345) note that "the secondary status of women farm workers is reflected in the income disparity between men and women farm workers. Women earn less than men every week and, often, work fewer weeks per year. Furthermore, men, as was shown, tend to dominate the higher paying jobs".

Additionally, Visser and Ferrer (2015:32) show an apparent wage gap between the sexes in the agricultural sector of South Africa, as female farm workers on average (and all other things equal) earned less than their male counterparts. This study shows that the profit-driven global apple value chain exploits the patriarchal dynamics that exist on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley to secure cheaper forms of labour, a practice that is all too common in other GCs (Barrientos et al., 2000; Greenberg, 2013a; Mezzadri, 2016a, b; Mies, 1986). Finally, table 9.5 reveals another longstanding employment practice in South African agriculture in which the employment outcomes of farm workers are also largely determined by their employment statuses on farms.

From the early days of colonialism to the present democratic era, a small group of permanently employed farm workers have always enjoyed higher wages than the larger group of seasonal farm workers (Devereux, 2020; Kritzinger and Vorster, 1996; Visser, 2016). This division of labour is influenced by the seasonal nature of the sector, the mechanization of production processes on farms, and the cost-reduction strategies of farmers. According to Davies (1990:22), “the most drastic consequence of the mechanisation and restructuring of South African agriculture has been the destabilisation of the workforce. A small core group of workers has acquired new skills as machine operators and supervisors, and since farmers pay higher wages for skilled work, they have sought to reduce the cost of unskilled labour.

The answer has been to rely more and more on seasonal or 'part-time' labour”. The implementation of neoliberal policies and limited state support for the agricultural sector, post-1994, has influenced the casualization of the workforce on South African farms (Visser, 2016). In the context of the GC, this is ideal for global supermarkets and the selected apple farmers who are actively seeking ways of reducing costs to optimize profits. Overall, table 9.6 shows that the farm workers who were paid above the minimum wage were mostly black, male, and permanently employed. This finding is consistent with the developing findings in this study, which show that race is becoming less of a factor in determining labour outcomes, whilst sex and employment status remain key determinants. In this context, decent work appears to apply to a small group of farm workers. This means that social upgrading concerning being paid the legal wage for work performed is not a reality for most of the farm workers who participated in this study. This also shows that this profit-driven global apple value chain did not produce inclusive social upgrading for farm workers in this study.

The notion of Decent Work (as per the ILO's definition) and social upgrading needs further interrogation, as paying workers below the legal minimum wage did not improve the overall conditions of the farm workers in this study. This study shows that most farm workers did not survive solely on their farm wages, as these were too low; as such, they needed alternative forms of income.

### 9.4.2 Satisfaction with Wages and Alternative Income Streams

This study shows that most of the farm workers employed on selected apple farms (in this study) based in the Langkloof Valley earn less than R3,240. Table 9.6 determines whether the farm workers who participated in this study were satisfied with their wages.

**Table 9.6: Satisfied with current wages**

| Satisfied with wages | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 5 | 6.7% |
| No | 70 | 93.3% |
| **Total** | **75** | **100%** |

The findings in the table above indicate that the vast majority (93.3%) of farm workers who participated in this study were not satisfied with their wages, while only 6.7% were satisfied with their wages. This also includes the farm workers who were earning above the minimum wage at the time of this study. Mr Leroy January, a general worker employed at a Packing Fresh Pty Ltd-affiliated farm, expressed his frustration with the low wage:

> No, the wage is not enough. There are things I would like to do in my house, but I can't because my wage is little. You spend according to the most pressing needs. The money I get goes to my family's policies, food, clothes and electricity. I also have kids, so I have to make sure that they are taken care of. The money we get from the farm is so little. Even this house is a disappointment. I wish I could buy the proper furniture for my family so that I can see where my money goes. Right now, if I want to buy anything, I have to save for a few months for something that someone working in a city can buy quickly. Like Nike *tekkies* [running shoes]. I can't just buy them; I have to save for a while before I can buy those *tekkies* [running shoes]. Remember, I get about R1,500 per fortnight and R3,000 per month.

> The cost of living is going up, and this wage is so little. We work very hard on these farms but come back with peanuts. But what can we do? (21/11/2018).

Mr January's statement summarizes the general feeling of dissatisfaction with wages among the farm workers who were interviewed for this study. These workers indicated that a significant portion of their wages is dedicated to essential expenses such as insurance, food, clothing, electricity and child-related expenses (among many other expenses). The wage that the farm workers receive from their employers does not improve their living conditions in any way as it only meets essential expenses. Farm workers who participated in this study are, essentially, living hand to mouth. Even the small group of farm workers who earned above the minimum wage were not satisfied with their wages. Mr Solomon Duna, a supervisor at Koukamma Vrugte, explained why he thought that his wage was not enough even though he is a supervisor:

> My wage is not enough, and I am unable to give my children everything they need because my income is so small. As a supervisor, I teach, train and monitor farm workers. I'm like a teacher, but unlike a teacher who probably gets R15000 per month, I get R4000 as a supervisor on that farm. My wage covers my family policies [insurance], the furniture account, the clothing account and groceries. (27/01/2019).

The statement above summarized the general sentiment of most of the farm workers who participated in this study, as most workers were not satisfied with their wages because these wages limited their ability to upgrade their lives. This shows that inclusive social upgrading in relation to being satisfied with their wages is not a reality for most of the farm workers who participated in this study. The failure to pay most of the farm workers in this study a fair minimum wage for profit maximization induces large-scale dissatisfaction among the farm workers about their wages. The minuscule farm worker wages (in this study) also reduce the ability of the farm workers to save money, as most of their money is dedicated to sustaining their livelihoods. Table 9.7 indicates whether the farm workers who participated in this study were able to save money.

**Table 9.7: Ability to save money**

| Ability to save money | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 12 | 16% |
| No | 63 | 84% |
| **Total** | **75** | **100%** |

Earning low wages makes it difficult for farm workers to be able to save any money for future purposes. The vast majority (84%) of farm workers who participated in this study were not able to save money from their monthly wages, and only 16% were able to do so. The ability to save money for future events provides a sense of security for workers; however, in this study, most of the farm workers were unable to save money. Most of the farm workers in this study did not experience this form of social security, which is also one of the key pillars of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda (the inspiration of the social upgrading notion). This is consistent with the finding that the farm workers were not content with their wages and were only able to spend their wages on essential expenses. Ms Brenda Bloem, a packer employed at Vrugteland Pakkers, expressed the frustration shared by most of the farm workers who participated (in this study) regarding the inability to save money from their farm wages:

> No way, the wage is not enough for me to save money. There are many things I would like to do that I can't. The money is only enough for food, electricity, clothes and our policies. You cannot even save money for your children's future. Even the money that we save during the season, we have to spend during the off-season because money gets tight during that period. It is tough surviving off-season. I use the money that I have saved during the on-seasons [to survive the off-season]. Also, I use the money that we get when we are called into work during the off-season. My two children also get child grants from the government. Life is hard during the off-season. We have to count every cent. We have to pay expenses and other things. The farmer doesn't care about our struggles. A lot of us have to find a way to survive during the six months when we are not at work. I also work as a babysitter during the off-season. (24/01/2019).

Farm worker wages in South Africa are generally low, which is ideal for the global supermarkets and the selected apple farmers in this study who seek to optimize profits through the reduction of wages.

Selwyn (2016) argues that capitalists extract surplus value (profit) through immiseration (pushing down real wages) and super-exploitation (paying workers less than the costs of reproducing their labour power). In the context of a GC, this surplus value extraction takes place through global labour arbitrage and race-to-the-bottom strategies imposed by lead firms to supplier firms. This study has shown that global labour arbitrage (race to the bottom), immiseration, and super-exploitation have taken place in the global apple value chain; as such, farm workers in this study were segmented and paid extremely low wages. The economically precarious conditions in the Langkloof Valley channel many black and coloured people into low-paid farm work.

The increasing employment of migrants (who are willing to accept wages below the legal minimum wage) on the selected apple farms further induces the vulnerability of the locals, because they accept low wages to compete with the migrant labourers. From an SLA perspective, the farm workers in this study are in a vulnerable context because of the profit-maximisation activities in the global apple value chain and their economically precarious socio-economic conditions in the Langkloof Valley (Scoones, 1998). DFID (1999) notes that people in vulnerable conditions often mobilize various forms of capital at their disposal to sustain their livelihoods.

The low wages from the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley are not sufficient to sustain their livelihoods; as such, they must rely on alternative streams of income and capital to sustain their livelihoods. The farm workers in this study could only sustain their livelihoods but were not able to significantly upgrade their lives from the minuscule wages and lean alternative means of survival. GPN scholars emphasized the importance of acknowledging the dynamics that shape the conditions in the geographical territories where GCs are embedded (Coe and Yeung, 2015; Hess, 2004; Hess and Yeung, 2006). Following this logic, this study also examines the alternative streams of income and capital utilized by farm workers (from the sphere of social reproduction) to sustain their livelihoods. Table 9.8 illustrates the proportion of the farm workers interviewed who had alternative source/s of income.

**Table 9.8: Alternative source/s of income**

| Alternative source of income | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 60 | 80% |
| No | 15 | 20% |
| **Total** | **75** | **100%** |

Earning low wages forces most farm workers (in this study) to seek alternative sources of income to survive. The SLA stresses that vulnerable population groups often rely on multiple sources of income (assets/capital) to maintain their livelihoods (DFID, 1999). A substantial percentage of the farm workers (80%) who participated in this study had alternative sources of income to supplement their wages. Less than a quarter of the farm workers (20%) in this study had alternative sources of income. This finding is consistent with the fact that their wages were extremely low, and farm workers were not able to save a portion of their wages for the long term. Within this context, alternative sources of income were a necessity.

This study shows that the wages from the farm were unable to upgrade the lives of the farm workers, instead, the farm used alternative sources of income to survive, which shatters the notion of inclusive social upgrading for most of these farm workers. Table 9.9 breaks down the alternative sources of income available to farm workers in this study. This table is a breakdown of the farm workers who had alternative sources of income. Each category of an alternative source of income was measured individually out of 75 (the sample population of farm workers who participated in this study). Table 9.9 below represents the number of farm workers (from the highest number to the lowest) who had alternative sources of income.

**Table 9.9: Types of alternative sources of income**

| Alternative sources of income | Number | Sample Population | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Child grant – from the government | 45 | 75 | 60% |
| Family member/spouse/ acquaintances | 37 | 75 | 49.3% |
| Selling goods/providing their labour | 28 | 75 | 37.3% |
| Pension grant – from the government | 25 | 75 | 33.3% |
| Loans | 6 | 75 | 8% |

Most of the farm workers who participated in this study depended on government child and pension grants (60% and 33.3% respectively) as alternative sources of income. Other sources of income included: income from family members/spouses/acquaintances (49.3%), selling of goods/providing labour (37.3%) and securing loans (8%). The government departments responsible for issuing these grants can be viewed as a form of social capital, as some SLA scholars defined social capital as social networks and institutions that the vulnerable access to help sustain their livelihoods (Ballet et al., 2007; DFID, 1999; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000).

Another type of social capital that was used by the farm workers in this study (to sustain their livelihoods) was in the form of family members, spouses or acquaintances. Most of the farm workers (in this study) also relied on community networks to survive in the off-season. In this study, some farm workers relied on social capital to secure financial capital (inflows of money) to supplement their low wages and help them sustain their livelihoods. Furthermore, some farm workers in this study survived by selling goods or working part-time jobs during the off-season. In this case, some farm workers were using their human capital (skills, knowledge, and ability to labour among other features) and physical capital (basic infrastructure and producer goods) to secure financial capital (Allison and Ellis, 2001; Becker et al., 1990; DFID, 1999; Glavovic and Boonzaier, 2007). Mr Bongani Jacobs, a general worker employed at a farm owned by Kloof Fruit Company, described his alternative source of income as follows:

> You have to be smart if you want to survive in these farms, my *broer* [brother]. The money from the farm is not enough. You see, at my house, my mother works at the packhouse, and I work in the fields, and my grandparents get a pension from the government. My little sister is ten, and I think she gets a grant. So, we put our money together, and that is how we live a comfortable life. It's tough for people who are the breadwinners in their families. I am heavily involved in my church. I am a very good singer, and I record and sell my music. People also book me to sing at their weddings and birthday parties. I do this on the weekends when I am not working. During the off-season, I also sell some dagga on the side. I don't smoke the stuff, man, but I have to survive. My mother sells some sweets, biscuits, and ice for the kids when her packhouse is closed. All of us here have to figure out ways to survive, my *broer* [brother]. (04/12/2018).

The statement above epitomizes the struggle of many farm workers in this study, who rely on social networks (institutions) and other assets at their disposal to survive. Table 9.9 also shows that some farm workers (in this study) also depend on loans to supplement their wages. Mr Matthew Reinecke, a supervisor employed at a farm owned by Kloof Fruit Company, described how loans and credit often trap farm workers in the Langkloof Valley:

> I'm a supervisor, but my money is not enough to take care of my family. My wife is unemployed, and luckily, my two children get a grant. But that is for them, not us, we still have to buy food, electricity and other things.

> Some of the farm workers borrow money from loan sharks here in the township, but the loans shark keeps their bank cards to withdraw the money when it comes in. However, they have to go back to the loan shark halfway through the month. It's a trap, man. I don't borrow money; I buy groceries on credit from 'Royal supermarket' and then I pay them back when I get paid with interest. It's not just me, but a lot of the farm workers here have a credit at 'Royal'. The wage is low, man, but these farmers make a lot of money because they sell the apples in China and those places. (04/12/2018).

The credit trap described by Mr Reinecke is reminiscent of the tuckshops that were run by farmers during the apartheid era. Farmers (or their wives) often had tuckshops on the farm, and the farm workers would incur so much credit that they would not be able to leave the farm, as they were constantly working off this credit (Marcus, 1989). The statement above also shows that some farm workers (in this study) rely on loans to sustain their livelihoods as well. In this case, the farm workers are using their social capital (access to networks, organizations and institutions) to secure financial capital (also includes money from financial institutions) to sustain their livelihoods. This study has shown that the farm workers who participated in this study mobilized different types of capital to supplement their low wages. Pre-1994, farm workers relied on payments in kind (non-cash payments) from the farmers to supplement their low wages (Davies, 1990).

Payments in kind in the deciduous fruit industry in the Langkloof Valley in the 1980s included housing, transport, fuel, clothing and food (Bekker et al., 1982). Post-1994, many farmers in South Africa have either reduced the payments in kind to cut costs (Atkinson, 2007; Du Toit and Ally, 2003; Wisborg et al., 2013). The costs for payments in kind have been externalized to the government and various other social networks which help farm workers to sustain their livelihoods (Du Toit and Ally, 2003:48). This externalization of costs has a direct impact on the social security (one of the pillars of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda) of the farm workers who participated in this study. Farm workers in this study relied on diverse forms of capital to survive. It is important to note that SLA does not focus on the size of the type of capital, but rather on how it contributes to the livelihood strategies of individuals, organizations or institutions (DFID, 1999). The SLA was designed to highlight the plight of vulnerable people and gave them agency by focusing on how they mobilize what they term 'different types of capital' for these people to survive (Scoones, 1998).

The pioneers of this framework understood that economically vulnerable people do not possess large-scale assets or capital, but they acknowledge their assets (no matter the size) as necessary for their survival. Nevertheless, land (no matter how small) is a form of natural capital which also plays a significant role in the livelihood outcomes of many vulnerable people around the world (Collados and Duane, 1999; Scoones, 1998). Land also provides social protection, as it can sustain people even when they are unemployed. Some farm workers (in this study) also relied on their access to small gardens to survive. Table 9.10 indicates the number of farm workers in this study who had access to land for food consumption.

**Table 9.10: Access to a garden**

| Access to a garden | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 38 | 50.7% |
| No | 37 | 49.3% |
| **Total** | **75** | **100%** |

Earning low wages on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley necessitates an alternative source of income, especially for the provision of food. Only about half (50.7%) of the farm workers in this study reported having access to gardens. Having a small vegetable garden is an important way of securing food and saving money. Some farm workers who participated in this study sold some of their vegetables to supplement their farm wages. Ms Fresh Orchards Incorporated, a general worker employed on a farm owned by Fresh Orchards Incorporated, explained how she sells produce from her garden to supplement her low farm wage:

> I also have a garden at the back of this house. There we specialise in potatoes mostly. You see, the off-season is time for me to be a real farmer, so we plant potatoes, which we sell to the Spaza shops [tuck shops] and neighbours here in the township. I also plant other veggies for us to eat. I also have some chickens. I sell some of the eggs from the chickens. I want to buy a cow next year and maybe another one in the future so they can breed. This is the only way to survive. (19/11/2018).

The story of Ms Kaap shows how farm workers use their natural capital (gardens) for subsistence and commercial purposes. Here, there is an interaction between natural capital (garden and livestock), physical capital (gardening equipment), social capital (informal market networks that purchase the produce), human capital (personal knowledge, skills and ability) and financial capital (money earned through the sale of produce or livestock).

This is consistent with the SLA, which contends that natural capital, among other forms of capital, is crucial for securing livelihoods in marginalized communities (Chambers and Conway, 1992). Farm wages on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley are extremely low, which is why farm workers (in this study) relied on alternative sources of income to survive. The notion of social upgrading (as proposed by mainstream GC discourse) is questionable when most of the farm workers in this study needed alternative sources of income to survive.

### 9.4.3 Bonuses

A bonus is financial compensation that is above and beyond the normal salary/wage of the employee. Bonuses are normally classed as a gratuity; in other words, a payment of gratitude by the employer to the employee in recognition of a job well done. In South Africa, there is no legal obligation for an employer to pay bonuses to its employees (Labour Guide, 2024). Bonuses are, therefore, classified as benefits, and employees may not strike over the nonpayment of bonuses unless there is a stipulation to this effect in an employment contract or collective agreement (Labour Guide, 2024). Apple farmers (in this study) from the Langkloof Valley grant merit bonuses to their employees. Mr Jannie Hendrick Wiese, the general manager at Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd, described the merit bonus offered by farmers in the region:

> We have a merit system, which means that a small percentage is included in the wage if the workers attend work and do their work properly. This amount is saved every month and is given to the workers at the end of the year. This is dependent on the workers' work ethic and behaviour at work. So, if the workers do not go to work, they are forfeiting this extra money because this extra money gets subtracted anyway. So, workers have to adhere to company rules, and they should work hard. If workers do not behave themselves, they then lose that allowance for that day. It is a small amount, but it impacts their bonus at the end of the year. If the workers adhere to company rules and attend work the whole season, they get almost double pay at the end of the season. (09/05/2019).

At face value, this merit bonus scheme appears to be fair because farmers are not obliged by the law to pay bonuses to their employees.

However, upon closer examination, this merit bonus is nothing more than a saving plan, as the farmer deducts a small percentage of a farm worker's wage every month and then redistributes this collected sum of money at the end of the year as a bonus. This is not a bonus that is common in other sectors, where employees are paid an extra amount of money (sometimes double their salary) on their birthday month or at the end of the year. In this study, if the worker is deemed to be unruly, they forfeit money for which they worked. This appears to be yet another cost-cutting exercise by the apple farmers in this study (to absorb cost pressures and increase their profit margins), which falsely gives the illusion of a bonus but is nothing more than a savings scheme for their employees. Farm workers see this 'merit bonus' as a monthly deduction from their wages rather than an addition. Ms Nadine Nuwe, a sorter employed at Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd, explained how the merit bonus worked from the perspective of an employee at the organization:

> Let me tell you how the bonus works at Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd. There is something called the merit bonus, whereby the boss takes R100 from us for every payment, and at the end of the year, Jannie [white general Manager at Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd] gives you that money. So, if you think of it, it is not a bonus, but money that I saved. Jannie and people like Van Vuuren [white farmer and shareholder at Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd] think that they are clever. [But] I know a bonus is usually a thirteenth cheque. I know we don't have an education, but we are not stupid. But what can we do? If you complain, those whites will chase you out of that packhouse, and we can't afford that. We have kids and family to take care of. (19/11/2018).

Essentially, the merit bonus is not a thirteenth cheque but a savings scheme. It is no wonder that farm workers in this study indicated that they used alternative sources of income and other forms of capital to supplement their low wages. This again shows there was no inclusive social upgrading for the farm workers who participated in this study, as the selected farmers were preoccupied with maximizing their profits and cutting labour-related costs to such an extent that only a small group of farm workers experienced any semblance of social upgrading.

## 9.5 HEALTH AND SAFETY OF FARM WORKERS

Health and Safety in the South African workplace is guided primarily by the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) of 1993 (Republic of South Africa, 1993).

The purpose of the act is to provide for the health and safety of persons at work and for the health and safety of persons in connection with the use of plants and machinery (Republic of South Africa, 1993). The employer is legally obliged to provide a safe, healthy working environment that has minimal risk to employees and other persons (Republic of South Africa, 1993). In this section, the following key areas relating to occupational health and safety are investigated: farm workers' knowledge of the health and safety policy, safety at work, provision of health care services and access to water and sanitation.

### 9.5.1 Knowledge of Health and Safety Policy

An organizational health and safety policy is designed to establish boundaries, guidelines and best practices related to health and safety in a business. Furthermore, health and safety policies are created to reduce workplace hazards and to safeguard employees (Republic of South Africa, 1993). Table 9.11 shows the number and percentage of farm workers in this study who knew the health and safety policy at their places of work.

**Table 9.11: Knowledge of health and safety policy**

| Health and safety policy | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 35 | 46.7% |
| No | 40 | 53.3% |
| **Total** | **75** | **100%** |

Slightly more than half of farm workers (53.3%) who participated in this study were not aware of a health and safety policy at their places of employment, while less than half of the workers (46.7%) knew of them. Devereux (2020:394) notes that farm workers are generally not familiar with the OHSA and do not know the correct procedure to follow if they get injured or ill at work. Many farmers take advantage of this lack of knowledge and do not report work-related injuries to the Department of Employment and Labour, nor do they register with the Compensation Fund (Devereux, 2020:394). Those farm workers (46.67%) who claimed to know such policies indicated that their places of work had health and safety policies displayed on notice boards, whilst others indicated that their employers briefly covered the policy during their induction training. Mr Jan Jaer, a supervisor at a farm owned by Kloof Fruit Company, described this process as follows:

> Yes, there are safety and health posters on boards. These boards have information on everything regarding health and safety on the farm. Here on the farm, these posters are in the shed and at the packhouses. Around the farm, there are also signs, like they say, don't smoke here and so on. Also, at the beginning of every picking season, the farm manager sits us down and explains some health and safety stuff. For example, the farmer will call someone to come to speak to us about the dangers of the chemicals [pesticides and herbicides] and why we have to stay away from the orchards when they are sprayed. But to be honest with you, even though there are policies here, the farmers still expect the workers to go to the field immediately after the spraying is done. There are a lot of guys here who are sick with TB and asthma. But they not going to complain because they don't want to piss off the farmer. Some guys even fall off ladders in the field, and the farmer will send them to the doctor and pay only half. Safety is not a concern for the farmers. Here, you must just do your job. (22/11/2018).

The statement above highlights the lack of implementation of the health and safety policies on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. Farmers may teach farm workers about the dangers of pesticides, for example, but still expect workers to work in the fields right after spraying. This was a general sentiment among the farm workers who participated in this study. The lack of implementation of health and safety policies is not limited to the use of pesticides since there is a general neglect of workers' safety since farmers seem to be more concerned with production output than the safety of their employees. Farmers view health-related issues to farm workers as an additional cost, which is why many farm workers in the Langkloof Valley do not report or claim for their work-related injuries or illnesses because they do not want to be seen as 'troublemakers' by the farmers and possibly jeopardize their job security.

Another point to note from the statement above is that the orchards did not have visible notice boards with health and safety policies. In the orchards, only the sheds and offices have notice boards, which means that the bulk of the workers in the orchards will not see the policy. Packhouses, by contrast, have a higher probability of having notice boards with health and safety policies because they are a prerequisite for their certification processes. However, having a visible health and safety policy and implementing that policy are two different things. On the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley, there is an evident schism between the two. In this context, the notion of social upgrading for the farm workers in this study is not a reality.

### 9.5.2 Protective Clothing

The OHSA stipulates that employers should create a safe work environment for their employees (SAFLII, 2021). The working environment should have minimal risk to the health and safety of employees (SAFLII, 2021). The OHS Act also stipulates that any employees working in a situation where they may be exposed to risk or potential risk are required to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) (SAFLII, 2021). Importantly, no deductions may be made from employees' remuneration for anything that the OHSA requires the employer to provide to employees in the interest of health and safety. The PPE matrix (figure 9.2) provides guidelines on what type of PPE must be used in the workplace when performing tasks and activities.

**Figure 9.2: Personal protective equipment (PPE) matrix**

| Activity / Area | PPE Type Required | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Workshop Activities (Grinding, Cutting, Welding, Drilling) | × | × | × | × | × | × | × | | | × | |
| Handling of Chemical Substances (Mixing and Spraying of Chemicals) | | × | × | | × | × | × | | × | | × |
| Handling flammable liquids | | × | × | | × | × | × | | × | | |
| Manual Handling Activities (Picking up objects, material) | | | | | × | | × | | | | |
| Hand tools (Using hammer and tools that can cause flying debris) | | × | | | | | | | | | |
| Working with material that causes dust | | | | | | | | × | | | |
| Working in noisy areas above 85 dB | | | | × | | | | | | | |

Source: The Sustainability Initiative of South Africa (SIZA) (2020:92)

Above are seven different working activities that require different types of PPEs (SIZA, 2020). Work in the orchards and packhouses covers the entire range of activities listed above, which means that farm workers employed on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley should be given protective clothing because of the nature of their work. Table 9.12 indicates the number and percentage of farm workers in this study who received protective clothing from their employers.

**Table 9.12: Protective clothing from the employer**

| | Race | | Sex | | Employment Status | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Protective clothing** | **Black** | **Coloured** | **Male** | **Female** | **Permanent** | **Seasonal** | |
| Yes | 4.5% (1) | 11.3% (6) | 17.5% (7) | 0% (0) | 16% (4) | 6% (3) | 9.3% (7) |
| No | 95% (21) | 88.7% (47) | 82.5% (33) | 100% (35) | 84% (21) | 94% (47) | 90.7% (68) |
| **Total** | **100% (n=22)** | **100% (n=53)** | **100% (n=40)** | **100% (n=35)** | **100% (n=25)** | **100% (n=50)** | **100% (n=75)** |

Note: The number in parentheses indicates sub-group sample numbers

Looking at table 9.12, the vast majority of farm workers (90.7%) in this study reported not receiving protective clothing from their employers. When the small group of farm workers (9.3%) who received protective clothing from their employers was examined, notable differences were observed across race, sex, and employment status. For example, a higher proportion of coloured farm workers (11.3%) received protective clothing from their employers compared to black workers (4.5%). Employment status also shows notable differences, as a higher percentage of permanent farm workers (16%) received protective clothing from their employers than seasonal farm workers (6%). This finding supports a consistent finding in this study, which shows that race has less of an influence on the employment outcomes on the selected apple farms in this study, as a small group of black and coloured permanently employed males experience better labour outcomes interchangeably.

Analysing the responses by sex shows that only males (17.5%) reported receiving protective clothing from their employers. This shows that sex plays a significant role in the employment outcomes of farm workers on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley.

Devereux (2020:397) indicated that most of the female farm workers in their study were not provided with protective clothes by their employers. Outcomes based on employment status are consistent with the developing patterns in this study, which shows that permanently employed farm workers experience better labour outcomes than those who were employed on seasonal (short-term) contracts. Devereux et al. (2017:9) note that more than two-thirds of seasonal workers (69%) are exposed to dangerous pesticides within an hour after the vineyards have been sprayed. Exposed workers report negative impacts on their health, such as skin rashes, nasal and eye problems, breathing difficulties and headaches. An even higher proportion of seasonal workers (73%) are not provided with protective clothes by the farmer.

Overall, the farmers' desire to cut costs on the selected apple farms affects the distribution (or lack) of protective clothing to their employees.

Literature on farm workers in South Africa pre-1994 shows that farm workers were rarely given protective clothing (Davies, 1990; Marcus, 1989). Davies (1990) notes that some farm workers often suffer from different kinds of diseases and workplace injuries due to the lack of adequate protective measures on the farms. This practice still exists in the democratic era where there is legislation that compels farmers to provide free protective clothing to farm workers because of the hazardous nature of their work (Devereux, 2020:397; Human Rights Watch, 2011; Zwane et al., 2011). For example, a study by Ulicki and Crush (2007:166) in the Eastern Free State found that whilst many farming operations use pesticides or poison, only 42% of farm worker respondents said they received protective clothing. Of those who did, nearly one-third stated that the clothing was in poor repair or that key pieces, such as gloves and face masks, were missing. Farm workers who participated in this study indicated that they had to purchase protective clothing out of their own pockets. Mr Clinton Baaitjies, a field worker (picker) employed at a farm owned by Fresh Orchards Incorporated, explained his grievance about the lack of protective clothing:

> The company does not want to give us gloves for free. They told us that they would deduct R100 if they bought us gloves themselves. That's the same as buying the stuff anyway. This is not fair because we need gloves. After all, the scissors we use are tough, and pruning is tough. This can hurt your hands. Sometimes, we have to work with irrigation and things like that, and that can make you sick. The farmer also refuses to buy us gumboots or something when we are walking in the damp fields. The farmer also does not provide us with overalls or any protective clothing. We have to take money out of our pockets to buy protective clothing. Do you know, even the guys working with chemicals have to buy their own masks and other protective stuff like glasses, gloves and so on? These guys sometimes have to work in the rain, and they don't get raincoats either. They just drive the tractor and spray. The farm does not even take these workers for testing or examination at the doctor, to make sure that they did not inhale any of the chemicals. The forklift drivers don't get protective clothing, like helmets, either. My friend is a forklift driver on this farm, and he told me that they have to pay R800 for their protective stuff [clothing].

> It’s not fair because we make a profit for these farmers, and they can’t give us stuff [protective clothing] to protect us. (05/12/2018).

This study shows that many farm workers working in the orchards were exposed to pesticides. Mr Bradley Leywer, a chemical sprayer at a farm owned by Fresh Orchards Incorporated, expressed his frustration at the lack of protective clothing on the farm as follows:

> The work I am doing is dangerous. I work with pesticides. I have masks and gloves, which I bought for myself. The farmer does not want to get us glasses, and this poison is dangerous for us. The farm usually sends a few of us permanent workers and first aiders on a short course every three months to learn about pesticides, but they still don’t want to get us things such as glasses to protect our eyes. The people from the government come here, and the farmer tells them that he takes us to training for pesticides, and he shows them the posters and they speak to us in front of the farmer, and we have to give a good report. When those people are gone, the farmer won’t give us the protective clothing, and also, he doesn’t want to take us to the doctor when we fall ill because of the chemicals. He’s a hypocrite. (05/12/2018).

This study shows that most farm workers who participated in this study did not have access to protective clothing and were exposed to various dangers, such as hazardous chemicals and pesticides. Farm workers in this study also indicated that their employers expected them to work in orchards straight after pesticides and chemicals had been applied. Many of the farm workers who participated in this study also indicated that they experienced injuries or knew of someone who had sustained injuries whilst at work. This finding correlates with those of other studies, which revealed that most farm workers in South Africa are not given protective clothing by their employers and often sustain injuries as a result (Davies, 1990; Devereux et al., 2017; Human Rights Watch, 2011). This violation of the OHSA by most of the apple farms in this study points to a serious governance deficit in the private and public stakeholders in the global apple value chain. The OHSA which falls under the ‘rights at work’ pillar of the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda (the foundation of social upgrading) is not experienced by all the farm workers who participated in this study, as the incessant race to cut costs for profit maximization (among other factors) denied the workers inclusive enjoyment of the OHSA. Overall, table 9.12 shows a recurring finding which shows that race is becoming less of a factor in determining the employment outcomes on the selected farms in this study, whilst sex and employment status remain strong determinants of employment outcomes.

This finding shows that a small group of permanently employed, coloured male farm workers received protective clothing from their employers. Most of the farm workers who participated in this study were not given protective clothing by their employers, which placed their lives at risk of incurring serious injuries or chronic illnesses. This finding is all too common in GCs as some studies have shown that workers employed in the production segment of GCs are often exposed to dangerous working conditions without protective measures (Asian Floor Wage, 2016a, b; ITUC, 2016; Mezzadri, 2016a; Oxfam, 2016; Selwyn, 2016). The priority in these GCs is the delivery of the product to the consumer, which leads to profit accumulation by the lead firms and the suppliers at the expense of a large segment of workers employed by supplier firms.

This study shows a strong relationship between the vertical and horizontal profit maximization strategies in the global apple value chain, the segmentation of employment outcomes, and non-compliance on the selected apple farms. The selected apple farms in this study have three main services available for farm workers who may get injured or fall ill whilst at work. These services include first-aid kits, mobile clinics and doctors' visits for extreme cases. The provision of first aid equipment and first aiders in the workplace is an OHSA requirement (SIZA, 2020). Table 9.13 illustrates the number of farm workers in this study who had first-aid services at their places of work.

**Table 9.13: Availability of first aid services**

| Availability of First-aid services | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 54 | 72% |
| No | 21 | 28% |
| **Total** | **75** | **100%** |

First-aid services are one of the least costly measures of health and safety, which is why they are so popular on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. The table above indicates that almost three-quarters of the farm workers (72%) who participated in this study knew about first-aid services in their organizations. This shows that social upgrading in relation to the provision of first-aid services on the selected apple farms is not inclusive; not all the apple farms that participated in this study provided quality first-aid services to the farm workers. Mr Brendon Kaizer, a general worker at Koukamma Vrugte, described the problems with the first aid on the farm:

> Last year, the farmer sent three of us permanent workers to first-aid training. This training was for a week, and we were taught many things like dressing wounds, bandaging basic injuries and so on. The problem on our farm is that the first-aid box is always empty. The farmer stocks up here and there. The first-aid box is never full. This is not good, because sometimes we can't help the other farm workers, because the box is always empty. (20/11/2018).

This lack of effective distribution of first-aid services on some farms can be attributed to blatant disregard and devious cost-saving techniques by some farmers. The cost pressures that are imposed on apple farmers by global supermarkets in the global apple value chain are one of the main causes for this violation of labour legislation. Apple producers are constantly looking at ways of cutting costs, and some go as far as neglecting the basic health and safety of their employees to keep costs at bay. Some farmers, however, do not cut such corners because they fear the consequences of neglecting the health and safety of their farm workers. Visser and Alford (2024) agree with this point, as they pointed out that not all the apple farms that are supplying international markets are violating labour laws. Nevertheless, this study shows that most of the farm workers experienced some form of labour law violation on the apple farms where they were employed.

Health and safety services on the apple farms in this study are also provided through public mobile clinics. Mobile clinics are customized vehicles that travel to the heart of communities, both urban and rural. Across South Africa, people living in townships and rural areas suffer from limited access to healthcare services (De Gruchy, 2020; London, 2003; Roberts and Antrobus, 2013; Sithole, 2005). Mobile clinics are meant to visit farms in the region regularly to help farm workers with their health and safety services because many of the farm workers must travel to the small towns in the region for health services (Sithole, 2005). The mobile clinics are designed to meet the farm workers at their point of need, as many farm workers in South Africa are known to neglect their chronic medical needs because they do not want to miss work and lose money (Devereux, 2020). However, this study has shown that mobile clinics are not freely available to all the farm workers who are employed on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. Table 9.14 shows whether the farm workers who participated in this study experienced mobile clinics visiting their places of employment.

**Table 9.14: Mobile clinic onsite visits**

| Mobile clinic onsite visits | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 32 | 42.7% |
| No | 45 | 57.3% |
| **Total** | **75** | **100%** |

Over half the farm workers (57.3%) who participated in this study did not see or know about mobile clinics visiting their places of employment, and only 42.7% had such knowledge. Mr Jaden Witbooi, a pallet packer employed at Vrugteland Pakkers, confirmed the findings in the table above:

> There's no mobile clinic that comes to this packhouse. We have to go to the clinic in town. When you go there, you must be prepared to wait in line the whole day and miss your pay for that day. The farmer does not care if you miss work because you are collecting your treatment. Kloof Fruit Company guys are lucky because they have a full-time nurse there. None of that here. (26/01/2019).

Less than half of farm workers (42.7%) who participated in this study have seen mobile clinics visiting their places of work. Mr Bongani Zimbini, a general worker employed at a farm owned by Fresh Orchards Incorporated, explained the issue of mobile clinics at his place of employment:

> Here on the farm, we have a nurse who visits the farm with a mobile clinic every Tuesday. The nurse gives us our medication, and we can also get medicine for our children. Some of the farm workers have chronic illnesses, and so they get their treatment from this clinic. This really helps because we do not need to go to the clinic in Joubertina. We just have to wait for Tuesday, unless you have an emergency, then you are rushed to hospital. The mobile clinic really helps us. (04/12/2018).

The statement above only represents a small group of farm workers in the study, as the majority did not have access to mobile clinics. Barrientos and Visser (2012) note that some large-scale farms in the horticultural (fruit and vegetable) sub-sector have on-site clinics. In this study, only Kloof Fruit Company, which was the largest organization that participated in the sample of apple farms that were covered (in this study), had an in-house clinic with a full-time nurse.

It is worth noting, however, that this clinic is located in the organization's head office in Joubertina, which means that their employees who are spread on farms throughout the Langkloof Valley waste long hours travelling and waiting to access healthcare services at this clinic, thus jeopardizing their daily wage. Other organizations relied on public mobile clinics or public clinics in the nearest town for their workers. Interestingly, some of the farm workers who had seen mobile clinics at their places of work complained of their inconsistency. Mr Jilhandre Thomas, a general worker at Koukamma Vrugte, described the impact of the inconsistency of mobile clinics on the farm workers at the Estate:

> Look, the government nurses [mobile clinics] come here to the farm, and they give us medicine, and we appreciate this. And I am not being ungrateful for this, but sometimes these people do not visit regularly. You know when you collect chronic medicine, you need to fetch it on a certain date every month. Now, these guys are not reliable because we never know when they are going to come. Sometimes, we have to go to town to get our chronic medication. When you go there, you have to wait for a whole day, and you lose money for that day. You know, on the farms, it's no work, no pay. Doesn't matter if you were at the clinics to get your chronic medication. (03/12/2018).

The statement above correlates with Sithole's (2005:36) assertion that "because of the remoteness of many farms, access of farm workers to medical services is generally poor, including infrequent visits by mobile clinics and waits of several hours for ambulances to arrive". In terms of this study, the inconsistency of visits by mobile clinics on most of the selected apple farms in this study forces farm workers to visit clinics in the townships or towns, where they often wait long hours and miss a day's wages. This haphazard consumption of chronic medication is not good for the long-term health of those farm workers who suffer from chronic illnesses. Secondly, when the farm workers miss a day's work, they do not get paid for that day even though it is for a valid health reason. Thirdly, missing days at work (even for health-related reasons) may jeopardize the affected farm worker's employment. Farm workers in this study rarely go to doctors to receive medical treatment. It is very costly, and the apple farmers are always avoiding any additional costs on their annual budgets. Farm workers are only sent to the doctors when there are extreme cases. Mr Jilhandre Thomas, a farm worker employed at Koukamma Vrugte, described this issue as follows:

> The farmers don't want to send us to the doctor. You only have to be on a stretcher before you are sent there.

> If you get badly injured at work, the farm is forced to take you to the doctor and pay the fees because he doesn't want trouble. But if you want to go to the doctor by yourself, the farmer will not pay for you. I know a guy here on this farm who was working with the chemicals, and he complained of chest pains and wanted to go to the doctor. The farmer told him to go to the clinic because he did not get chest pains from work. The guy went to the clinic and found out that he had TB. Another thing you must know about the Langkloof is that the farmers and the doctors know each other, and the doctor will not diagnose you and say you got ill at work because their friends will get sued mos...You see, the farmer here only pays half of your doctor's fees if you are a permanent worker; otherwise, if you are seasonal, and your injury from work is not too serious, then you must go to the clinic.
> (03/12/2018).

Overall, the health services available to farm workers interviewed consisted of first-aid services and public clinics in the nearest towns. Some farm workers often delay their medical treatment for the days when they are not working because they cannot afford to lose a day's wage. Delaying medical treatment is not good for their health, especially for farm workers with chronic illnesses. Farmers also perceive workers who need regular medical care as a business liability. Doctors' visits are only reserved for extreme cases, and in such cases, the farmers incur costs. Nevertheless, if the farmer does not believe that a worker's illness or injury was caused at work, they will not send them to the doctor unless they are employed permanently. In such a case, the farmer only pays half of the medical fees for the permanent farm workers. It is important to note that most farm workers in this study also did not know the health and safety protocols at their places of work.

Agreeing with the findings in this study, Visser and Ferrer (2015:70) note that "high costs of commuting to visit clinics and consult doctors discourage farm workers from doing so". It is worth noting that the farm workers in this study indicated that, for emergencies, they either had to visit government clinics in the townships or the public hospitals in Joubertina or Kareedouw. Some farm workers are forced to spend their minimal financial resources to visit private doctors if they do not want to visit the public healthcare facilities, which are used by most of the farm workers who participated in this study. Generally, the results from this study show that the provision of health care services, which are important for Decent Work and social upgrading (as a whole), are not inclusive on the selected apple farms.

## 9.6 SANITATION AND DRINKING WATER

Sanitation can be defined as the process of keeping places clean and healthy, especially by providing a sewage system and a clean water supply. The Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), in accordance with the National Building Regulations, instructs employers to provide sanitary facilities (toilets) in their businesses (SIZA, 2020). The Act further requires employers to have the following facilities available for their employees: (a) make toilet paper available free of charge to employees; (b) provide every water closet pan, designed to have a seat, with a seat; (c) supply a towel to every employee for his or her sole use or disposable paper towels or hot air blowers or clean portions of continuous cloth towels at washbasins; and (d) provide toilet soap or a similar cleansing agent free of charge to employees (SIZA, 2020). Table 9.15 shows whether the farm workers in this study who were employed in packhouses and orchards had access to sanitation facilities as per the OHSA.

**Table 9.15: Sanitation facilities in the packhouses and orchards**

| Availability of toilets and wash basins | Packhouses | Orchards | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 100% (32) | 30.2% (13) | 60% (45) |
| No | 0% (0) | 69.8% (30) | 40% (30) |
| **Total** | **100% (n=32)** | **100% (n=43)** | **100% (n=75)** |

Note: The number in parentheses indicates sub-group sample numbers

Most of the farm workers (60%) in this study had access to sanitation facilities in their places of employment, and only 40% did not have access to such facilities. When comparing the subsample by place of employment, there are notable differences. A higher percentage of farm workers (100%) employed in the packhouses had access to sanitation facilities than workers employed in the orchards (30.2%). Over two-thirds of the farm workers (69.8%) employed in the orchards did not have access to sanitation facilities, whilst none of the workers employed in the packhouses lacked access to sanitation services. This information was verified through observation (one of the data collection methods used in this study) when the packhouse managers (in this study) took the researcher on tours of their packhouse facilities. The researcher observed that the packhouse was extremely clean and had full-functioning sanitation facilities (toilets, wash basins and hand dryers**)**. The visits to the orchards were very different as indicated in the table above.

Slightly above two-thirds of farm workers (69.8%) in this study who were employed in the orchards did not have access to the sanitation facilities that are provided for in the OHSA. There are evident disparities in the access to sanitation facilities between workers employed in the packhouses and those employed in the orchards. Those farm workers who worked in the orchards often had to relieve themselves in the bushes and had no water source to wash their hands afterwards. The orchards with toilet facilities were different from those in the packhouses, as they were either reserved for the supervisor or were extremely dirty or out of order. The unequal access to sanitation facilities on the selected apple farms shows that Decent Work and social upgrading in this context is not inclusive as well. During the visit to the orchards, the researcher noticed that the few toilets available were also located far from where the farm workers were based. This finding relates to the findings from other studies on farm workers in South Africa which also indicate that farm workers employed in the orchards either do not have access to toilets or the few that are available are dirty or unusable (Devereux, Levendal and Yde, 2017; Devereux, 2020; Visser and Ferrer, 2015). Mr Jeremiah Mlenze, a field worker employed at Koukamma Vrugte Trust, described the lack of quality sanitation facilities at his place of work:

> I have been working there for years, and I haven't seen any proper toilets on this farm. The only toilet here is out of order and damaged. To be honest with you, we all use the bush for number two. We do not get any toilet paper or anything, you have to bring your own. If you do not have any toilet paper, you will use green grass or leaves to wipe. There is no water for us to wash our hands. When you come from relieving yourself in the bush, you will get back to work. The conditions of hygiene on this farm are very bad. We raised this issue with the pongos [supervisors] recently, and he went to management and was told that there is no money. This is why we do not bother complaining about any grievances here on that farm because we will be given the same response. Also, there is no water in the orchards. You have to walk far to the farm to get water. You have to walk to the farmhouses to get water. This is about a 20-minute walk. Management tells us to bring water from our houses. They say that it is not their responsibility to give us water at work. The inspectors only go to the office, or they walk around with the 'quality control' people, and the farmer is always with them. Those people don't talk to us. (02/12/2018).

The lack of functioning toilets in many of the orchards (in this study) exposes farm workers to various dangers. Some of the farm workers in this study recounted stories where they encountered animals such as snakes when they were relieving themselves in the bushes. Most female farm workers also feared being sexually assaulted as they walked far to relieve themselves. This finding is consistent with those of Devereux et al.'s (2017:26) study, which indicated that not only are women's labour rights violated by the lack of toilets in the vineyards, but their human dignity is negatively impacted as they are forced to seek alternatives. Devereux et al. (2017:26) showed that women who did not have toilets at the workplace had to use the bush (47%), or secluded parts of the vineyard itself (40%) (Devereux et al., 2017:26).

A small number of female farm workers in that study waited until they went home after work (10%), and very few (2%) indicated that walked to the nearest place where they could find toilets (Devereux et al., 2017:26). Devereux et al. (2017:26) also noted that women were also in danger of sexual harassment, assault and rape used the bush and lonely parts of the vineyard. Devereux (2020) notes that even if toilets are provided on farms, they are not necessarily hygienic. Women face additional difficulties when they are menstruating; they are forced to use the bush to change their sanitary towels. Women's lack of access to toilets and sanitation facilities is a form of discrimination based on their sex, as their needs are neither acknowledged nor accommodated (Devereux, 2020). Another key finding in this study was that some apple farmers hired portable toilets and wash basins when the labour inspections were about to visit the farms, and these were subsequently returned after the inspections.

Most of the farm workers who participated in this study also pointed out that the most obvious sign that labour inspections were taking place on a particular day was when they were transported to work in orchards that were far away from the farm offices for the day. These farm workers would return to work in the orchards near the farm offices the following day. This is an obvious attempt by farms to eliminate any chance of interaction between labour inspectors and random farm workers who may expose some of the labour law violations on their farms. According to many farm workers who participated in this study, some apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley often choose and brief a handful of (mostly permanently employed) farm workers to engage with the labour inspectors.

The interaction between the selected farm workers and the labour inspection is very scripted because the farm workers do not want to jeopardize their employment or risk the farms not passing the labour audit for exporting their apples. These findings show evident violations of labour laws about sanitation facilities on farms, and there appears to be some unethical relationship between some farmers (in this study) and labour inspectors (from government and private labour auditing firms). It is also evident that the inspectors are not as vigilant in the orchards as they are in the packhouses.

Farm workers indicated that the inspectors are primarily concerned with the fruits and the phytosanitary properties of the fruit rather than the conditions of the farm workers. These findings are consistent with Barrientos and Barrientos' (2002) assertion that the South African agricultural sector has always had a deficiency in sanitary provisions for field workers. The OHSA requires employers to undertake the following tasks in their businesses: (a) make available an adequate supply of drinking water for his or her employees at their workplace, and (b) clearly and conspicuously mark taps and pipes that are not fit for human consumption (SIZA, 2020). Table 9.16 shows the number of farm workers employed in the packhouses who had access to drinking water.

**Table 9.16: Availability of drinking water in the packhouses and orchards**

| Availability of drinking water at work | Packhouses | Orchards | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 100% (32) | 18.6% (8) | 53.3% (40) |
| No | 0% (0) | 81.4% (35) | 46.7% (35) |
| **Total** | **100% (n=32)** | **100% (n=43)** | **100% (n=75)** |

Note: The number in parentheses indicates sub-group sample numbers

Over half the farm workers (53.3%) in this study had access to drinking water at their places of work, while 46.7% did not have access to drinking water. When comparing the sub-sample by place of employment, there are notable differences. A far higher percentage of farm workers (100%) employed in packhouses had access to drinking water compared with those workers employed in the orchards (18.6%). Farm workers who were employed in the orchards also indicated that some of the farmers (in this study) brought out portable water tanks when the inspectors visited the farms. This is another measure used by some farmers (in this study) to pass the auditing process, as these water tanks were taken away after the certification process.

Farm workers employed in the orchards in this study brought their water to the orchards or walked long distances to other farm workers' houses to ask for water. The unequal access to drinking water on the selected apple farms shows that Decent Work and social upgrading in this context are not inclusive as well. Devereux (2020:393) noted that the lack of access to drinking water on farms not only compromises the dignity of the farm workers but has negative health implications as well. These outcomes show that there are glaring (private and public) governance deficits in the motoring of labour standards. Pahle (2015:132) contends that labour inspectors have mostly failed to report labour rights violations taking place in many farms in South Africa. This is largely because most labour inspections take place in the absence of the farm workers and the unethical relationship between some labour inspectors and White farmers (Devereux, 2020:400; Pahle, 2015:132). Human Rights Watch (2011) also notes that DEL is under-resourced, hence their poor monitoring of labour rights violations on farms in the country.

## 9.7 RIGHTS AT WORK

The findings in this study show that many farm workers' rights were violated at their places of employment. Table 9.17 determines whether the farm workers in this study believed that their rights were respected by their employers.

**Table 9.17: Rights at work**

| | Race | | Sex | | Employment Status | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Rights at work** | **Black** | **Coloured** | **Male** | **Female** | **Permanent** | **Seasonal** | |
| Yes | 4.5% (1) | 30.2% (16) | 30% (12) | 14.3% (5) | 24% (6) | 22% (11) | 22.7% (17) |
| No | 95.5% (21) | 69.8% (37) | 70% (28) | 85.7% (30) | 76% (19) | 78% (39) | 77.3% (58) |
| **Total** | **100% (n=22)** | **100% (n=53)** | **100% (n=40)** | **100% (n=35)** | **100% (n=25)** | **100% (n=50)** | **100% (n=75)** |

Note: The number in parentheses indicates sub-group sample numbers

Slightly over three-quarters of the farm workers (77.3%) in this study reported that their rights were not respected by their employers, while less than a quarter of the farm workers (22.7%) thought their rights were respected by their employers. Had the farm workers in this study experienced inclusive Decent Work and social upgrading, then there is a great chance that most of them would have been satisfied with their rights being respected by their respective employers.

When comparing the outcomes in table 9.17 according to race, sex and employment status, clear differences can be observed. A far higher percentage of coloured farm workers (30.2%) thought their rights were respected by their employers compared with black workers (4.5%). In terms of race, the employment outcomes of farm workers are mixed, as they favour different race groups in different facets of work and livelihoods. This study consistently shows that a smaller group of black and coloured farm workers experience better employment outcomes interchangeably. A higher share of male farm workers (30%) reported that their rights were respected at their places of work compared with their female counterparts (14.3%). Research on South African farms has shown that female farm workers have generally experienced gross violations of their rights since the colonial era (Greenberg, 2013a; Marcus, 1989). This study also showed a slightly higher percentage of permanent farm workers (24%) whose rights were respected by their employers relative to seasonal farm workers (22%) in this study.

This finding is also not surprising because a small core of permanently employed farm workers has always experienced better employment opportunities in the South African agricultural sector and deciduous fruit sub-sector in the Langkloof Valley (Bekker et al., 1982; Davies, 1990; Kritzinger and Vorster, 1996; Visser and Ferrer, 2015). The farm workers in this study knew that their rights were being violated, but their precarious economic positions did not allow them to abandon farm work. The findings in this table are consistent with the narrative that farm workers in South Africa, from the colonial to the contemporary era, have always been victims of exploitation and human rights violations at the hands of their employers (Atkinson, 2007; Davies, 1990; Devereux, 2020; Marcus, 1989; Visser, 2016). Many farm workers in Devereux, Levendal, and Yde's (2017) study complained that their employers did not recognize or respect their rights as employees. Overall, table 9.17 shows that a small group of permanently employed and coloured males in this study thought their employers respected their rights. It is important to note that in this study, race is not much of a determinant of employment outcomes on the selected apple farms, whilst sex and employment status are strong determinants.

## 9.8 EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS WITHIN THE GLOBAL APPLE VALUE CHAIN

One of the key pillars of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda is 'rights at work', which envisions workplaces where the rights of workers are respected by their employers. Countries which are signatories to the ILO's Decent Work Agenda are encouraged to align their labour legislation with the core principles of this agenda to improve the working conditions of workers.

In the context of GCs, the ILO falls under the social governance variant of the three-tiered model of governance, which also includes the public and private stakeholders. These three variants of power work in tandem to ensure that global capitalist trade functions seamlessly without any governance irregularities or deficits (Alford, 2020; Davis et al., 2018). In the global apple value chain, global supermarkets occupy a hegemonic position, and their core objective is to secure top-quality apples at the lowest price possible and within a short space of time to reduce costs and appropriate large profit margins. These supermarkets are not compelled to secure their apples from developing countries such as South Africa because of the modernized CA rooms that preserve apples in pristine condition even during their off-season in their home countries.

Nonetheless, these supermarkets do not solely rely on apple producers in their home countries but rather purchase the bulk of their apples from developing countries (such as South Africa) with lower currencies, cheaper apples, and lower production and labour costs. This profit-driven approach includes the race to the bottom and global labour arbitrage (Smith, 2016; Willoughby and Gore, 2018). As price makers, global supermarkets are aggressive with their demands for lower prices for apples, and as such, apple producers (who are price takers) are placed in a corner to meet these demands. Global GAP (who also form part of social governance) also sets standards for these apple producers to meet. These standards cover product quality, the environment and labour standards, which are monitored by private and public institutions. To obtain certification to export apples to international markets, apple producers in the Langkloof Valley must adhere to these standards.

Apple producers who fail to meet these standards are not allowed to export their produce; as such, they are forced to sell their apples in the local markets, which do not yield as high profit margins as the international markets. The apple industry of South Africa is export-dependent (WWF, 2016), hence why the apple producers in the Langkloof Valley are under pressure to meet international standards to optimize profits. International multilateral institutions establish global trade rules which are deregulated in nature; as such, they allow nations to trade with each other ‘freely’ (DAFF, 2020). The South African government has also adopted these neoliberal policies; hence, many local commercial apple producers are engaged in the global apple value chain without state protection or (significant) support (Visser and Alford, 2024).

Unlike Global GAP, the ILO's Decent Work Agenda is aspirational and hinges on the cooperation of the participating nations to ensure that their labour laws align with its core principles. The ILO's Decent Work Agenda is assisted by the private and public labour audits that are a prerequisite for exporting apples to international markets. This chapter has shown that the intense vertical and horizontal profit maximization strategies in the global apple value chain induce voluntary non-compliance (to some labour laws) in most of the apple farms in this study. The existence of laws does not mean that compliance is guaranteed, as has been shown in this chapter. This chapter has also shown that there is a deficit or weakness in the monitoring of labour standards, as the apple farmers in this study are exporting their apples, which means that they are passing labour audits (and gaining certification) amid large-scale non-compliance on their farms.

This shows that greater value is placed on the quality of the apple (which is exported for profit) than on the farm workers who produce these apples. The product monitoring process is so precise and scientifically rigorous that any slight mishaps (deviations from the international standard) disqualify the apple producer from exporting their apples. Nonetheless, unlike the apples, which are visible to international buyers, the farm workers who produce these apples are invisible to international buyers. This chapter has shown that the labour audits conducted by private agents and the government on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley are failing many farm workers (in this study), as non-compliance is a common practice on these farms. Clelland (2015) termed the hidden exploitation of workers, because of the extraction surplus value in GCs, 'dark value'.

In explaining this concept, Clelland (2015) also compared GCs to an iceberg, where only the tip is visible, whilst the structure that holds up this tip is immersed underwater in the ocean. Marx (1967) noted that the capitalist drive to extract surplus value (profit) as in the capitalist labour process results in mostly negative outcomes for workers. In the global apple value chain, the drive for the maximum extraction of surplus value (at both the vertical and horizontal levels) has resulted in a highly segmented labour force on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley that are experiencing immiseration and superexploitation. The segmented employment outcomes pertaining to employment rights (in this study) show that only a small core of permanently (mostly male) farm workers enjoyed their labour rights on the selected apple farms, whilst the vast majority of the (mostly female) seasonally employed farm workers experienced various forms of violations of their rights on these farms.

Using Clelland's (2015) iceberg metaphor, the exploitation and non-compliance of the selected apple farms in this study constitute the 'hidden or dark part' of the global apple value chain. Some critics may solely attribute the violation of labour standards to the farmers and governments where the GC is embedded. However, it is important to note that the private labour audits are conducted by independent private agencies that are recognized and recruited by global supermarkets. This means that the global supermarkets cannot be absolved from the rampant non-compliance taking place on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. The violation of worker rights on the selected farms in the Langkloof Valley also speaks to the ineffectiveness of the trade unions and other labour representative platforms on these farms as well.

GC literature also shows that the drive for profit by both the lead firms and supplier firms in GCs results in the violation of labour rights of workers in different GCs around the world (Asian Floor Wage, 2016a, b; Clean Clothes Campaign, 2013; Dolan, 2004; Hedberg, 2013; ITUC, 2016; Mezzadri, 2016a; McGrath, 2013; Oxfam, 2016; Raworth and Kidder, 2009; Selwyn, 2016). Smith (2016:26) contends that "buyer-driven GVCs typically place significant downward (costs) pressures on labour costs. Some suppliers are achieving reduced labour costs through violations of national and international labour standards and human rights laws. Practices such as failure to pay minimum wage and illegal overtime work are typical challenges in several industries. Additionally, the drive for reduced costs often results in significant occupational safety and health violations.

Downward pricing pressure has created economic incentives for violating environmental regulations and industry best practices, leading to the increased release of disease-causing pollutants. Cutting costs by engaging in negative social practices is a particularly acute trend in developing countries". The contribution of this study is that it shows how the capitalist drive for profit connects the spheres of trade exchange, production and social reproduction in the buyer-driven global apple value chain with arm's length forms of governance. Mainstream GC (especially GVC and GVC) scholars traditionally show the tip of the iceberg of GC outcome but do not show the hidden extraction of surplus value and how it impacts workers employed by supplier firms in GCs. Selwyn (2013) contends that one of the major flaws of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda (which is used to measure social upgrading) is its weak conceptualization of class relations and its inability to identify the systemic processes of exploitation characteristic of capitalist social relations in GCs.

Although non-compliance takes place at the farm level, lead firms cannot be absolved from these labour violations because global supermarkets either send their labour inspectors or rely on private organizations to conduct labour audits such as SIZA. The labour violations on the selected apple farms (in this study) can be blamed on the farmers, the DEL and global supermarkets who work through SIZA or independent labour auditing firms. Global supermarkets play a contradictory role in that they demand adherence to Global GAP social standards (labour laws) from their producers while at the same time, their price and delivery demands have a detrimental impact. This study strongly indicates a causal relationship exists between the vertical and horizontal profit-driven strategies in the global apple value chain, non-compliance and lack of thorough labour audits on the selected apple farms.

## 9.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter examined the 'rights at work' pillar of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, which is used to measure social upgrading in this study. More specifically, the experiences and outcomes of the farm workers (who participated in this study) were analysed to determine whether they experienced certain labour rights as provided by the labour legislation of South Africa. The areas relating to labour laws covered in this chapter included employment contracts, working hours, income, health and safety, sanitation and water, rights at work, and employment rights within the context of the global apple value chain. The experiences of the farm workers in this study were interrogated under each of the areas noted above, and as such, a clear pattern emerged.

Most of the farm workers who participated in this study experienced violation of their rights in some shape or form, whilst a small minority of farm workers did not experience violation of their labour rights on the selected farms in the Langkloof Valley. The two main factors determined whether farm workers in this study experienced the former or the latter outcomes. These factors include sex and employment status. Historically, race played a major factor in determining employment outcomes on farms in South Africa and the Langkloof Valley as well. Nevertheless, this study showed that the experiences of the farm workers were determined by sex and employment status. The outcomes of the workers in terms of race show a mixed picture, as different race groups have favourable outcomes in different facets of employment covered in this study. These mixed outcomes for farm workers, according to race, in consistent throughout this study.

The outcomes favouring coloured farm workers may be an indication of the continuation of the racial prejudice which existed pre-1994 on farms in the region. The outcomes favouring the black far workers are also an indication of some progress from this racialized history. A small group of mostly permanently employed male farm workers did not experience violation of labour rights on the selected apple farms in the study, whilst the majority of (mostly) female seasonally employed farm workers experienced violation of their labour rights on these farms. This segmentation of the experiences of farm workers in this study regarding their employment rights is a result of the intense profit maximization strategies (at both the vertical and horizontal level), the voluntary non-compliance of the apple farmers (in this study), a flawed public and private labour monitoring system, and a weak labour movement at the level of the affected farms.

A point of agreement among the farm workers (both permanent and seasonal) in this study was that their wages were extremely low, hence, most of them needed alternative sources of income or capital to survive. This finding shows that the minimum wage for farm workers in this study was not a living wage. Most of the small group of privileged farm workers whose rights were never violated by their employers also needed various forms of capital to sustain their livelihoods. These workers, as privileged as they are, could not upgrade their livelihoods because the legal minimum wage for farm workers (2018/2019) was low. Instead, the alternative forms of income and capital helped them to sustain their livelihoods.

This study shows that the ILO's Decent Work Agenda needs a serious look into how wages influence the livelihoods of workers, as a legal minimum wage for farm workers is not a living wage, hence the need for alternative sources of income. Marx (1967) noted that the sphere of social reproduction is an important part of the capitalist production process; as such, wages should consider the living conditions of workers. The notion of social upgrading remains incomplete when the living conditions are not considered because a low minimum wage cannot upgrade the living conditions of workers. The ILO needs to consider this point and acknowledge the aggressive profit maximization strategies that induce non-compliance and exploitation in many GCs. Overall, this chapter has shown that the notion of Decent Work and social upgrading is not inclusive for the farm workers who participated in this study.

# CHAPTER TEN

# SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL DIALOGUE ON THE APPLE FARMS

## 10.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines whether the farm workers who participated in this study had access to social protection and social dialogue on the selected commercial apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. Social protection can be defined as the set of measures that protect workers against economic and social distress (ILO, 1999). The first part of this chapter interrogates the extent to which the 75 farm workers who participated in this study had access to social protection measures such as medical cover, pension and insurance and access to the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF). This section of the chapter also examines the living conditions of the farm workers who participated in this study. As such, the following areas are covered: places of residence, types of dwellings, number of people in households and access to water and electricity. The second part of this chapter interrogates the internal and external channels for social dialogue that are available to the farm workers who participated in this study on the commercial apple farms where they were employed. Social dialogue is a process of negotiation, consultation and information exchange between employers and workers' organizations (and government institutions to some extent) (ILO, 1999). Both social protection and social dialogue are two of the four pillars of the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Decent Work Agenda, which is used (in this study) to measure whether workers experience social upgrading. Analysing these two pillars concerning the experiences of farm workers in this study is essential, as it determines whether integrating into the global apple value chain leads to inclusive social upgrading for workers as assumed by the neoliberal-inspired GC (especially GCC and GVC) scholars and multilateral institutions such as the Bretton Woods Institutions.

## 10.2 MEDICAL COVER

Historically, farmers in South Africa have not prioritized the health of their employees (Davies, 1990; Marcus, 1989).

Davies (1990:17) notes that (pre-1994) the health care of the farm workers in South Africa depended on the 'goodwill' of their employers. The norm during this period was that farmers made minimal (if any) provisions for workers' health needs. Post-1994, the approach of many farmers towards the healthcare of their employees has not significantly changed, as only a few farm workers enjoy medical aid benefits (Devereux, 2020). Table 10.1 shows the number of farm workers (in this study) who had access to medical cover provided by their employers.

**Table 10.1: Medical cover**

| | **Race** | | **Sex** | | **Employment Status** | | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Medical cover** | **Black** | **Coloured** | **Male** | **Female** | **Permanent** | **Seasonal** | |
| Yes | 13.6% (3) | 20.7% (11) | 27.5% (11) | 8.6% (3) | 56% (14) | 0% (0) | 18.7% (14) |
| No | 86.4% (19) | 79.2% (42) | 72.5% (29) | 91.4% (32) | 44% (11) | 100% (50) | 81.3% (61) |
| **Total** | **100% (n=22)** | **100% (n=53)** | **100% (n=40)** | **100% (n=35)** | **100% (n=25)** | **100% (n=50)** | **100% (n=75)** |

Note: The number in parentheses indicates sub-group sample numbers

Medical cover signifies an additional cost to farmers who are in a constant race to cut costs to absorb the cost pressures from international supermarkets. Most of the farm workers (81.3%) who participated in this study did not have access to the medical cover provided by apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley, while almost one-fifth of the farm workers (18.7%) had access to the medical cover provided by their employers. This shows that the notion of social upgrading in this context is not inclusive for the farm workers who participated in this study. When examining the small group of workers with medical cover, there are notable differences by race, sex and employment status. For example, there was a higher percentage of coloured farm workers (20.7%) than black workers (13.6%) who had medical coverage from their employers. This indicates some continuity in the practice of coloured farm workers experiencing more favourable employment outcomes in the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley compared to black farm workers (Bekker et al., 1982). A much larger share of men than women in the sample had access to medical coverage (27.5% and 8.6%, respectively). Lastly, only permanent workers enjoyed medical cover. Visser and Ferrer (2015:29) indicate that only 1.5% of farm workers in South Africa received contributions to medical or health insurance. Similar to this study (but with different percentages), Visser and Ferrer's (2015) study shows that only a small group of farm workers received medical coverage from their employers.

This finding is consistent with the findings in Visser and Ferrer's (2015:29) study, which indicated that "although very few (1.5%) of farmhands and labourers received contributions to medical or health insurance, the incidence of this benefit does vary by work status and sex. Whereas the benefit was provided to 3 per cent of workers with employment of a permanent nature, no workers with employment of limited or unspecified duration received the benefit. Of the workers with employment of a permanent nature, 4.0 per cent of men and 0.8 per cent of women receive this benefit. Provision of the benefit does vary by province". Overall, only a small group of permanently employed male farm workers had access to medical cover provided by their employers. Interestingly, not all the permanently employed farm workers enjoyed this medical benefit, which means that they rely on government hospitals and clinics in towns or unreliable mobile clinics.

The farm workers with financial means visit private doctors using their own money. Farm workers in this study did not have access to medical aid schemes provided by their employers. The selected apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley did not deduct a contribution from their employees' wages for medical aid benefits. Instead, farmers operate on a case-by-case basis; that is, they pay full medical fees for serious work-related injuries or illnesses and only half for some employees who are employed on permanent contracts. This type of provision is better known as 'medical cover' for farm workers. Mr Foidal De Vos, a supervisor employed at a farm owned by Kloof Fruit Company, described his medical cover as follows:

> Yes, I have a medical benefit as a permanent worker. When we go to the doctor, the farm will pay 50% of the fees, and we pay the other 50%. My wife and children fall under this, too. The farmer doesn't want us to abuse this privilege, though. But it really helps because the seasonal workers have to wait for the mobile clinic, or they travel to our [Kloof Fruit Company's] nurse in Joubertina. (03/12/2018).

Only Kloof Fruit Company had a clinic at their head office in Joubertina, but their farm workers' stations at different parts of the Langkloof Valley still have to travel to Joubertina and wait in the queue to receive medical treatment, thus missing wages for hours missed. Some farm workers (in this study) who were permanently employed mostly used public health care services to avoid paying 50% of their medical fees when they visited private doctors. Most of the farm workers in this study (permanent and seasonal) indicated that they reserved doctors' visits for serious medical conditions. In such cases, these farm workers mobilized various forms of income to meet the costs.

This is even harder for seasonal farm workers who do not have medical cover, which means that they have to pay the full amount for doctors' visits. It is for this reason that most of the seasonal farm workers who participated in this study depended on government clinics located in the towns and townships or mobile clinics, which are unreliable and inconsistent in their visitations to farms in the region. Ms Florence Kaap, a general farm worker employed at Fresh Orchards Incorporated explained why they did not receive medical aid at their place of work:

> My cousin is a nurse, and I know what medical aid is. They usually deduct from her pay, and then she has her children and her husband on the medical aid. They don't struggle at all because they go straight to the doctor when they are sick. Here on the farms, there's no such thing. We use the clinics when we are sick or when we collect our treatment. The farmer will [only] take you to the doctor when you get hurt here at work. (19/11/2018).

The farm workers in this study indicated that when they visit clinics or hospitals in the towns or townships, they have to wait in queues and lose a day's wage for hours missed (Sithole, 2005). Some farm workers even postpone their dates to collect chronic medication because they do not want to miss a day's wage (Sithole, 2005; Visser and Ferrer, 2015; Devereux, Levendal and Yde, 2017). This has compromised the quality of their health and could lead to serious complications, especially for those farm workers who are on chronic medication of any kind. Lastly, only permanent farm workers enjoyed pension and funeral cover from their employers. In this study, the large group of farm workers without medical cover were mostly black, female and seasonal.

## 10.3 PENSION AND FUNERAL COVER

A pension fund is a retirement fund that receives frequent contributions (usually monthly) from the employee and the employer. A stand-alone funeral policy offers coverage for a family's immediate needs following the loss of a family member. This differs from life insurance, which can benefit a deceased person's dependents for longer. This study showed that some farm workers who participated in this study were offered a pension and a stand-alone funeral policy. These two funds were deducted from the farm workers' wages every month. However, this offering is not available to all the farm workers. Table 10.5 shows the number of farm workers in this study who had a pension and funeral cover at their places of employment.

The table above shows a large majority (84%) of farm workers in this study did not have a pension fund or a funeral cover with their employers. This finding correlates with the findings made by some scholars who note that most farm workers in South Africa have no retirement provisions despite working for all their adult lives (Devereux et al., 2017). Many of the farm workers without funeral cover indicated that they relied on private insurance companies for funeral cover, meaning that a portion of their low wages was deducted by these private companies every month. A significant number of the farm workers (in this study) who did not have a pension fund were confident that they would receive the pension grant from the state when they reached the legal retirement age in South Africa. Table 10.2 provides a racial breakdown of the group of farm workers in this study who had access to a pension fund and a funeral cover.

**Table 10.2: Pension and funeral cover**

| | **Race** | | **Sex** | | **Employment Status** | | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Pension and funeral cover** | **Black** | **Coloured** | **Male** | **Female** | **Permanent** | **Seasonal** | |
| Yes | 9.1% (2) | 18.9% (10) | 27.5% (11) | 2.9% (1) | 48% (12) | 0% (0) | 16% (12) |
| No | 90.9% (20) | 81.1% (43) | 72.5% (29) | 91.4% (32) | 52% (13) | 100% (50) | 84% (63) |
| **Total** | **100% (n=22)** | **100% (n=53)** | **100% (n=40)** | **100% (n=35)** | **100% (n=25)** | **100% (n=50)** | **100% (n=75)** |

Note: The number in parentheses indicates sub-group sample numbers

The majority of the farm workers (84%) in this study did not have pension and funeral cover from their employers, while less than one-fifth of the farm workers (16%) had access to this type of cover. This shows the lack of inclusive social upgrading with the provision of pension and funeral cover by the selected apple farmers. Notable differences by race, sex and employment status are evident when the sub-samples are compared. For example, a higher percentage of coloured farm workers (18.9%) than black farm workers (9.1%) enjoy pension and funeral cover from their employers. This indicates some continuity in the practice of coloured farm workers experiencing more favourable employment outcomes in the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley compared to black farm workers (Bekker et al., 1982). A far higher share of males (27.5%) have pension and funeral cover from their employers relative to their female counterparts (2.9%).

This finding is consistent with the findings in this study that show that most of the female farm workers experienced poorer working conditions than their male counterparts. Lastly, only permanent farm workers enjoyed pension and funeral cover from their employers. This finding agrees with the findings made by some scholars that show that in the South African agricultural sector, it is mostly the permanently employed farm workers who have access to a pension and a funeral cover (Visser and Ferrer, 2015:2). In this study, the large group of farm workers without pension and funeral cover were mostly black, female and seasonal. Only a small group of (mostly) permanently employed males had access to a pension and funeral cover offered by the selected apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley. Mr Jan Jaer, a supervisor employed at a farm owned by Kloof Fruit Company, described the benefits that he gets from his employer:

> The farm deducts a little money for pension. I also have a funeral policy with the farm, and they deduct this every month. I feel sorry for some guys who have been working as seasonal workers on this farm for years. They don't have pension or funeral cover. I know a guy here on the farm who has been a seasonal worker for almost twenty years. One day, we were drinking, and he told me that he didn't care about pension and all those things because the government would take care of him when he retired and died. (22/11/2018).

Mr Eric Kahla, a specialist tree planter who is employed at a farm owned by Kloof Fruit Company, described the predicament of many farm workers without a pension fund or a funeral cover:

> To be honest with you, if you do not organize policies outside of the farm, you will die a pauper. There are a lot of people here who have passed on but could not even be buried at their place of birth because of costs. Some of these people lost touch with their families back home. There is a saying that goes: *xola ntliziyo yam, kusekhaya nalapha* [be glad my heart, even this place is home]. Some people leave their homes to work here and never return home. Some get government pensions and die here. When they die, they are buried by us. It's tough here, my brother. (04/12/2018).

This statement also shows that the selected apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley have externalized their social protection responsibilities to the government and farm workers' social networks.

Most of their seasonal farm workers rely on the state for pension grants and even burials. During the apartheid era, farmers often took over some of the social protection and payments in kind (Atkinson, 2007; Davies, 1990; Marcus, 1989). Nevertheless, with the advent of democracy and the removal of state subsidies from the sector (and the adoption of stringent labour laws), farmers are increasingly seeking more ways of externalizing any costs, and social protection is one of many externalized costs by farmers post-1994 (Dut Toit and Ally, 2003).

## 10.4 UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE FUND COVERAGE

The Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) gives short-term relief to workers when they become unemployed or are unable to work because of maternity, adoption and parental leave, or illness (Devereux et al., 2017:12). The UIF in South Africa is governed by the following legislation: Unemployment Insurance Act, 2001 (the UI Act); and Unemployment Insurance Contributions Act, 2002 (the UIC Act) (Devereux et al., 2017:11). All employers are legally obliged to register and pay UIF contributions. Employers must pay UIF contributions of 2% of the value of each worker's pay per month: the employer and the worker contribute 1% each (Devereux et al., 2017:11). Apple harvesting in the Langkloof Valley spans only six months, which means that the farm workers employed on seasonal contracts remain unemployed for the other half of the year. All the farm workers who were interviewed in this study indicated that they contributed to the UIF every month, as evident in their monthly payslips.

From an SLA, unemployment can be seen as an economic shock that is seasonal in the case of the seasonal farm workers in this study (DFID, 1999). The UIF constitutes financial capital, which is earned through the labour of the farm worker (human capital) on the apple farm (social capital), which contributes to the fund, and the worker claims this money at the Department of Employment and Labour (social capital). The UIF also contributes to sustaining the livelihoods of the seasonal farm workers during the off-season. Workers who are permanently employed also contribute to this fund, however, they remain employed throughout the year. This study has shown that permanent workers only work a few days a week as the production processes on the selected apple farms slow down during the off-season. The increasing casualization of the labour force by the selected apple farmers to reduce costs to remain competitive in the global apple value chain has an impact on the workers, as more workers are employed on seasonal contracts.

The casualization of the labour force on the selected apple farms in the region also increases the workload of the small group of permanent farm workers who are compelled to perform multiple tasks/jobs during the off-season whilst their wages remain the same. Nonetheless, this small group of workers remains employed throughout the year, whilst an increasing number of farm workers only work for six months in the year. In this case, there are evident disparities in the employment outcomes between the small group of permanently employed and seasonally employed farm workers (who constitute the majority) on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. Inclusive social upgrading with the provision and access to UIF is a reality for all the farm workers who participated in this study. Most of the seasonal farm workers interviewed in this study indicated that the UIF money is very little, hence, they rely on government grants, remittances, selling of goods, engaging in subsistence farming, and working part-time to survive.

This finding aligns with the assertion made by Devereux and Solomon (2011:22), who contend that the UIF is palliative as it does not transform the structures that entrench and reproduce poverty and inequality among farm workers in South Africa. Devereux and Solomon (2011:22) argue that measures such as the UIF are introduced within a neoliberal economic policy framework, and structural change can only happen if there is a fundamental change in the institutions that created poverty in the first place. It is worth noting that some of the farm workers who participated in this study struggled to claim money from the UIF during the off-season. Mr Gilmore Mere, a general worker employed on a farm owned by Fresh Orchards Incorporated, described his trouble accessing UIF money:

> I am having a problem with accessing my UIF. I went to the offices, and they always give me the run around. They told me that I must come back another time, and when I got there, they rescheduled for another date. The farmer is supposed to contribute to the UIF. I went to the farmer and explained to him that I was having problems with accessing the UIF. Now, it is almost two years since I have not received the UIF payments. I'm not sure if the problem is with the farmer or the UIF people. But now, I have been given another date [by the Department of Employment and Labour]. I hope works out this time. (24/01/2019).

Another farm worker, Ms Nosipho Zinto, a packer at Kloof Fruit Company, explained how the negligence by farmers affects the claiming process:

> At the end of the season, we usually go to claim the UIF money, which is often not enough. There is a problem with claiming UIF. Some colleagues go on maternity, and when they come back, their years of service at the packhouse are shortened in the UIF. For example, if you have been working at the Kloof Fruit Company packhouse since 2010, and you get pregnant and go on maternity leave in 2015. When you come back from maternity leave, they will say you started work in 2015, not in 2010, which means that UIF will not recognize the five years you worked there before maternity leave. Even when you collect UIF for those four years, it will not be the full amount. Sometimes they give you less than R5,000. When I went to the UIF people, they told me that my employer only registered me for the four years, not the full ten years I worked. This is not fair at all. That's why I work as a cleaner at a bed and breakfast here during the off-season because that UIF money is little. (21/11/2018).

The statements from the seasonal farm workers above show that the claiming process for the UIF is stalled by two possible factors. Firstly, the selected apple farmers may have failed to complete the necessary paperwork or have not been contributing to the UIF as a means of saving costs. Secondly, this process may also be stalled by the government officials who are tasked with the responsibility of issuing UIF claims. The first scenario is plausible because this study has shown that some apple farmers violated the rights of most of the farm workers who participated in this study in the name of cutting costs and increasing their profit margins in the global apple value chain. This scenario would confirm a consistent finding in this study that shows a clear relationship between the profit maximization strategies and non-compliance on the selected apple farms (from the Langkloof Valley) engaged in the global apple valley chains. The second scenario is also plausible, as some scholars have noted that the Department of Employment and Labour is under-resourced, and its labour inspectors lack the capacity to effectively enforce labour regulations under its coverage (Benjamin, 2011; Bhorat et al., 2015; Hastings, 2019; Visser and Ferrer, 2015). Overall, the barriers to claiming the grants from the UIF threatened the livelihoods of the seasonal farm workers who participated in this study.

## 10.5 FARM WORKERS' PLACE OF RESIDENCE

During the apartheid era, permanent farm workers employed on the deciduous fruit farms in the Langkloof Valley resided on the farms, whilst seasonal farm workers mostly resided in neighbouring townships (Bekker et al., 1982). Table 10.3 illustrates the geographical places of residence for the farm workers who participated in this study.

**Table 10.3: Place of residence**

| | Race | | Sex | | Employment Status | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Place of residence** | **Black** | **Coloured** | **Male** | **Female** | **Permanent** | **Seasonal** | |
| On-farm | 36.4% (8) | 35.8% (19) | 35% (14) | 37.1% (13) | 40% (10) | 34% (17) | 36% (27) |
| Off-farm | 63.6%. (14) | 64.2% (34) | 65% (26) | 62.9% (22) | 60% (15) | 66% (33) | 64% (48) |
| **Total** | **100% (n=22)** | **100% (n=53)** | **100% (n=40)** | **100% (n=35)** | **100% (n=25)** | **100% (n=50)** | **100% (n=75)** |

Note: The number in parentheses indicates sub-group sample numbers

Almost two-thirds of the farm workers (64%) who participated in this study resided off the farms in townships located in different parts of the Langkloof Valley, while over one-third of the farm workers (36%) resided on the farms. Some differences surface when the sub-samples in table 10.3 are compared by race, sex and employment status. The findings in the table above show that there is a balance between the number of black (36.4%) and coloured (35.8%) farm workers residing on the selected farms in this study. This indicates that some changes have taken place in terms of race on some selected farms in the Langkloof Valley because pre-1994 employment outcomes on the farms in the region largely favoured coloured workers over black workers. Although this study has shown some favourable employment outcomes for coloured farm workers, there are cases where black workers experience favourable outcomes, thus showing both continuities and discontinuities in the racial practices on farms in the region.

Furthermore, there was a slightly larger share of females (37.1%) residing on farms compared with their male counterparts (35%). Interviews conducted with (mostly seasonally employed) female farm workers residing on farms revealed that they were residing on the farms through their male associates who were permanently employed. It is worth noting that the selected apple farmers in the region did not provide housing to seasonally employed farm workers, hence, they resided on the farms through permanently employed farm workers who were mostly male. For example, in a single household on a farm, there can be a male farm worker who is employed as a supervisor and lives with his wife and daughters who are employed on seasonal contracts on the same farm. In this case, the female farm workers resided on the farm through their male associates and eventually outnumbered them in their households.

This was a common finding in the interviews conducted with farm workers residing on the farms. The findings in table 10.3 show that there was a higher percentage of permanent farm workers (40%) residing on the farms than seasonal farm workers (34%). This finding is consistent with Bekker et al.'s (1982) study, which showed that the farm workers who resided on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley during the apartheid era were employed on permanent contracts. This study has shown that this has changed, as a larger proportion of farm workers in this study resided in townships throughout the Langkloof Valley. This finding is consistent with other literature showing that an increasing number of farm workers in South Africa do not reside on farms (Visser, 2016). Atkinson (2007:54) indicates that farm evictions were taking place before the democratic dispensation in South Africa.

Post-1994, many farmers accelerated the pace of evictions on their farms as a response to the newly established legislation to land reform, land tenure and farm labour (Wegeriff, 2006:9). These legislative changes were accompanied by neoliberal policies which saw the removal of state support for farmers, as such, they sought to reduce costs through evictions (Atkinson, 2007; Hall et al., 2002; Wegeriff, 2006). Another significant reason for the large-scale eviction on farms in South Africa, post-1994 was that farm workers voluntarily left farms to escape paternalism (at the hands of their white employers) on the farms and to access some of the provisions and services (housing, schooling, healthcare services etc.) made by the state in the townships and urban areas (Wegeriff, 2006). Mr Matthew Reinecke, a supervisor employed at a farm owned by Kloof Fruit Company, captured the general sentiment of the farm workers who did not want to live on the farm:

> I prefer living here in the township. I wouldn't want to live on a farm. When you live on the farm, the farm manager owns you. There is no privacy or freedom on the farm. You are like the farmer's property when you stay on a farm, as he has 24-hour access to you and your family. Also, we are close to everything here. On the farm, if you want to go to the shops, you must wait for the farmer to take you guys, or you must arrange transport, which is costly. Also, we don't have to pay money for transport to take our kids to school, because there is a school here. It's much better outside here than on the farm. (04/12/2018).

This study has shown that farm workers who voluntarily left farms to reside in townships in the Langkloof Valley were mostly driven by the desire to access public services which provide various forms of social security or protection.

Bekker et al.'s (1982) study indicated how deciduous fruit farmers in the Langkloof Valley (during the apartheid era) provided various forms of non-cash payments (social security) to supplement the extremely low wages. Payments in kind were not necessarily acts of goodwill but were low-cost methods of retaining a vulnerable class of workers trapped within exploitative farm work (Davies, 1990). During this period, seasonal farm workers did not receive payments in kind, as these were the 'privileges' reserved for permanently employed (mostly coloured) farm workers, thus showing long-standing unequal access to social security for farm workers in Langkloof Valley. Female farm workers mostly employed on seasonal contracts could only reside on the farms through male associates (Bekker et al., 1982). This study shows that employment status and sex remain key determinants of accessing farm worker housing. It is also worth noting that the farm workers who resided on the selected apple farms (in this study) noticed a drastic decline in the levels of payments in kind coming from their employers; as such, they also relied on the government for their social security. Table 10.4 shows the ownership patterns among the farm workers who participated in this study.

**Table 10.4: Ownership of dwelling**

| Ownership of place of residence | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Owned by farmers – on-farms | 27 | 36% |
| Owned by farm workers – outside the farms | 25 | 33.3% |
| Owned by family members/acquaintances – outside the farms | 20 | 26.7% |
| Owned by a landlord – farm workers renting outside the farms | 3 | 4% |
| **Total** | 75 | **100%** |

Note: The number in parentheses indicates sub-group sample numbers

Most of the farm workers who participated in this study resided in properties that were either owned by their employers on the farms (36%), family members or acquaintances (26.7%) and landlords (4%) outside the farms. Only one-third of the farm workers (33.3%) in this study resided in properties which they owned outside the farms. The ownership of a house or dwelling can be considered a form of physical capital by SLA scholars and comes with a certain level of security for individuals.

The fact that a higher percentage of farm workers in his study do not own the properties they reside in signifies a certain level of inequality in the outcomes of the farm workers (in this study), and it also shows the fallacy of inclusive social upgrading in the global apple value chain. Residing in a property owned by someone else carries a high level of unpredictability because they can evict or remove an individual at any time. This is not to say that owning a house or dwelling does not come with certain risks, however, it has a greater level of security or predictability than living on someone else's property, which often comes with certain conditions. The large number of farm workers who owned houses in this study received them from the state (RDP houses). Although social protection is part of the decent work agenda, in this study, it is important to note that social protection (in the form of housing) is not a result of engaging in the global apple value chain but is a need that is fulfilled by the state.

Only a small group of farm workers resided on the farms because the selected apple farmers in this study have increasingly externalized the costs of housing to the farm workers who largely rely on the state for most social services. The profit-driven agenda of both the global supermarkets and the selected farmers in the global apple value chain in question has a direct impact on the housing outcomes of the farm workers who participated in this study, thus contradicting the very idea of inclusive social upgrading in GCs. Table 10.5 shows the type of dwellings that the farm workers who participated in this study were residing in.

**Table 10.5: Types of dwelling**

| Type of dwelling | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Brick house – on-farm | 27 | 36% |
| Brick house – off-farm | 38 | 50.7% |
| Informal dwelling – off-farm | 10 | 13.3% |
| **Total** | **75** | **100%** |

Note: The number in parentheses indicates sub-group sample numbers

Housing is an important part of social security for farm workers, as it protects them and their families from the harsh natural elements (Cohen and Moodley, 2012:332). SLA scholars perceive housing (especially those owned by farm workers) as a form of physical capital which contributes to the livelihood strategies of farm workers who participated in this study (DFID, 1999). Nevertheless, it is worth investigating the quality of the housing where the farm workers (in this study) were residing.

About half the farm workers (50.7%) in this study resided in brick houses outside the farms where they worked, while just over one-third (36%) resided in brick houses owned by farmers on the farms where they worked. Only 13.3% of the farm workers in this study resided in informal dwellings, which were all located in townships outside the farms where they were employed. Although all the farm workers who resided on farms (in this study) resided in brick houses with water and electricity, the quality of these houses was not good. This finding comes from both the farm workers and through the observations made by the researcher during the interviews with the farm workers residing on the selected apple farms. Mr Solomon Duna, a supervisor at Koukamma Vrugte, described the conditions of the farm worker houses on the farm where he was employed:

> When we were younger, the farmer would maintain the houses on this farm, but now we have to fix the houses from our own pockets. I have two children, and my wife works as a packer [seasonal] on this farm as well, so there is not enough money to take care of my family and fix the house properly. It's all about priorities, my brother. Look, I'll fix the house when there is a leak in the roof or the door or the windows are broken, but I can't do extra things. Also, this is not my house, the farm owns it, so I can't fix a house that I will leave in the future. I'm hoping to get an RDP house and move with my family before I'm 45. We applied for an RDP house a few years ago, but we are still waiting. If we get an RDP house, I'll be happy because it will be my house, and I will hustle to fix it the way I want. (27/01/2019).

The statement above shows that the farms where the farm workers were residing did not spend money on maintaining the houses. Research shows that many farmers in South Africa have drastically reduced payments in kind to cut costs and have externalized these onto the farm workers and government (Hall et al., 2002; Wegeriff, 2006). The unequal access to quality housing and general ownership (of houses) shows there isn't inclusive social upgrading (in this context) for the farm workers in this study. Table 10.6 shows the number and percentage of farm workers (in this study) who had access to water and electricity at their places of residence.

**Table 10.6: Access to water and electricity**

| Access to water and electricity | Water | Electricity |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 93.3% (70) | 90.7% (68) |
| No | 6.7% (5) | 9.3% (7) |
| **Total** | **100% (n=75)** | **100% (n=75)** |

Note: The number in parentheses indicates sub-group sample numbers

Most of the farm workers who participated in this study had access to water (93.3%) and electricity (90.7%) at their places of residence. Only a small group of farm workers in this study did not have access to water (6.7%) and electricity (9.3%) at their places of residence. This finding is consistent with that of ECSECC (2017:81) which indicated that Koukamma municipality had a total number of 8 210 (or 71.63%) households with piped water inside the dwelling, a total of 1 110 (9.68%) households with piped water inside the yard and a total number of 1 770 (15.44%) households had no formal piped water. During the interviews with the farm workers (94%) who resided in the townships in the Langkloof Valley, it was immediately evident that most of them resided in RDP houses, which were of a slightly better quality than houses on the farms.

This shows that most of the farm workers in this study resided in government RDP houses, which indicates the externalization of this means of social protection by the farm to the government. It is important to note, however, that many of the brick houses of the farm workers who participated in this study were sparsely furnished and needed maintenance work. For example, some of the homes that the researcher visited often had cracks on the walls, broken ceilings, broken windows sealed with different types of material, broken doors in the rooms inside the house, and outside walls and roofs needing paint (among other factors). Farm workers indicated that they struggled to maintain and upgrade their brick houses because their wages were low and dedicated to other pressing household needs. This shows that having access to brick housing on the farm or outside the farm does not necessarily mean that the living conditions of the farm workers are of a high quality; as such, the notion of inclusive social upgrading in this context is (once again) very questionable.

## 10.6 NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN THE HOUSEHOLD

Dunaway (2013) contends that the household is a crucial component of GCs, as the workers' survival strategies within their households contribute to reproducing their labour power for employment on the supplier firms engaged in GCs. Capitalist organizations depend on workers, who are connected to their households situated in specific communities. The sustainable livelihoods theory asserts that vulnerable population groups need diverse assets to survive. This study has shown the importance of multiple forms of income, which help farm workers sustain their livelihoods. The farm wage is not enough to take care of the needs of the farm workers and their families, rather, they have to mobilise different assets available to them to survive. In addition to the government, farm workers heavily rely on their household members to survive. As such, it is important to determine the average household numbers of the farm workers employed on the apple farms of the Langkloof Valley. Table 10.7 shows the number of people who resided in the same households as the individuals who participated in this study.

**Table 10.7: Number of people in the household**

| Number of people in the household | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Less than three | 25 | 33.3% |
| More than three | 50 | 66.7% |
| **Total** | **75** | **100%** |

Two-thirds of the farm workers (66.7%) who participated in this study resided in households that had more than three people (including themselves), while only one-third (33.3%) resided in households with less than three people (including themselves). Many of the households visited by the researcher relied on multiple streams of income from the members of the households, which means that the more people in the household, the greater the streams of income, whether coming from government grants, formal employment, or small-scale businesses (among other sources of income). For example, in one household in the Langkloof Valley, one can find two people who are employed on different farms. One may be on a seasonal contract, whilst the other may be employed on a permanent contract. In the same household, there could also be recipients of state welfare grants (i.e., pensioners, children or disabled persons).

In such a household, each stream of income is crucial as it serves to meet pressing household needs. Mr Jan Jaer, a supervisor employed at a farm owned by Kloof Fruit Company, described the importance of having multiple streams of income in his household:

> I'm a supervisor here on the farm, and I work the whole year. During the off-season, I do multiple jobs on the farm as well. My wife works at the packhouse and only works half the year. I have a nineteen-year-old son, who finished matric last year and is now working at Honeybush tea farm not far from here. He is a casual there. Then, I have a small thirteen-year-old girl who is in standard five. She gets a grant, luckily, so that helps with her expenses. My son is old, and he contributes to the groceries and electricity. You see, during the picking season, we are okay, I can say. But off-season, it's only me working, and this time is a bit tough because my wife and son are not working then. In the off-season, we rely on my income and the child grant, but you can't count that because it's for the child. My wife tries to sell stuff like vetkoek during the off-season. She's a good cook, and when other farm workers have events, they call her to help cook, and they pay her. Anyway, every cent counts; that is my point. You don't enter farm work to be rich. (22/11/2018).

Mr Jaer's account is common for farm workers' households who participated in this study in the Langkloof Valley. Outside the government, farm workers rely on members of their households to survive. These family members provide diverse assets for their households to survive. This can be seen in the purchasing of household appliances and furniture. Farm workers in this study indicated that they needed multiple streams of income from different family members to purchase household amenities, as they could not afford these with their meagre farm wages.

## 10.7 SOCIAL PROTECTION IN THE GLOBAL APPLE VALUE CHAIN

Smith (2016) contends that global labour arbitrage drives contemporary globalization of production. The search for the cheapest forms of labour by multinational companies is driven by a profit motive, as such it is no coincidence that lead firms in different GCs secure their produce or products from developing countries with a vulnerable labour force whose rights are constantly violated (Selwyn, 2016). Vulnerable workers engaging in GCs from emerging economies are often paid extremely low wages and have minimal access to social security.

This study has shown that most of the farm workers who participated in this study were employed on seasonal contracts, thus limiting their access to various forms of social security provided by their employers. Pre-1994, it was common practice for farmers in the Langkloof Valley to provide various forms of social protection of varying proportions. The removal of state support from the agricultural sector of South Africa by the ANC government, together with the institutionalization of labour legislation (which protected farm workers' rights) led to the decline of the provision of social protection by the farmers to their employees as a means of saving costs. The selected apple farmers (in this study) are engaging in the global apple value chain without state support, as such they have resorted to aggressive methods of reducing costs such as casualizing the bulk of their labour force and externalizing the costs related to the provision of social protection (for their employees) to the government and workers (and their social networks, etc.).

This means that most farm workers who participated in this study do not have access to social protection from their employers, which means that the promise of inclusive social upgrading for workers participating in the global apple value chain is not true. This study has also shown that the UIF, which is available to all farm workers (in this study) is not enough to last the duration of the off-season, which is six months. Some farm workers in this study struggled to access these funds due to farmers' noncompliance and failure by the government officials tasked with issuing these funds. Standing (2011) outlined that neoliberal globalization has produced a growing class of workers in insecure forms of employment without access to social protection provided by their employers. This group relies on external networks (outside their workplaces) to secure social protection for themselves and their families. This uneven access to social protection among the farm workers (in this study) results from the aggressive profit-maximizing activities engulfing the vertical and horizontal aspects of the global apple value chain. this further shows that social upgrading is not a reality for all the farm workers in this study, as the access to social protection was unequal.

## 10.8 INTERNAL CHANNELS FOR SOCIAL DIALOGUE

### 10.8.1 Trade Unions

In terms of section 23 of the Constitution of South Africa, every worker has the right to form or join a trade union (Devereux, 2020:398). This means that employers cannot dictate to the farm workers which association or organisation they can or cannot join.

According to Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2011), the formation or joining of a trade union by workers is better known as associational power. From an SLA perspective, associational power qualifies as social capital, as it is a way that workers (who are vulnerable) use associations and social networks to mobilize for better working conditions, which influence their living conditions and livelihoods as well (DFID, 1999). Davies (1990:11) notes that during the apartheid era, "most farmers are strongly opposed to their workers joining a union, refuse union organisers the right to visit workers on the farms, and use the threat of dismissal to prevent workers becoming unionised". Apple farmers (in this study) did not prevent their farm workers from joining trade unions; however, their wary attitude towards them deterred a lot of farm workers (in this study) from joining them. Mr Kobus Van Tonder, product manager at Kloof Fruit Company, sums up the general attitude of apple farmers (in this study) towards trade unions:

> Yes, we have trade unions in all our packhouses. We try to make the workers aware of the market forces that impact the way we determine our wages and run our operations. You must remember, the trade unions in South Africa, they have an aggressive mandate. For example, last year, we had a drought and then hail, and in that context, we as a business can't afford to give them a seven percent increase. They don't care about market forces, they only care about the increase to improve their lives. They are unreasonable. (07/05/2019).

This statement by Mr De Kock captures the general sentiment of apple farmers (in this study) who feel that trade unions are blinded by political motives that are detached from the realities of the market. The apple farmers in this study were aware that they could not prohibit trade unions from operating on their farms, however, their employees avoid joining trade unions because they do not want to be seen as 'troublemakers'. Farm workers in this study indicated that being seen as a 'troublemaker' by the selected apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley significantly reduces their chances of being recalled for future employment during the harvesting season. The fear of being unemployed for longer periods deterred many farm workers (in this study) from joining trade unions. ECSECC (2017) showed that Koukamma municipality has limited employment options outside the agricultural sector and high levels of unemployment; as such, the farm workers fear long-term unemployment because of joining trade unions.

Anner (2015) termed this fear of unemployment ‘market control’, as the precarious market conditions automatically subdue workers from participating in direct collective action against them. Table 10.8 indicates the number of farm workers (in this study) who were members of a trade union at their places of work.

**Table 10.8: Trade union membership**

| | Race | | Sex | | Employment Status | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Trade union membership** | **Black** | **Coloured** | **Male** | **Female** | **Permanent** | **Seasonal** | **Total** |
| Yes | 27.3% (6) | 28.3% (15) | 37.5% (15) | 17.1% (6) | 52% (13) | 16% (8) | 28% (21) |
| No | 72.7% (16) | 71.7% (38) | 62.5% (25) | 82.9% (29) | 48% (12) | 84% (42) | 72% (54) |
| **Total** | **100% (n=22** | **100% (n=53)** | **100% (n=40)** | **100% (n=35)** | **100% (n=25)** | **100% (n=50)** | **100% (n=75)** |

Note: The number in parentheses indicates sub-group sample numbers

Almost three-quarters of the farm workers (72%) in this study did not have trade union membership at their places of work, while those with trade union membership constituted slightly above a quarter (28%). This shows that only a small group of farm workers in this study were members of trade unions at their places of employment. Social upgrading in this context is not inclusive of all the farm workers in this study. When comparing the sub-samples according to race, sex and employment status, notable differences surface. Coloured farm workers (28.3%) enjoyed a slight advantage over black farm workers (27.3%) in trade union membership. This finding is consistent with a consistent finding in this study, which indicates that some bias towards coloured farm workers still exists on some selected farms in the Langkloof Valley.

Males (37.5%) enjoyed a higher percentage of trade union membership than females (17.1%). This finding is consistent with other findings in this study, which show that a small group of male farm workers experienced better employment outcomes on the selected apple farms than their female counterparts. Low trade union membership among women in the agricultural sector in South Africa is a longstanding feature in the sector. Devereux et al.’s (2017:33) study on the labour conditions of women farm workers in the Western Cape and the Northern Cape showed that trade union membership among the research participants was only 12%. Devereux et al.’s (2017:33) study further reported that trade union membership was marginally higher among permanent workers and among export workers.

Similarly, this thesis has shown that permanent farm workers (52%) had a far higher rate of trade union membership compared with farm workers employed on seasonal contracts (16%). This finding correlates with Visser and Ferrer's (2015:30) observation that there are more permanent farm workers with trade union membership than seasonal farm workers. Barrientos and Visser (2012) note that trade unions have less ability to represent or support seasonal farm workers given their high turnover and precarious state of employment on the farms. The larger percentage of farm workers without trade membership were mostly black, female and seasonal. Historically (pre-1994), trade unions were not effective in the agricultural sector due to the hostility of the white farmers (among other factors (Davies, 1990). Post-1994, trade unions still have a very limited footprint in this sector due to the continued hostility of many white farmers towards trade unions, the distant geographical locations of farms and the overwhelming fear among farm workers to join trade unions (Devereux, 2020; Klerck and Naidoo, 2019; Visser and Ferrer, 2015; Webb, 2017).

Devereux (2020:398) contends that farmers are widely perceived by farm workers as being hostile to trade unions because they fear that workers could use the union to campaign for higher wages and better working conditions. The global apple value chain is driven by profit motive which has influenced the voluntary non-compliance by the selected apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley. An intense trade union presence on the selected apple farms (in this study) has a high chance of exposing and challenging incidents of non-compliance, which would disrupt the illegal cost-cutting measures that these thrive on. This study has shown that associational power in the form of trade unions (Coe and Jordhus-Lier, 2011) is only accessed by a small group of farm workers. Mr Bradley Leywer, a pesticide sprayer employed at Fresh Orchards Incorporated, explained why he thought farm workers (at his workplace) do not join trade unions at his place of work:

> The reason why there is no union on this farm is that the white guy [farm manager] will treat you badly if he knows that you are part of a trade union. If I start a trade union, they will tell you to pack your bags because you are a problem. Sometimes, we talk about starting a trade union here, but we get cold feet when it is time to make it happen. We are scared to be shown the gate, you check. A few years ago, a guy from COSATU came to recruit us. I don't know how the *mlungu* [white farm manager] found out, but the following day, the *pongo* [supervisor] warned us not to join that union because the farmer didn't want it and would fire anyone who joined it. (05/12/2018).

The statement by Mr Leywer represents the general perception of many farm workers in this study who did not join trade unions on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. Most of the farm workers (in this study) avoided joining trade unions avoid joining trade unions because they fear losing their jobs. Another reason why most of the farm workers (who participated in this study) did not join trade unions is that they were sceptical about their agenda. Devereux's (2020:398) study indicated that many farm workers believed that trade unions do little to assist farm workers and are only interested in collecting fees. Some of the farm workers (in that study) who had previously been trade union members became disillusioned and left (Devereux, 2020:398). Some of the farm workers who participated in this study (in the Langkloof Valley) also felt that trade unions were there to recruit for the ANC rather than help them to address their workplace grievances. Additionally, there were some farm workers (in this study) who thought that the trade unions were co-opted by the farmers in the region, which is why they were ineffective. Mr Eric Kahla, a specialist tree planter employed at a farm owned by Kloof Fruit Company, explained why farm workers (at his place of employment) were sceptical of trade unions:

> There is a trade union called FAWU [Food and Allied Workers Union] here. But they are useless because they have been bought by the farmers. They have been here for many years and have done nothing. All the serious cases on the farms have not been addressed. I remember, a few years ago, a lady called Alicia was unfairly dismissed by another employee. That other lady was later called back to work on the farm that same season, but Alicia, who was fired for the same thing, was not called back. Alicia raised the issue with the trade union as she felt that she was being treated unfairly. The FAWU representative called Alicia and told her to accept R3,000 from the farm as she wasn't going to win the case. She took that money and left the farm, and I don't know what happened to her or where she is working today. But FAWU has not won any case ever since they started operating on the farm. They are scared of the farmers, and I think the farmer also gives them brown envelopes if you know what I mean. A lot of us here don't even go to the union when we have an issue. We started a workers' committee here a few years ago because we thought the trade union was useless. (04/12/2018).

In addition to fearing 'blacklisting' from the farmers, the farm workers in this study did not trust the agenda of the trade unions in their industry, as they had not seen any tangible cases won by the trade unions on their behalf.

Overall, a small group of permanently employed (mostly) male farm workers had a higher probability of having trade union membership than (mostly) female and seasonal farm workers. The bulk of the farm workers who did not have trade union membership relied on alternative platforms or channels to raise their workplace grievances. Matthew Reinecke, a supervisor employed by a farm owned at Kloof Fruit Company, explained why farm workers are choosing alternative platforms like workers' committees over joining trade unions:

> There was a trade union [on this farm] back then. But you see, Kloof Fruit Company is very clever. First of all, they have 14 farms here in the Langkloof Valley. Once, the trade union took Kloof Fruit Company to court, but their case did not succeed because they were not recognized as a union. The reason for this is that Kloof Fruit Company argued that their business is not limited to one farm and that for a trade union to exist, they need to capture a certain percentage of the workforce at Kloof Fruit Company. So, the union was only operating on one farm and could not capture the lion's share of the workers on the other 13 farms that fall under Kloof Fruit Company. So, this is how the union failed their case as they were not recognized. You see, if you fight Kloof Fruit Company, you need a lot of money because they have the best lawyers, and they can afford to fight you in court any day ...The trade union was never effective anyway. They were just eating the workers' money. (04/12/2018).

Table 10.9 shows the number of farm workers who thought the trade unions were effective in addressing worker grievances.

**Table 10.9: Efficacy of trade unions**

| Efficacy of trade union | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 3 | 14.3% |
| No | 18 | 85.7% |
| **Total** | **21** | **100%** |

A large percentage of the farm workers (85.7%) in this study who had trade union membership did not think that they were effective, while only 14.3% thought these unions were effective. This finding is shared by several scholars who have shown that trade unions have a poor success rate in the agricultural sector, a tradition which dates back to the apartheid era (Davies, 1990; Devereux, 2020; Visser and Ferrer; Webb, 2017).

The limited success of trade unions on the selected apple farms (in this study) can be strongly attributed to what Anner (2015) terms 'employer and market control' among other factors. Employer control can be seen in how the hostile attitudes of the selected apple farmers towards trade unions deter many of their employees from joining them. This study has shown that the price of joining a trade union on the selected apple farms is being identified as a 'troublemaker' and jeopardizes their future employment. The fear of being blacklisted and the possibility of long-term unemployment in the future is evidence of market control, as this deters many farm workers (in this study) from joining trade unions. This study has shown that market and employer control restrict the associational power of farm workers who participated in this study.

Employer control takes place when employers use various methods to suppress worker mobilization; as such, workers reach out to external stakeholders who help pressure their employers to address their grievances quickly (Barrientos, 2013; Cumbers and Routledge, 2010; Fichter and Sydow, 2012; Wad, 2013). Market labour control takes place in contexts with high levels of unemployment that discourage worker activism; as such, workers reach out to external multi-stakeholder formations to address their workplace grievances (Alamgir and Banerjee, 2019; Bezuidenhout et al., 2008). Alford, Barrientos and Visser (2017) call on trade unions to work in tandem with other stakeholders to address the grievances of farm workers.

### 10.8.2 Workers' Committees

Webster and Buhlungu (2004) contend that trade union federations are detaching from rank-and-file workers in sectors such as agriculture who are resorting to alternative platforms. Klerck and Naidoo (2019) also agree with this sentiment as they point out that low levels of unionisation have resulted in non-governmental agencies playing an active role in advising and representing farm workers. This study has shown that, outside trade unions, workers' committees were the only other channel available for workers to engage in social dialogue and vocalize their workplace grievances. The LRA does not preclude the establishment of such committees in the workplace (Visser and Ferrer, 2015). Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2011) categorize a structure such as a farm workers' committee as associational power of workers. From an SLA perspective, a workers' committee also qualifies as social capital, which farm workers in this study used to improve their working and living conditions.

The infamous farm worker strikes which took place in 2012–2013 in De Doorns (Western Cape) showed how farm workers in that region relied more on farm worker committees (and another community-based movement) rather than trade unions (alone) to address wages, services and overall living conditions for farm workers (SAHistory, 2015; Webb, 2017). Farm workers' committees are intended to benefit non-unionized workers as well (Alford et al., 2017). This study has shown that, in the absence of a trade union on their farms, the apple farmers established farm workers' committees on their farms as a mechanism for gaining accreditation (passing labour audits) to export their apples to international markets. Farm workers' committees on the selected apple farms (in this study) were chaired by supervisors, who communicated worker grievances (expressed by workers in the committees) to the farmers. These farm worker committees were presented as democratic platforms, open to seasonal and permanent farm workers. Table 10.10 shows the number of farm workers in this study who were part of a workers' committee at their places of work.

**Table 10.10: Member of a workers' committee**

| | **Race** | | **Sex** | | **Employment Status** | | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Member of a worker's committee** | **Black** | **Coloured** | **Male** | **Female** | **Permanent** | **Seasonal** | |
| Yes | 68.2% (15) | 66.4% (32) | 67.5% (27) | 57.1% (20) | 80% (20) | 54% (27) | 62.7% (47) |
| No | 31.8% (7) | 39.6% (21) | 32.5% (13) | 42.9% (15) | 20% (5) | 46% (23) | 37.3% (28) |
| **Total** | **100% (n=22)** | **100% (n=53)** | **100% (n=40)** | **100% (n=35)** | **100% (n=25)** | **100% (n=50)** | **100% (n=75)** |

Note: The number in parentheses indicates sub-group sample numbers

Farm workers' committees appeared to be more open to farm workers, as almost two-thirds of the farm workers (62.7%) who participated in this study were members of workers' committees, while slightly over one-third of the farm workers (37.3%) did not have such membership. Social upgrading in this context is not inclusive for all the farm workers who participated in this study. Yet again, notable differences can be observed when the sub-samples were compared by race, sex and employment status. Black farm workers (68.2%) had a slightly higher membership in workers' committees than coloured farm workers (66.4%). This result is consistent with the other findings (in this study), which show that some black farm workers experience favourable employment outcomes despite the racialized history (pre-1994), which favoured coloured workers in the Langkloof Valley (Bekker et al., 1982).

Males (67.5%) also have a higher membership in workers' committees than their female counterparts (57.1%). When considering the limited participation rate of females in both trade unions and in farm workers' committees on the selected apple farms (in this study), it becomes clear that most female farm workers in this study had limited opportunities to engage in social dialogue to express their workplace grievances. Webb (2017) contends that farm worker committees are credible platforms that cater to seasonal farm workers, as trade unions in the agricultural sector seem to cater to permanent farm workers. Interestingly, in addition to reporting higher rates of trade union membership, permanent farm workers (80%) in this study also enjoyed greater levels of membership in workers' committees than seasonal farm workers (54%).

Those farm workers who were not in workers' committees were mostly black, female and seasonal. The selected apple farmers (in this study) preferred these committees over trade unions because they could monitor them through supervisors who provided them with reports after every committee meeting. Although workers' committees appear to be open to both seasonal and permanent farm workers, their efficacy is questionable as they are chaired by supervisors who enjoy close relationships with farmers. Table 10.11 shows the number of farm workers who participated in this study and thought the worker committees were effective.

**Table 10.11: Efficacy of workers' committees**

| Efficacy of workers' committees | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 11 | 23.4% |
| No | 36 | 76.6% |
| **Total** | **47** | **100%** |

More than three-quarters of farm workers (76.6%) in this study who were members of farm workers' committees at their places of work did not think they were effective in addressing their grievances. Less than a quarter of members of workers' committees (23.4%) found the workers' committees effective, which further shows the lack of inclusive social upgrading in this context. Visser and Ferrer (2015) show how an NGO like ECARP has played a major role in assisting farm workers establish workers' committees in some areas of the Eastern Cape (such as Makhanda and Sundays River), as such, 98% of the committees have experienced some success in improving the working conditions (where these committees are located) through facilitating negotiations with the farms.

This study, however, has shown that farm workers' committees are formed by the farmers (as a means of passing labour audits and securing accreditation or certification) and are chaired by supervisors. These committees were not as successful, as in the case of those where NGOs such as ECARP are involved, because the farmers use them as a means of monitoring workers and identifying troublemakers. Although these committees are open to seasonal farm workers, they are not effective, as these workers are scared to engage robustly in these platforms, because they fear being blacklisted by the farmers which can drastically minimize their chances of future employment. Mr Leroy January, a general worker employed at a farm affiliated with Packing-Fresh Pty Ltd, explained why he thought the workers' committee at his place of employment was ineffective:

> There's a worker committee here on the farm. Look, the committee tries harder than the unions because they take the issues to the mlungu [white farmer]. But the biggest problem in the committee is that some of the workers side with the farm manager because they want to be in his good books, and this division weakens the committee's agenda. When it is time for the wage to increase, the farm manager will only increase the wages of some of the people in the farm committee to shut them up. What I see happening is that the farm worker committee has been infiltrated by the manager, and they end up choosing who becomes a member. I told the workers that the committee should be chosen by the workers and not by the manager, otherwise, the manager will always get his way if he chooses the committee. (21/11/2018).

Mr January's statement captures the opinions of most of the farm workers (in this study) who were members of the farm workers' committees. This study has shown that farm worker committees are ideal platforms for seasonal workers, however, they face strong opposition from the farmers who use them to monitor and divide workers. The fear of retrenchment or being labelled 'troublemakers' by the selected apple farmers reduces the effectiveness of the farm workers' committees. Some farm workers indicated that they do not voice out that they do not voice out all their grievances as they know that the supervisors will report them to the farmers, and this can limit their chances of future employment. Anner's (2015) notions of the 'employer and market control' also apply in this context, as the selected apple farmers monitor these committees (through the supervisors) deters farm workers from robustly engaging in these committees because they fear being blacklisted and long-term unemployed.

This study does not imply that the farm workers' committees were completely useless, as some farmers (in this study) responded to small issues that did not require them to spend a lot of money. Mr Alexandra Witbooi, a supervisor at a farm owned by Fresh Orchards Incorporated, explained how the farmer responds to grievances raised by workers through the workers' committees:

> It's a bit tricky for us *pongos* [supervisors] my *broer* [brother]. You see, I'm a worker and a supervisor, so I can feel the pain of the workers in the committee, but I also don't want to annoy the boss, you check. The guy is not so bad, and he will fix one or two things raised in the committee, but when you mention anything about pay increases, then you will irritate him. Anything that has to do with spending more money annoys the guy [the farmer]. So we have to be careful because we don't want the workers to think we betraying them, but we also don't want to make the boss angry. As I said, it's tricky, my *broer* [brother]. We have kids to think about, so I don't want to rock the boat, man. (05/12/2018).

The statement above explains why most farm workers who were part of workers' committees at their workplaces found them ineffective because farmers are hostile to worker grievances relating to wages and other money-related issues. Overall, the presence of trade unions and farm workers' committees on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley only gave an illusion of social dialogue, as most farm workers found both channels ineffective. The existence of these platforms may appear as though farm workers (in this study) have access to social dialogue, but this study has shown that these platforms have limited success rates due to employer and market control among other factors (Bezuidenhout, Lambert and Webster, 2008; Cumbers and Routledge, 2010; Fichter and Sydow, 2012; Alamgir and Banerjee, 2019).

These forms of control thus restricted the associational power of the farm workers who were part of the farm workers' committees at their places of work. This means that the 'social dialogue' pillar of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda is not experienced (and effective) by many farm workers who participated in this study. The large number of farm workers who experienced violations of their labour rights on the selected apple farms (in this study) shows that the internal platforms available for social dialogue are largely ineffective. Most of the core grievances of the farm workers (in this study) were associated with money. The farmers in this study cut corners and costs (at the expense of their employees) to absorb the cost pressures imposed on them by the global supermarkets.

It is important to note that the cutting of corners by the selected farmers (in this study) is voluntary and leads to a violation of worker rights. In the context of GCs, Selwyn (2016) and Smith (2016) show how the race to the bottom (through the search for the cheapest forms of labour) leads to super-exploitation for workers employed by suppliers/producers. This study has shown that the global supermarkets and the selected apple farmers are incessantly racing to reduce costs, and as such, the rights of farm workers are violated on a large scale.

### 10.8.3 Strike Action

The LRA makes provisions for legal (protected) strikes if workers are disgruntled with their employment conditions (Barter McKellar, 2023). For strikes to be protected, certain requirements must be met. The first prerequisite is that the employees or their trade unions must provide written notice of their intention to strike to the employer, relevant bargaining council and the (CCMA) at least 48 hours before the strike (Visser and Ferrer, 2015). The second prerequisite instructs the parties involved to make reasonable attempts to resolve the dispute through negotiation or other dispute-resolution mechanisms (Barter McKellar, 2023). A wildcat strike, officially known as an unprocedural or unprotected strike, is one where the strikers have not complied with the requirements of the Labour Relations Act (LRA) before going on strike (The South African Labour Guide, 2022). If a strike is unprotected, an employer has the right to lock out the employees from entering the business premises, take legal action or even dismiss the employees (Consolidated Employers Organisation, 2023). Table 10.12 shows the number of farm workers in this study who experienced strike action at their places of work.

**Table 10.12: Strike at your place of work**

| Strike at your place of work | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 18 | 24% |
| No | 57 | 76% |
| **Total** | **75** | **100%** |

Slightly above three-quarters of the farm workers (76%) who participated in this study did not experience any strike action at their places of work, while less than a quarter of the farm workers (24%) experienced strike action at their places of employment. Interviews with the selected apple farmers and farm workers in this study revealed that only Kloof Fruit Company experienced (two) strikes in the apple industry of the Langkloof Valley to date.

These strikes took place in 2014-2015 when farm workers employed at Kloof Fruit Company engaged in a wildcat (unprotected) strike at the company's head office (in the Langkloof Valley) located in Joubertina. The farm workers employed at Kloof Fruit Company were striking for higher wages after they found out that their colleagues employed by the same company in the Western Cape were earning higher wages for doing the same job as them. The farm workers employed by Kloof Fruit Company in the Langkloof Valley found this to be unfair, and they approached their employer to increase their wages to match those of their colleagues in the Western Cape. When the Kloof Fruit Company (in the Langkloof Valley) refused to concede to these demands, their employees responded through a wildcat (unprotected) strike, which entailed nonattendance to work and burning of tyres at the locked gates on the premises in Joubertina. Consolidated Employers Organisation (2023) notes that employers have the right to lock out the employees from entering the business premises, take legal action or even dismiss the employees if they engage in an unprotected strike (Consolidated Employers Organisation, 2023). In response, Kloof Fruit Company enlisted the assistance of private security and police to disperse the workers. Police used rubber bullets to disperse the protesting workers. There are accounts of police chasing the protesters into Ravinia township in Joubertina. Mr Pieter Matthews, a quality control officer employed at Kloof Fruit Company, described the events of the strike:

> We had two strikes at Kloof Fruit Company at the end of 2014 and the beginning of 2015. The first one was about the wages. The second one was about our rights. The workers in Kloof Fruit Company in the Western Cape are earning more than us for doing the same work as us. At Ceres, the guys doing my job get R39 per hour, whilst I only get R22.90 per hour. That is not fair if we are working for the same company and doing the same job. The employer gave us 11% when we asked for 15%. The second strike was about equal rights. The strikes were a bit violent because the workers threw stones, and the police shot rubber bullets. Some police chased us into the location. A lot of the guys who were at the front of that strike are now sitting in the location [township] without jobs. These *boere* [farmers] don't play. The workers are scared to strike now. (21/11/2018).

It is worth noting that there was no evidence in the data that the strikes at Kloof Fruit Company had any connection with the infamous 2012-2013 strikes which engulfed the farming community in De Doorns in the Western Cape.

Nonetheless, there are some similarities and differences between the strikes that took place in De Doorns (2012-2013) and the Langkloof Valley (2014-2015). Firstly, both strikes were driven by a desire to increase the wages (among other factors relating to working conditions) of farm workers (Bitter Grapes, 2016; Hågensen and de Jager, 2016; Wilderman, 2015). Secondly, both strikes were unprotected, as the farm workers involved did not follow the prescribed legal procedures for embarking on a strike action. Thirdly, the strikes in De Doorns included multiple stakeholders (trade unions, workers' committees, NGOs and other community-based organizations) and garnered national attention, which led to farmers making concessions to some of the demands of farm workers in that region (Maregele, 2019; SAHistory, 2015).

The strikes in Kloof Fruit Company in the Langkloof Valley were solely organized by the trade union members at the Joubertina head office. This means that these strikes used different types of associational power (and social capital) to organize and engage in the strikes (Alford, Barrientos and Visser, 2017). The fourth area of similarity between the strikes that took place in De Doorns (2012-2013) and at Kloof Fruit Company in the Langkloof Valley (2014-2015) is that farm workers in both cases used their structural power and halted production at their places of work by removing their labour and blocking roads which impacts the value chain processes of their employers (Alford et al., 2017:739). The fifth area of similarities is that in both cases, farm workers blocked roads and burnt tyres near the premises of their employers which resulted in an aggressive response by SAPS and private security companies (in the case of Kloof Fruit Company) (Wilderman, 2015).

Some scholars describe this response from the SAPS as a form of state control (Adelman, 2015; Anner, 2015; Cumbers et al., 2008). The last similarity in both cases is that, as much as some concessions were made, such as increasing wages (among other factors), the farmers in De Doorns and at Kloof Fruit Company retrenched a lot of the workers who were involved in the unprotected strikes, reduced the number of permanent farm workers on their farms and increasingly mechanized their production processes to depend less on farm labour to decrease costs as well (Maregele, 2019; SAHistory, 2015). The farm workers who largely benefited from these strikes are those who are permanent, whilst the bulk of the labour force, which is employed on seasonal contracts, remains marginalized and exploited (Maregele, 2019). Cases of non-compliance are still prevalent in both cases (Maregele, 2019).

The response of farmers in both cases is strategically designed to keep labour costs low, as farmers increased wages for a few permanent workers whilst retrenching and casualizing a large number of farm workers. The effect of this restructuring is that fewer workers are doing to work of multiple workers for a single employee's wage, and unemployment and the growing number of migrant labourers (who are willing to accept low wages) induce the desperation of many black and coloured farm workers who are willing to accept extremely low wages (below the legal minimum wage) just to survive. This means that, although the strikes were well intended, they have harmed most seasonally employed farm workers who come from generations of cycles of poverty, which is the ideal labour force in the global agrifood value chains, which are driven by aggressive vertical and horizontal profit maximization strategies. Table 10.13 determines whether the farm workers who experienced the strikes at their place/s of work thought they were effective.

**Table 10.13: Efficacy of strike action**

| Are strikes effective? | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 5 | 27.7% |
| No | 13 | 72.2% |
| **Total** | **18** | **100%** |

Almost three-quarters of the farm workers (72.2%) in this study who had experienced a strike at their place of work did not find them effective, while only 27.7% thought the strikes in their workplaces were effective. This also shows that social upgrading in this context is not inclusive for the farm workers who participated in this study. Nevertheless, the outcomes in De Doorns and the Langkloof Valley show that farmers engaged in global agri-food value chains are profit-driven, and the reduction of costs guides their approach to strikes and other forms of worker action. Mr Kobus Van Tonder, the product manager at Kloof Fruit Company, explained his perspective on the events of the wildcat strikes that affected his organization in 2014-2015:

> Yes, there were two strikes, one in 2014 and another in 2015. The strike was about wages. The matter was resolved. We lose money when there are strikes because we can't pack or do our orders, or pack for specific shipping lines or meet shipping deadlines. It has a huge impact. The buyers don't care about such delays, but we have contingency plans, as Ceres has six packhouses, and they can help when we can't deliver because of a strike. The strike lasted two days, I think, on both occasions.

> The loss is not in terms of quality or quantity, but it is a matter of not being able to deliver on a specific date because of the delays caused by the strike. Also, the workers don't get paid when they go on strike. (07/05/2019).

This statement shows how workers used both associational and structural power in the strikes that affected Kloof Fruit Company. Nonetheless, Mr Van Tonder's account of the wildcat strikes epitomizes the attitude of the selected apple farmers (in this study) towards strikes. They are more concerned with the cost factor and meeting international demands than the justified grievances of their employees. Mr Marnus Andre Liebenberg, the owner of Koukamma Vrugte, echoed similar sentiments:

> Once a month, all the managers go through all the financial issues (such as overseas markets, income, losses, profits, etc.) with the workers. I think it is important that the workers know what the demands of the clients are. I think the honeymoon in South Africa is over. The buyers want their fruit at the best price, with the best quality, and they don't care if we are South Africans or not. If we can't supply them, they will just go to New Zealand, Chile or Argentina. Quality and price are the most important things. They don't want to hear about our problems. I think information is important. Everyone in the business must know what is going on and what the clients need and expect from us. The only way to survive is to satisfy their [international buyers'] demands. That is the bottom line. If you cannot meet their [international buyers'] demands, then we are out of business. So, exposing the workers to the reality and harshness of the market is what motivates them to work because they know that if we do not meet the demand, then there is no work for us. (11/05/2019).

The wildcat strikes that took place in the Langkloof Valley were isolated events and have not occurred since. Wildcat strikes have profound consequences for farm workers in the Langkloof Valley. One of the main reasons for this can be attributed to the fact that the leaders of the strikes were dismissed and are blacklisted from future employment in the apple industry in the region. Therefore, a large majority of farm workers do not go beyond approaching trade unions or workers' committees to raise their grievances, as they fear long-term unemployment. In a context with limited job opportunities and high unemployment such as the Langkloof Valley (ECSECC, 2017), workers tend to have less bargaining power, as these conditions suppress worker mobilization (Webster et al., 2008).

Minimal acts of sabotage in the production processes on the selected apple farms (in this study) were also limited due to intense technological (quality control, sensors, computerized systems etc.) and physical control (piece rates, targets, supervisors etc.) mechanisms which count as employer control as well (Anner, 2015). These tight methods of surveillance, together with the fear of retrenchment and unemployment (market control) among farm workers in this study, limit the scope of any forms of sabotage by the workers who participated in this study. Workers who find themselves in such contexts often endure difficult working conditions and low wages rather than risk unemployment and poverty or reach out to external stakeholders who can help them face their employers (Anner, 2015).

## 10.9 EXTERNAL CHANNELS FOR SOCIAL DIALOGUE

### 10.9.1 Knowledge of External Channels for Social Dialogue

The previous section showed that the internal channels for social dialogue on the selected apple farms in this study were largely ineffective. It is, therefore, important to examine the external channels (for social dialogue) that were available to farm workers in this study. Alford, Barrientos and Visser (2017) argue that the farm workers employed on the fruit farms in the Western Cape were able to shine a spotlight on their plight through multiple channels and collaborations. Table 10.14 provides a breakdown of the number of farm workers (in this study) who knew the external channels available to assist farm workers with their workplace grievances.

**Table 10.14: Knowledge of external channels for social dialogue**

| Knowledge of external channels | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 36 | 48% |
| No | 39 | 52% |
| **Total** | **75** | **100%** |

Slightly more than half of farm workers (52%) who participated in this study did not know any external channels to express work-related grievances, while only 48% had such knowledge. Knowing external channels of social dialogue is key to Decent Work and social upgrading for workers, however, these results show that this is not a reality for all the workers who participated in this study. Research shows that many farm workers in South Africa have limited knowledge about their rights and labour legislation (Visser, 2016).

Visser and Ferrer's (2015:199) study notes that on farms in Levubu, Eston and Ventersdorp, most workers were either unsure about their rights in the workplace or they did not know their rights at all. Seasonal workers' knowledge about their rights was worse. In the Western Cape, only about 37% of them indicated that they knew their rights. Table 10.15 provides a list of the external channels that the knowledgeable group of farm workers thought were available to them to raise their work-related grievances.

**Table 10.15: External channels for social dialogue**

| External channels for dialogue | Number | total |
|---|---|---|
| ANC office (Joubertina) | 18 | 24% |
| Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) | 9 | 12% |
| Support Centre for Land Change (SCLC) | 9 | 12% |
| No knowledge of external channels for social dialogue | 39 | 52% |
| **Total** | **75** | **100** |

Almost a quarter of the farm workers in this study identified the ANC office as the most accessible channel for raising workplace grievances. This was followed by the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) (12%) and the Southern Cape Land Committee (SCLC) (12%). Slightly over half of the farm workers (52%) in this study had no knowledge of any external channels for social dialogue.

### 10.9.2 ANC Office in Joubertina

The ANC office in Joubertina was established in the late 1990s as a strategy to garner support for the party in the rural farming communities of the Southern Cape. Historically, this part of South Africa had strong support for the National Party, which is why post-1994, the ANC established an office in Joubertina (the economic hub of the Langkloof Valley) to increase its voter constituency in the region. Over the years, the ANC office has evolved from a voter recruitment centre into a key mediating organization between farmers and farm workers in the Langkloof Valley. Picture 10.1 shows the ANC Office in Joubertina.

**Picture 10.1: ANC Office in Joubertina**

Source: Google Street View (2022)

The ANC office in Joubertina consists of a few permanent employees (who are responsible for organizing party-related programmes) and some volunteers who mainly deal with workplace disputes on the farms in the region. Two volunteers, Reverend Daniel September and entrepreneur Mr Xolani Ntabeni, were asked to participate in this study to provide a thirdparty perspective of the employment relationship between farmers and farm workers in the Langkloof Valley. When farm workers approach the ANC office in Joubertina with workrelated grievances, the volunteers offer them three main options. The first option is to provide them with information about the specific workplace grievances they are experiencing. Both volunteers identified the same finding made by scholars such as Visser and Ferrer (2015), who observed that most farm workers are unaware of their labour rights, thus inducing their susceptibility to being exploited by their employers. Mr Ntabeni's statement below confirms this point:

> You see, most of our people here are not well educated, and they don't know their rights most of the time. The farmers know this, and that is why they exploit their workers. Workers who ask questions regarding certain rights are quickly black-listed, and some lose their employment altogether. Farm workers don't know their rights because some of the stories that they tell us are unbelievable. The other day, a guy came here and told us the farmer makes them work until eight and nine at night without paying them overtime. Funny enough, the guy was here for something else and not to complain about the working hours.

> That shows you that the farm workers do not know their rights. Farm workers tell us about not getting protective clothing when they are working with chemicals and also working in the fields while people are spraying. Others fall off ladders at work, and they don't claim anything. These are violations [of labour legislation]. But it's normal around here. I think there need to be workshops for the farm workers to teach them about their rights. (08/05/2019).

The volunteers indicate that many farmers in the Langkloof Valley violate labour laws because they know that their employees are unaware of their rights, and those who are aware of them fear challenging them because they do not want to lose their jobs. This again reaffirms the fact that employers rely on their control mechanisms and the precarious state of the market in the region (ECSECC, 2017) to suppress worker voices. Anner (2015) terms these methods of control 'employer and market control', which is why only a few farm workers in this study joined trade unions or embarked on strike action. Those farm workers who joined the works' committees were careful not to engage robustly because they feared victimization by their employers. The statement by Mr Ntabeni is also telling because most of the farm workers who approach the ANC office are employed on permanent contracts and are part of trade unions, yet they are unaware of their rights. A workshop could educate the farm workers (in the region) about their labour rights; however, their fear of being labelled 'troublemakers' or being retrenched limits their ability to effectively challenge their employers about their workplace grievances. The volunteers indicated that the three biggest grievances that farm workers bring to their office include unfair dismissals, extremely low wages and injuries or illnesses incurred at work. As Reverend September explained:

> I would say the major cases are regarding unfair dismissals. I think the farmers still think it's apartheid days when they could just fire you if they don't like you. The second major issue that we deal with here is workers being underpaid by the farmers. The workers complain that their wages are very low and that it takes longer for the farmers to increase them. Workers complain that the farmers like to underpay them, even when they have earned more than the daily wage rate through their piece rates. Some [farm workers] complain about getting sick from the pesticides or get injured and the farmers refuse to pay their medical bills, which is why they come to us. (08/05/2019).

The statement by Reverend September shows that apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley are so preoccupied with 'the bottom line' that they blatantly violate the rights of farm workers.

This is a common finding of several studies related to farm workers in South Africa (Devereux et al., 2017; Devereux, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2011; Visser, 2016). The issue of underpayment of wages is consistent with the cost-cutting strategies of the apple farmers, who want to meet the production demands of international buyers whilst keeping costs (especially wages) low by any means necessary. Farm workers are always the victims of cost-reduction strategies, either through casualization, wage-cutting or even a failure to pay medical expenses related to workers being injured or falling ill at work. This study shows that apple farmers in this study are so concerned with the 'bottom line' that they neglect the well-being and safety of their employees. Willoughby and Gore (2018) also contend that the increased influence of global supermarkets creates more ruthless cost-cutting and an acceleration of the race to the bottom in global agri-food value chains, which has a direct impact on social and environmental standards. The second service offered by volunteers at the ANC office is mediation; that is, the volunteers offer to visit the farms and negotiate with the farmers on behalf of the aggrieved farm workers. This strategy is not always effective, as the volunteers are often met with hostility from the farmers implicated in the accusation. Reverend September described some of the reactions from the farmers when the volunteers visit their farms:

> Look, there are some sensible farmers here in the Langkloof Valley. They know our work, and they know we mean well. So, when we go to them with a case, they are willing to talk to us and try to resolve the problems. But these are only a handful because the rest still think South Africa is under apartheid. I say this because their farm workers will tell us how they are verbally abused with racial slurs by their employers. So, when we go to the farm to mediate, the farmers are full of insults, and some even prefer the legal route and waste money instead of dealing with us and solving the problem with their employees. Anyway, when we encounter such farmers, we just forward the case to the CCMA in Port Elizabeth [Gqeberha]. (08/05/2019).

The statement by Reverend September confirms the utterances of the farm workers who indicated that farmers do not tolerate any type of worker activism, thus confirming some of the utterances of farm workers regarding the ineffectiveness of social dialogue with farmers in the region. The farmers who participated in this study also indicated that they were wary of external interventions such as trade unions, which is why they preferred workers' committees, which they could monitor as per the workers' assertions in this study.

The hostile attitude of (mostly white) farmers towards external organizations who wish to represent workers (in any way) dates back to the apartheid era. Davies (1990) confirms this by indicating that during the apartheid era in South Africa, most farmers were so opposed to their workers engaging with trade unions or any civil society groups that some even threatened their workers with dismissals if they interacted with 'outsiders'. In this study, some farm workers were also slightly sceptical about the work of the ANC office in Joubertina. Jeremiah Mlenze, a field worker employed at Koukamma Vruste Trust, expressed his distrust of the ANC office:

> That ANC office is just there to get votes from the people here. I have not seen them come to the farm to help us or host a workshop for farm workers. Also, there's a black guy there who acts like he is the hero for farm workers here, but he's all talk, no action. I think that he is cosy with the farmers because he attends their events. (02/12/2018).

Alford, Barrientos and Visser (2017) discussed how farm workers in De Doorns did not trust trade unions, which is why the strikes of 2012-2013 in De Doorns were not solely driven by trade unions but by various workers' committees, NGOs and community-based organizations as well. It is worth noting that, although operating within the farms (internal channels), most trade unions in South Africa are affiliates of larger federations with strong political ties, hence the scepticism by some farm workers. Nevertheless, the hostile responses from some of the apple farmers in the region leave the volunteers from the ANC office in Joubertina with no other option but to forward the cases of the aggrieved farm workers to the CCMA in Gqeberha. The CCMA is a body established in terms of the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 to settle and resolve disputes that arise in employer-employee relationships (CCMA, 1996).

The referring or forwarding of farm worker cases to the CCMA is the third major service that is offered by the volunteers to assist farm workers in the Langkloof Valley. Some volunteers, such as Mr Ntabeni, go as far as driving some of the farm workers to the CCMA in Gqeberha. Figure 10.1 is an extract from a 2018 arbitration award by the CCMA, where Mr Ntabeni is mentioned because he referred the farm worker (in the case) to the CCMA (see Appendix 7). Mr Ntabeni's real name has been concealed in figure 10.1 below to protect his identity.

**Figure 10.1: Extract from CCMA 'Arbitration Award' in 2018**

8. *The week after 13 March 2018 he went to the ANC offices to report his case. The ANC official send him back to the employer to request the UI19 form because they wanted to see the reason for the termination.*

***Applicant's witness: Mr***

9. *Mr testified as follows. He serves as a community leader. At the constituency office he usually assist people with CCMA cases. He was at the office when the Applicant arrived. The Applicant informed him that the employer said that he resigned but he never resigned. The Applicant also informed that he went to work and the employer told him that there was no work for him. He informed the Applicant to go back to the employer and to request the UI19 form in order to see what appear on the on UI19 form. This was the week after 13 March 2018. The Applicant went to the employer and he brought the UI19 to the constituency office. The UI19 form reflects that the Applicant resigned but he never submitted any resignation letter to say that he has contractually resigned.*

Source: CCMA 'Arbitration Award' (2018)

The extract above validates the claims that were made by the officers at the ANC office. The referral of cases to the CCMA is the last service that the volunteers offer the farm workers since most of the farm workers (in this study) did not know about or approached the CCMA.

### 10.9.3 The CCMA

The CCMA is mandated by the LRA to conciliate workplace disputes, arbitrate certain categories of disputes that remain unresolved during conciliation, facilitate consultations regarding large-scale dismissals due to operational requirements, establish picketing rules, facilitate the establishment of workplace forums and statutory councils and advise a party to a dispute about the procedure to follow (CCMA, 1996). For this study, the CCMA in Gqeberha was approached to source information regarding the nature of the farm worker cases (in 2018/2019) that were forwarded from the Langkloof Valley. The officials at the CCMA provided documents that detailed case referrals by sector in 2018 and 2019 (see Appendices 5 and 6). The first document indicates that in 2018, there was a 4.1% (362 out of 8,770 cases) referral rate from the agricultural sector in the Eastern Cape as a whole. This finding was disaggregated according to region to ascertain the cases from farms in the Langkloof Valley. Figure 10.2 shows the number of case referrals that came from the Langkloof Valley in 2018.

**Figure 10.2: Case referrals from the agricultural sector in Langkloof Valley, 2018**

REFERRALS BY SECTOR BY TOWN

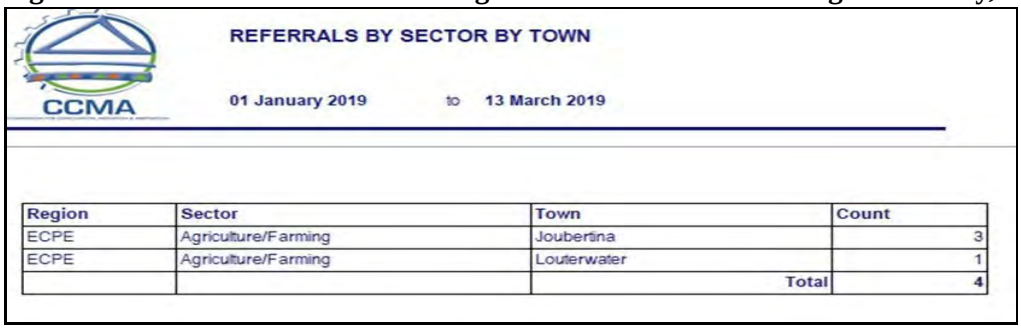
01 January 2018 to 31 December 2018

| Region | Sector | Town | Count |
|---|---|---|---|
| ECPE | Agriculture/Farming | Joubertina | 8 |
| ECPE | Agriculture/Farming | Kareedouw | 10 |
| ECPE | Agriculture/Farming | Krakeel | 1 |
| ECPE | Agriculture/Farming | Louterwater | 3 |
| ECPE | Agriculture/Farming | Misgund | 1 |
| | | Total | 23 |

Source: CCMA (Referrals by sector by town 2018).

Figure 10.2 shows that only 6.4% (23 out of 362) of case referrals from the agricultural sector of the Eastern Cape came from the Langkloof Valley in 2018. The second document provided by the CCMA indicated that in 2019, there was a 4.1% (70 out of 1,1711 cases) referral rate from the agricultural sector in the Eastern Cape as a whole. This finding was disaggregated according to region to ascertain the cases from farms in the Langkloof Valley. Figure 10.3 shows the number of case referrals that came from apple farms in the Langkloof Valley in 2019.

**Figure 10.3: Case referrals from the agricultural sector in the Langkloof Valley, 2019**



REFERRALS BY SECTOR BY TOWN

01 January 2019 to 13 March 2019

| Region | Sector | Town | Count |
|---|---|---|---|
| ECPE | Agriculture/Farming | Joubertina | 3 |
| ECPE | Agriculture/Farming | Louterwater | 1 |
| | | Total | 4 |

Source: CCMA (Referrals by sector by town 2019)

Figure 10.3 shows that only 5.7% (4 out of 70) of case referrals from the agricultural sector of the Eastern Cape came from the Langkloof Valley. The findings from the figures above indicate that there is an extremely low case referral rate from the agricultural sector, especially from the Langkloof Valley in the Eastern Cape. These findings are very close to the findings made by Bhorat et al. (2009:18-19), who showed that CCMA referrals from the agricultural sector were extremely low (4.6%) in 2005/2006. The extremely low report rate from the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley is caused by three main reasons.

Firstly, most of the farm workers in this study were not aware of external channels that were available to farm workers to express their work-related grievances. Secondly, some of the cases are mediated by the ANC office on behalf of the aggrieved farm workers. Lastly, farm workers employed on the apple farms are generally reluctant to utilise external channels because they fear being blacklisted by the farmers, and risk jeopardizing future employment. As stated earlier, most case referrals from farm workers (in the Langkloof Valley) to the CCMA were for unfair dismissals (see Appendix 7). Mr Jonathan Van Der Linde, the owner of Vrugteland Pakkers, explained a case involving one of his employees, who was referred to the CCMA by Mr Xolani Ntabeni from the ANC office in Joubertina:

> For example, there is a guy here who told everyone in the packhouse that he was leaving, and he quit the job and left for about five days. He returned the following week wanting his job back, and I told him he couldn't have it back because he walked out without following procedure. Also, I had already found a replacement for him. This guy took me to the CCMA, and I lost that case, which cost me R10,000. We also had another case when a lady came here claiming that she could pack, and we later found out that she could not pack at all, and then we fired her. She also took me to the CCMA. Actually, I had a few cases at the CCMA in the past few years, and this is a cost to the business. (10/05/2019).

The arbitration award from the CCMA relating to one of the cases mentioned by Mr Jonathan Van Der Linde can be seen in Appendix 7. Nonetheless, the statement from Mr Van Der Linde (above) shows two major points. Firstly, the CCMA is effective in addressing the grievances of workers, however, only a few farm workers who participated in this study knew about (or referred their cases to) the CCMA. Secondly, Mr Van Der Linde's statement shows that the selected apple farmers in this study perceive farm workers who approach the CCMA as an irritation and a threat to their tight financial position. Having access to an important institution that helps workers with workplace disputes is an integral component of Decent Work and social upgrading. This study shows that very few workers had access to this service and generally shows a lack of inclusive Decent Work and social upgrading for the farm workers. Farmers are more concerned about the financial implications of arbitration awards that may go against them instead of the core grievances of their employees. This is seen throughout this study, as the monitoring mechanisms were stronger for measuring product quality than the highly flawed and inadequate labour monitoring mechanisms.

This study has shown that the apples (and the profit they create) are more valuable than most farm workers who produce them on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. The intense financial pressures from international buyers in the global apple value chain force producers to approach most of their employees as commodities rather than human beings with legitimate human rights.

### 10.9.4 Support Centre for Land Change

The third external channel for farm workers employed on apple farms in the Langkloof Valley to engage in social dialogue was the Support Centre for Land Change (SCLC). Formerly known as the Southern Cape Land Committee, the Support Centre for Land Change (SCLC) was established in 1987 (NGO Pulse, 2016). SCLC works with rural communities, farmworkers, farm dwellers, and small-scale farmers to create conditions for reform (NGO Pulse, 2016). SCLC has community advice offices in rural parts of the Eastern Cape and Western Cape. Some of the services provided by these offices include assisting communities to understand their rights so they can engage decision-makers on accessing these rights and helping farm workers to organize themselves (MOTT, 2018). One of the major challenges facing SCLC is that they are under-resourced, and they cannot provide services equally between the different rural farming communities in the Western Cape and Eastern Cape. In fact, SCLC does not have an office in the Langkloof Valley, as their head office is located in George in the Western Cape, which is about 180 km from the Langkloof Valley. The office in George services many of the rural farming communities in the Western Cape. This means that the only farm workers (from the Langkloof Valley) who benefit from the services offered by SCLC are those residing in communities in and around Haarlem, which is situated on the border of the Western Cape. Ms Florance Kaap, a general worker at a farm owned by Fresh Orchards Incorporated, resides in Haarlem and described the services offered by SCLC:

> The people at SCLC come around here a few times a year. They usually call a lot of us [farm workers] to workshops which they host in the hall here in Haarlem. At these workshops, they teach us about our rights and what we should do when the farmers fire us for no reason. These workshops are well attended, and they also provide food and cold drinks for us. They are nice people, shame, I won't lie. When they come here, they usually contact older farm workers like me, and they know we will call the people to the hall. I wish the government would follow in the footsteps of the SCLC. (19/11/2018).

The statement from Ms Kaap shows that SCLC has a very noble mandate to assist the marginalized people in rural farming communities in the Western and Eastern Cape. However, their lack of capacity restricts their ability to make a real difference in the Langkloof Valley and the greater Eastern Cape, as they dedicate most of their resources to the rural farming communities in the Western Cape. This finding in this study correlates with that of other studies (based on farm workers in South Africa) which indicate that civil society organizations in South Africa have always (since the colonial and apartheid eras) been involved in helping farm workers through different methods (Davies, 1990; Devereux, 2020; MOTT, 2018; NGO Pulse, 2016; Visser and Ferrer, 2015). The work of these organizations, however, has always faced financial barriers which limit their impact in rural farming communities (Visser and Ferrer, 2015:205).

SCLC, therefore, has a weak presence in the Langkloof Valley because of its financial constraints. It is worth noting that civil society organizations can educate farm workers on their rights, however, these farm workers face structural oppositions in the form of employer and market control (Anner, 2015) which limit their chances of making significant changes in their places of employment. Having access to channels for social dialogue (no matter the size) does not equate to substantial improvements in the working conditions on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. Data in this study has clearly shown that most of the farm workers who participated in this study experienced violations of their labour rights at the hands of their employers. This is not to discredit the work of civil society; however, the farm workers are facing bigger structural challenges.

### 10.9.5 Department of Employment and Labour

One of the interesting findings from this study was the fact that the farm workers did not list the DEL as one of the external channels which they could access to express their workplace grievances. The Department of Employment and Labour (DEL) is the key state department tasked with the responsibility of regulating and ensuring that employers in South Africa adhere (or comply) to the labour legislation of the country (SAHRC, 2020). This unit is responsible in enforcing compliance with not only the BCEA but also OHSA, the EEA and the SDA (Visser and Ferrer, 2015). In the case of the agricultural sector, DEL deploys labour inspectors to conduct inspections and labour audits on commercial farms. Labour inspections are either proactive or reactive. The most common forms of proactive inspections are general inspections and blitz inspections (Benjamin, 2011).

In a blitz inspection, a team of inspectors evaluate compliance with a full range of labour regulations. Reactive inspections are conducted in response to complaints lodged with the inspectorate (Benjamin, 2011). Table 10.16 shows the number of farm workers who participated in this study who had either seen or engaged with labour inspectors (from the DEL) at their places of employment.

**Table 10.16: Seen or interacted with labour inspectors from the DEL**

| | Race | | Sex | | Employment Status | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Seen or interacted with labour inspectors from DEL** | **Black** | **Coloured** | **Male** | **Female** | **Permanent** | **Seasonal** | |
| Yes | 36.4% (8) | 32.1% (17) | 55% (22) | 8.6% (3) | 80% (20) | 10% (5) | 33.3% (25) |
| No | 63.6% (14) | 67.9% (36) | 45% (18) | 91.5% (32) | 20% (5) | 90% (45) | 66.7% (50) |
| **Total** | **100% (n=22)** | **100% (n=53)** | **100% (n=40)** | **100% (n=35)** | **100% (n=25)** | **100% (n=50)** | **100 (n=75)** |

Note: The number in parentheses indicates sub-group sample numbers

Two-thirds of farm workers (66.7%) who participated in this study did not see or interact with labour inspectors from the DEL at their places of work, while only one-third of the farm workers (33.3%) have seen or interacted with these inspectors. Inclusive social upgrading in this context is not experienced by all the farm workers who participated in this study. Notable differences surface when the sub-samples are compared by race, sex and employment status. A slightly higher percentage of black (36.4%) than coloured farm workers (32.1%) had seen or interacted with labour inspectors from DEL. This result is consistent with the other findings (in this study), which show that some black farm workers experience favourable employment outcomes despite the racialized history (pre-1994), which favoured coloured workers in the Langkloof Valley (Bekker et al., 1982). A larger percentage of males (55%) than females (8.6%) had seen or interacted with labour inspectors from DEL. This finding shows clear inequality between the sexes, as male farm workers have more access to interacting with labour inspectors from the DEL. Unsurprisingly, a substantially larger percentage of permanent farm workers (80%) than seasonal farm workers (10%) had seen or interacted with labour inspectors from the DEL. This finding is consistent with the other findings in this study, which indicated that a small group of permanent farm workers experienced better employment outcomes than seasonal farm workers.

Some of the farm workers who either saw or interacted with the labour inspectors from the DEL highlighted the unethical nature of these inspections. This is further explained by Mr Foidal De Vos, a supervisor employed at a farm owned by Kloof Fruit Company:

> Yes, I've seen the government labour inspectors visiting the farm. The farmer instructs us to make sure that our teams are not working near the office when the government people visit. Also, he asks us to speak to a few seasonal workers whom we can trust and who won't say anything negative about the farm to the inspectors. The inspectors also don't go into the orchards to speak to the workers. They ask us to call some workers to the office, and they speak to them from there. (03/12/2018).

Mr De Vos' statement above shows how non-compliance on the selected apple farms (in this study) has continued due to the DEL's inadequate labour auditing processes. Ms Sonia Damons, a picker employed on a farm owned by Fresh Orchards Incorporated, described how workers are hidden by the selected apple farmers when labour inspectors visit the farms:

> Look, I think there is some under-the-table stuff happening between the farmers and those inspectors. We all know that when we are told to work in the orchards that are far from the main house or the office, the guys from the government are visiting the farm that day. The *pongos* [supervisors] usually select a few of his friends to go to the office to speak to the inspectors. Those guys won't say anything bad about this farm because they are thinking about their jobs. If they tell the inspectors about the nonsense on this farm, the *pongos* [supervisors] will be upset and won't call them back next season. My friend Brenda was called there a few times, and she told me that they just agreed to everything there because she didn't want to lose her job. Those guys don't come to us in the trees [orchards] because we would tell them the real story. Sometimes, the [labour] inspectors leave the farm with a bakkie full of fruit. I'm not making this up. (24/01/2019).

This study's finding on the flawed nature of labour inspections by the DEL on the selected apple farmers correlates with findings from other studies that have shown a similar trend of poor labour audits by the DEL. Pahle (2015) argues that labour inspectors have mostly failed to report labour rights violations taking place in many white-owned farms in South Africa.

This is largely because most labour inspections take place in the absence of many farm workers and the unethical relationship between some labour inspectors and white farmers (Devereux, 2020; Godfrey and Clarke, 2002; Greenberg, 2010; Pahle, 2015). The findings from the three tables above confirm the utterances of Mr De Vos and Ms Damons, who indicated that only a small number of (permanently employed) farm workers either see or interact with the labour inspectors from the DEL. This finding confirms the fact that many farm workers in this study did not access channels available to engage in social dialogue, thus showing that this pillar of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda is not experienced by all the farm workers who participated in this study. The DEL is failing the farm workers who participated in this study, as their negligence and poor labour inspections perpetuate the exploitation and violation of labour rights on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley.

The combination of non-compliance and a flawed labour auditing system works in favour of the majority of the selected apple farmers who cut costs (at the expense of the rights of their employees) as a means of absorbing the cost pressures from the global supermarkets in the global apple value chain. This shows a relationship between the vertical and horizontal profit-maximizing strategies and noncompliance and a flawed public (state) labour monitoring system in the global apple value chain. It is worth noting that various unsuccessful attempts (via calls and emails) were made to contact the labour centre of the DEL (in Uitenhage), which is responsible for conducting labour inspections on the commercial farms in the Langkloof Valley. These attempts included enlisting the help of Mr Mzukisi Mali, the head of labour inspectors at the DEL in Makhanda, to contact his colleagues in Uitenhage, but they also ignored his emails and calls. The labour centre's failure to respond to the researcher and their colleague (Mr Mali) confirms the assertions made by several scholars that the DEL is facing serious structural deficiencies and a lack of competent staff (Greenberg, 2010).

### 10.9.6 Sustainability Initiative of South Africa

The organization responsible for conducting private labour audits on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley is the Sustainability Initiative of South Africa (SIZA). SIZA was established in 2008 for two main purposes: (1) monitoring and verification of compliance with labour laws on South African farms, and (2) the facilitation of capacity building initiatives to support growers, emerging growers and agricultural workers with the implementation of ethical and environmental standard requirements (SIZA, 2016).

SIZA also works (or partners with) third-party firms in conducting internationally recognized (and accredited) labour audits on commercial farms in the fruit industry of South Africa. Apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley who wish to export their produce to international markets traditionally hire the services of SIZA to conduct labour audits to obtain certification. It is worth noting that this study revealed that some international buyers recruit their own international labour auditors from their home countries to conduct labour audits as well. Nevertheless, in this study, SIZA was the main labour auditing organization recognized by most of the global and local buyers. Table 10.17 shows the number of farm workers who participated in this study who have either seen or interacted with inspectors from SIZA at their places of employment.

**Table 10.17: Seen or interacted with SIZA inspectors**

| Seen or interacted with SIZA inspectors? | Number | Total |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 0 | 0% |
| No | 75 | 100% |
| **Total** | **75** | **100%** |

The findings in the table above show that none of the farm workers who participated in this study had either seen or interacted with labour inspectors from SIZA. This finding is concerning because this organization supposedly conducts regular labour audits for apple producers in the Langkloof Valley who wish to export. Inclusive social upgrading in this context is a reality for all the farm workers who participated in this study. Interestingly, all the farmers interviewed in this study indicated that inspectors from SIZA visited their farms for labour inspections. For example, Mr Marnus Andre Liebenberg, the owner of Koukamma Vrugte, explained his company's interaction with SIZA:

> Yes, we have people from SIZA here on a regular basis. They do audits on our company all the time. They come here three or four times a year. They look at everything to make sure that we are following the labour laws of the country. They also check files to see whether everything is in place and so on. We always pass the checklist, and they give reports for filing. This company has five accreditations: SIZA, Global GAP, and three other European accreditors for their specific markets. You can't export without certificates of accreditation because the PPECB will not allow your fruit to be exported without accreditation certificates. (11/05/2019).

This statement by Mr Liebenberg is evidence that the selected apple producers (in this study) interact with representatives from SIZA regularly, whilst the farm workers employed on those farms did not see or interact with these representatives. This study has shown a glaring weakness of the private labour auditing (and monitoring) system (mainly by SIZA), as most of the farm workers who participated in this study experienced blatant violations of labour rights on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. SIZA and other private organizations that conduct private labour audits on these selected apple farms did not do a thorough job. As much as, there is a code of silence among farm workers (in this study) because they fear retrenchment, organizations tasked with auditing labour standards on the selected apple farms surely can find innovative ways of investigating employment conditions on these farms without revealing the identity of farm workers or being influenced by the farmers.

This is a weakness of SIZA and of the international buyers and global supermarkets who blindly trust the reports from SIZA without also institutionalizing mechanisms to monitor SIZA and other private auditors. Visser and Alford (2024) show that non-compliance (of varying levels) is a well-known feature in the apple value chain of South Africa, which shows that due diligence is not a priority when it comes to auditing labour conditions on the selected apple farms in this study. Failure to detect labour violations on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley by SIZA (and its third-party auditing firms) is strikingly similar to the failure of the Wine and Agricultural Ethical Trading Association (WIETA) which failed to detect labour law violations on the wine farms in the Western Cape (Hastings, 2019).

WIETA drives a pro-active, world-class and sustainable ethical trade programme for the South African wine industry and aligned sectors (Bitter Grapes, 2016; Hastings, 2019). WIETA is also a globally recognised ethical auditing body registered with the Global Social Compliance Programme (GSCP) (Hastings, 2019). Nevertheless, Hastings (2019) notes that WIETA has a history of aligning with the wine producers and, therefore, tends to turn a blind eye to violations of labour laws on the wine farms in the Western Cape. SIZA is not ambiguous about its support for the fruit growers of South Africa, which (like WIETA) has affected their objectivity and efficiency when conducting labour audits. The selected commercial apple farmers in this study were still in the export business, whilst this study showed gross violations of labour laws on their farms.

SIZA (2016) explains that their labour auditing programme aims to harmonise ethical and environmental code requirements to assist growers with ethical labour practice compliance and environmental stewardship whilst minimizing costs. The last two words, “minimizing costs” epitomize the stance of the apple farmers who were interviewed in this study towards apple production and their employees. SIZA seems to have adopted this stance as well because non-compliance persists on the selected apple farms in this study. SIZA approaches labour auditing as a simple ‘tick box’ exercise rather than a thorough investigation of the working conditions on these apple farms. The glaring oversight in both the public (by DEL) and the private (by SIZA) labour inspections on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley points to a significant governance oversight of labour conditions on the selected apple farms in the global apple value chains.

Visser and Alford (2024) attribute labour exploitation on many commercial apple farms in the Western Cape to governance deficit and non-compliance by suppliers or producers. Some mainstream GC scholars contend that a well-coordinated public, private and social governance framework is the antidote to labour exploitation and non-compliance in GCs (Alford, 2016; Gereffi and Lee, 2016). This study, however, has shown that the aggressive vertical and horizontal profit maximization strategies in the global apple value chain induce governance deficits and non-compliance by the selected apple farmers. Additionally, global supermarkets cannot be absolved from the deficiencies of private labour auditing organizations such as SIZA, as they blindly approve them without conducting due diligence and a consistent monitoring mechanism to ensure they do a thorough job. This implicates the global supermarkets as well in the oversights made in the private labour audits.

Some of the modernization and mainstream GC (GCC and GVC) scholars attributed underdevelopment in former colonies to governance deficits (Gereffi and Lee, 2016; Harrison, 1988). Alford (2017) contends that the trans-scalar governance deficits facing precarious workers in the South African fruit industry must be understood in the context of broader commercial pressures inherent in global production networks. The ensuing commercial pressures facing fruit producers relative to lead-firm supermarkets, combined with increasing labour and production costs, have exacerbated the ongoing restructuring of farm workers in South Africa. Alford’s (2017) paper, however, focuses on the governance deficits but does not emphasize the role of farmers in voluntarily violating the rights of their employees.

This study has shown that the profit maximization strategies in the global value chain take place at both the vertical and horizontal level; as such, all stakeholders are involved in non-compliance and violation of farm workers' rights within this value chain. It is for this reason that Davis et al. (2018) contend that public, social and private governance work together to achieve the profit-making agenda of large-scale businesses in GCs. Selwyn (2013:82) also points out that one of the limitations of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda is its inability to identify the systemic processes of exploitation characteristic of capitalist social relations. This problem derives from its assumptions that, given the right institutional (governance) context, capital does not exploit labour. The ILO's Decent Work Agenda represents the conceptual denial of capital's role in the exploitation of labour. This study has shown that the incessant race for profit in the global apple value chain has created an environment where the selected apple farmers use fearmongering to deter farm workers (in this study) from engaging in impactful social dialogue on their farms, hence the continued noncompliance.

## 10.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter interrogated the notion of social protection as it pertains to the lived experiences of farm workers employed on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. The four aspects of social protection that are covered in this chapter include medical cover, pension and funeral cover, UIF and housing. This chapter has shown that the aggressive cost-cutting measures applied by the selected apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley (as a response to cost pressures from global supermarkets) have directly influenced the uneven access to social protection for their employees. The apple farmers in this study have externalized most of the social protection responsibilities to the state and the farm workers. Most of the social protection currently offered by the apple farmers (in this study) is mostly enjoyed by a small group of permanently employed (mostly male) farm workers. In terms of race, this chapter showed that coloured farm workers experienced favourable outcomes in some employment outcomes, whilst black workers also experienced some favourable outcomes as well. This chapter has shown both continuities and discontinuities in the racialized employment practices on selected farms in the Langkloof Valley. Most of the social protection measures discussed in this chapter (except for the UIF) are benefits rather than legally binding, which is why most of the farmers are externalizing them to the government and farm workers.

The major takeaway from the first section of this chapter is that most of the farm workers who participated in this study did not enjoy social protection through their employment on the selected farms. The social protection pillar of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda is not inclusive and only caters to a small group of farm workers. This chapter has shown that employment status and sex determine whether the farm workers (in this study) experienced social protection measures offered by the selected apple farmers. The selected apple farmers (in this study) are increasingly casualizing their labour force and externalizing the responsibility of social protection to the state and the farm workers in response to the cost pressures from global supermarkets in the global apple value chain. This chapter also interrogated the notion of 'social dialogue' as it pertains to farm workers who participated in this study. On the surface, the availability of internal and external channels or platforms available to farm workers (in this study) to express their grievances would appear as though they have access to engage in social dialogue as per the ILO's Decent Work Agenda.

This chapter has shown that most of the farm workers who participated in this study did not robustly engage in these platforms, as they feared being labelled 'troublemakers', which would jeopardise their job security because their employers perceived these platforms as a hindrance to production and profit accumulation. This finding of uneven access to social dialogue contradicts the notion of inclusive social upgrading for workers engaged in GCs. Overall, this chapter has shown that social protection and social dialogue are only enjoyed by a small group of mostly permanently employed male farm workers, whilst the rest of the seasonally employed, mostly female farm workers, did not enjoy social protection and social dialogue in their employment. This finding shows that the quest for profit accumulation by global supermarkets and the selected commercial apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley induces uneven social outcomes, non-compliance and social downgrading for most of the farm workers who participated in this study. Once again, it is evident from this chapter that social upgrading and Decent Work (as per the ILO's definition) is not inclusive in this study.

# CHAPTER ELEVEN
# DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

## 11.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a concluding discussion of the outcomes that emerged from this study, which determined whether integrating into a global apple value chain led to economic and social upgrading for selected apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley. Neoliberal-inspired GC (especially GCC and GVC) scholars and multilateral institutions assert that integrating into GCs leads to economic and social upgrading for suppliers/producers from the global South (Gereffi, 2019; Humphrey and Schmitz, 2002a; Sturgeon, 2009; World Bank, 2020). Mainstream GC scholars, multilateral institutions and modernization theorists perceive global capitalist trade as a panacea to underdevelopment in the global South and attribute inequalities or exploitation in GCs as a consequence of governance deficits rather than a systemic reality (Harrison, 1988; Gereffi, 2019; World Bank, 2020). Selwyn (2017), however, notes that global capitalist trade (through GCs) creates wealth, exploitation and poverty concurrently, which is why it was necessary to use the global apple value chain case as a case study to understand the driving forces behind these vastly disparate outcomes.

The core research question informing this study is whether a profit-driven capitalist trading arrangement such as a global apple value chain can yield inclusive development outcomes for the selected apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley. Marx (1967) contends that the secret to profit-making is through the extraction of surplus value, which creates an uneven distribution of profits between capital and labour. Clelland (2014) contends that GCs are central mechanisms for draining surplus value in the world economy where, at each node of the chain, participants attempt to maximize their capture of surplus value through wages, rent and profit. This is done through the construction of varying degrees of monopolies and monopsonies, hence, Selwyn and Leyden (2022) perceive GCs as oligopolistic rather than inclusive. This study examines the outcomes of selected apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley to evaluate the efficacy of the neoliberal-inspired assumption about GCs in the face of the incessant drive for profit highlighted by Marxist-inspired scholars (Frank, 1979; Smith, 2016; Wallerstein and Hopkins, 1986). This chapter covers the following areas: theories, methodologies, key research findings, and recommendations for future research.

## 11.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study examined the experiences of selected apple farmers and farm workers (from the Langkloof Valley) in the global apple value chain to determine whether integrating in such a value chain leads to economic and social upgrading for these participants as assumed by mainstream GC (especially GCC and GVC) scholars and multilateral institutions. Qualitative research methods were ideal for this study, as it seeks to unearth the subjective perspectives and experiences of research subjects in a particular social reality (Fossey et al., 2002; Marshall and Rossman, 2014). Although it has evolved over the years, qualitative research remains true to uncovering an insider's view of a particular social phenomenon (Castan˜eda, 2006; Hopf, 2004; Kvale, 1996; Lecompte, 2002; Merriam, 2002).

This study used purposive sampling, which is a method where the researcher utilizes their personal judgment to identify potential research participants who possess specific characteristics that are required for a particular study (Browne, 2005; Etikan, Musa and Alkassim, 2016). In this study, the characteristics that were required included being an apple farmer and farm worker (from the Langkloof Valley) who was actively participating in the global apple value chain. The volunteers from the ANC office in Joubertina were also approached, as they provided a third-party perspective on the employment relationship between farmers and farm workers in this study. Recruiting research participants for this study included using snowball sampling, whereby the participants recommended and recruited each other (McNamara, 1994; Noy, 2008).

In the recruitment process, the researcher needed to establish a rapport with the research participants before securing their consent to participate. The research assistant, who is an ex-farm worker and a native of the Langkloof Valley, played a major role in assisting the researcher in identifying and recruiting research participants. In this study, data was collected through one-on-one interviews, group interviews, document analysis and observations. These data collection methods proved to be very effective, as they provided data which helped to unearth the experiences of the selected apple farmers and farm workers (from the Langkloof Valley) in the global apple value chain. The qualitative data collected from closed-ended questions of the farm worker questionnaire is presented in frequency tables and cross-tabulations (Cloutier and Ravasi, 2021).

Data was analysed using deductive thematic analysis, which entailed utilizing themes or concepts (governance, economic upgrading and social upgrading) drawn from pre-existing theories to determine whether they correlate with the data collected (Bryman, 2012; Clarke and Braun, 2017; Fife and Gossner, 2024; Proudfoot, 2023).

## 11.3 THEORY AND FINDINGS

### 11.3.1 Governance and Trade Exchange

Baglioni et al. (2022) outlined the importance of including the spheres of trade exchange, production and social reproduction in analysing outcomes in GCs. This study adopted three theoretical frameworks, the GCF, LPT and SLA, to analyse the three spheres noted above in the global apple value chain. Gereffi and Korzeniewicz (1994) note that the notion of 'governance' occupies the centre of GCF analysis, as the evolution of this framework (GCC, GVC and GPN) was driven by changing scholarly perceptions about how GCs are governed. Currently, there is a consensus that GCs are governed through a three-tiered framework that includes public (the state), social (civil society) and private (business) stakeholders (Alford, 2017; Gereffi and Lee, 2016). In the global apple value chain, the public stakeholders are responsible for adopting neoliberal policies and monitoring adherence to product and social standards (among other roles).

The social stakeholders include civil society organizations that are responsible for raising awareness and monitoring the violations of these standards. In the global agri-food value chain, it was the civil society organization that called for standards (such as Global GAP and others) that ought to be met in these value chains. The private stakeholders include the global supermarkets, export marketing agents and the apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley. Davis et al. (2018) argue that social and public stakeholders work in tandem to facilitate the profit agenda of the private stakeholders in GCs. This was evident in the global apple value chain, which ensured that the apples from the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley produced quality apples at low prices and delivered within a short space of time to international markets. The private and public monitoring mechanisms for measuring product quality were highly scientific and meticulously executed. The problem came about with the public and private monitoring of social or labour standards, which this study found to be flawed, as the majority of farm workers in this study experienced violations of their labour rights. This aspect of the global apple value chain is unpacked in the section dealing with social upgrading and downgrading.

Nonetheless, the GCF provided the conceptual tools to analyse the sphere of trade exchange, that is, the relationships between global supermarkets and the selected apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley. The global apple value chain is buyer-driven with market forms of coordination, meaning that the global supermarkets (who dominate the markets in the global North) occupied a hegemonic position in this GC and had a stronger bargaining position as price makers. The selected apple farmers (in this study) were price takers, meaning that they occupied a weaker bargaining position than global supermarkets. This unequal relationship stems from the colonial era, where dependency and world systems scholars noted the global capitalist trade produced uneven global outcomes between different regions in the world. The dependency and world systems theories focus more on the nation-state, but this study showed that the legacy of global inequality created by colonialism places global supermarkets (in advanced economies) in a more advantageous position than the selected apple farmers from the Langkloof Valley. Suwandi (2019) described lead firms in GCs as economic imperialism, as they dominated suppliers in the global South.

### 11.3.2 Apple Farmers in an Oligopolistic Global Apple Value Chain

Selwyn and Leyden (2022) acknowledge the hegemonic position of lead firms in GCs but add that GCs are oligopolistic as these lead firms also interact with large-scale (monopolistic) suppliers in the global South. This means that GCs cater more to large-scale capital and marginalize smaller-scale businesses. In this study, the global supermarkets trade with large-scale (white) apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley. The oligopolistic nature of the global apple value chain is seen in the relationship between the large-scale white commercial apple farms and the land reform beneficiaries in the Langkloof Valley. The land reform beneficiaries come from poor socio-economic conditions, and the inadequate government support drove them into unequal ‘partnerships’ with the white apple farmers in the region. These white apple farmers assisted the land reform beneficiaries with production and post-harvest activities in exchange for cheap apples and their labour as well; hence, this study labelled these dynamics ‘new age sharecropping’. The white apple farmers (in this study) used their relationship with land reform beneficiaries to absorb the cost pressures from the global supermarkets who seek quality apples at the lowest price possible. In this global apple value chain, the race to the bottom imposed by global supermarkets on the selected apple farmers (in this study) created uneven relations and outcomes.

Modernization scholars argued that former colonies struggled to develop because of internal governance deficits (among other factors) (Bernstein, 1971; Harrison, 1988; Rostow, 1959). In this study, this is evident in the government's failure to protect the apple farmers in the global apple value chain and the inadequate support for the land reform beneficiaries, who find themselves at the bottom of this value chain. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that South Africa also adopted a neoliberal market-based approach to land reform. Neoliberal policies advocate for less state intervention, and as such, the ANC government removed state support from the sector, thus exposing farmers to highly competitive global agri-food value chains (Mather and Greenberg, 2003; Visser, 2016). This policy framework means that only those farmers with economic strength participate in the global apple value chain, which excludes the majority of the previously excluded (marginalized) indigenous people who wish to farm commercially (and even export).

Instead, land reform beneficiaries find themselves in 'new age sharecropping' arrangements within the global apple value chain. Countries that have not adopted neoliberal policies often find themselves on the receiving end of sanctions and other forms of global economic exclusion. The neoliberal framework allows for 'large-scale' businesses to thrive and marginalizes small-scale businesses (Selwyn and Leyden, 2022). Global supermarkets impose various profit maximization strategies such as global labour arbitrage or race to the bottom to purchase cheap quality apples within a short space of time. The apple farmers in this study responded to these pressures through various methods. The selected apple farmers in this study utilized various forms of capital at their disposal to engage and sustain their businesses in the global apple value chain.

This is where the SLA approach enters the analysis in this study, as this approach highlights that people and organizations (or communities) in vulnerable contexts utilize various forms of capital (at their disposal to survive) to sustain their livelihoods. The selected apple farms (in this study) are considered vulnerable because they are price takers and occupy a subordinate position to the global supermarkets to which they supply their apples. GC scholars argue that suppliers or producers in the global South have to engage in clusters or strategic partnerships to compete and upgrade in GCs (Coe and Yeung, 2015; Giuliani et al., 2005; Hassink, 2021). The apple farmers in this study formed strategic partnerships with each other to form large-scale businesses that were able to thrive in the global apple value chain.

This study showed that these apple farmers utilized social, human, natural, physical and financial capital to strengthen these partnerships. The land reform beneficiaries also used the combination of these types of capital (though at a lesser level) to engage in the global apple value chain. Vicol et al. (2019) noted that the class disparities and socio-economic conditions at the supplier or producer level need to be understood in GCs, as they impact the positions and outcomes of the participants in the value chain. The case of the 'new age sharecropping' is an example of these class disparities at the producer level, as the apple farmers in this study had different economic strengths. Hall and Kepe (2017) also note that the partnerships between established white commercial farmers and land reform beneficiaries are not only unequal but resemble coloniality. Sihlobo (2023) indicates that the South African agricultural sector is divided into two racially divided classes that is, established white commercial agri-business and black and coloured land reform beneficiaries. Mainstream GC scholars assume that the integration of these suppliers or producers (in clusters or strategic partnerships) into GCs leads to economic upgrading, briefly defined as the movement from low-value to higher-value activities within a GC (Gereffi, 2019; Humphrey and Schmitz, 2002a).

### 11.3.3 Economic Upgrading

Humphrey and Schmitz (2002b) identified four types of economic upgrading in GCs, and they include: product upgrading (moving into more sophisticated product lines); process upgrading (the improvement of technologies and work organization processes in production); functional upgrading (entails acquiring new functions to increase the overall skill content of the activities); and intersectoral upgrading (the movement of a firm into new but often related industries). Mainstream GC (especially the contemporary GCC and GVC) asserts that the economic upgrading trajectories of supplier firms in GCs are determined by their governance model. Supplier firms participating in GCs governed through *hierarchy relations* have a high chance of process and product upgrading, whilst functional upgrading prospects are restricted by lead firms (Bazan and Navas-Aleman, 2004; Campos et al., 2000; Giuliani et al., 2005). Supplier firms in *arm's-length market relations* often experience product, process and functional upgrading but often rely on their resources to upgrade and can be derailed by economic and political forces (Bair and Gereffi, 2001). This study has shown that the global apple value chain is governed through *arm's length trading relations* between global supermarkets and the apple producers from the Langkloof Valley.

The global apple value chains are buyer-driven with arm's length forms of trading relations between global supermarkets and apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley. This study showed that the selected apple farmers experience process, product, functional and inter-sectoral upgrading. The level at which the upgrading materialized (in this study) depended on the economic strength and types of capital available to the selected apple farmers. Process upgrading, which entails the upgrading of the technological and workplace organization methods to optimize production on the apple farms, was analysed via the LPT. The application of the LPT showed that the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley were primarily driven by a profit motive, that is to extract as much surplus value as possible whilst meeting the demands of the global supermarkets.

Marx (1967) identified two methods used by capitalists to extract surplus value and these include increasing absolute surplus value (lengthening the working day without increasing wages proportionately) and increasing relative surplus value extraction (the intensification of the working day through technological and managerial innovations and/or through reducing the costs of labour power). In addition to these two methods, the apple farmers (in this study) also relied heavily on Taylorist, Fordist and neo-Fordist methods to optimize production and keep costs low to extract as much surplus value as possible (Braverman, 1974). The application of the LPT in this study also showed that workers were controlled through various methods, which include piece rate systems, target systems, direct supervision, and various technologies (such as sensors and quality control) to reduce any mistakes and optimize production at the lowest price.

These methods of control also reduce or nearly eliminate any chances of sabotage or soldiering. In both orchards and packhouses, centralized computer systems are utilized to control the pace of the production processes (Chisoro-Dube et al., 2019). LPT discourse also discusses the relationship between control measures in the workplace and worker subjectivity (Cressey and MacInnes, 1980; Edwards, 1982; Friedman, 1977; Knights and Willmott, 1989, 1990; Willmott, 1989). This study showed that the various styles of control, which also include a Foucauldian notion of the panopticon, indicate that workers regulate their behaviour when they believe that they are being watched or monitored through different mechanisms (Foucault, 1977). This was the case in this study as the farm workers indicated that they willingly participated in their subjugation as they feared losing their jobs.

The increased technologization of the production processes on the selected apple farms (in this study) has had an impact on the division of labour, as there are a few technocentric (mostly permanent) jobs and a large number of simplified (mostly seasonal) jobs. This student showed that there was evidence of upskilling and de-skilling as well, a finding similar to that of other studies (Burawoy, 1979; Friedman, 1977; Zimbalist, 1979). This study has shown that a small group of mostly permanently employed males experienced upskilling and job upgrading, whilst the large majority of seasonally employed females were denied such opportunities. This is a regular practice in the fruit sector of South Africa (Kritzinger and Vorster, 1996). These production-related changes are all an attempt to reduce input costs to absorb the cost pressures from the global supermarkets. The labour outcomes in terms of social upgrading and downgrading are discussed further in this chapter. Nevertheless, the process of upgrading in the selected apple farms led to product upgrading through the expansion of apple varieties.

All the apple farmers in this study experienced process and product upgrading, which are prerequisites for surviving in the global apple value chain; otherwise, these farmers would be outcompeted. Some of the apple farms (in this study) also experienced functional upgrading, which took different forms depending on the economic strength and capacity of the organization. Lastly, some apple farmers (in this study) also experienced various forms of inter-sectoral upgrading, as they were supplying their apples to other value chains. All the different types of economic upgrading experienced by the selected apple farms (in this study) were determined by the access to various forms of capital and their economic strength as well. The land reform beneficiaries (in this study) also experienced economic upgrading; however, it was dependent on their white commercial partners, which means that the distribution of profits also followed the patterns of the ‘new age sharecropping’ arrangements.

### 11.3.4 Social Upgrading and Social Downgrading

Mainstream GC (especially GCC and GVC) discourse and multilateral institutions (such as the Bretton Woods Institutions) also assume that economic upgrading (as a result of engaging in GCs) leads to social upgrading (Gereffi, 2019; Knorringa and Pegler, 2007; Puppim de Oliveira, 2008; World Bank, 2020). Social upgrading stems from the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda, which rests on four pillars consisting of employment creation, rights at work, social protection and social dialogue. Barrientos et al. (2010:14-15) note that labour outcomes in GCs are largely determined by the strategies adopted by supplier firms to meet the demands of the lead firms.

In this regard, Milberg and Winkler (2011) outline three supplier strategies that affect worker outcomes, which include the low-road approach (involves economic and social downgrading), the high-road approach (involves economic and social upgrading) and a mixed approach (involves economic upgrading, social upgrading and social downgrading). Using Winkler's (2011) model, the employment outcomes of the farm workers who participated in this study indicated a mixed approach, as a small group of (mostly) permanently employed male workers experienced social upgrading, whilst a large group of (mostly) seasonally employed farm female workers experienced social downgrading. These outcomes were seen in all four pillars of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda. The selected apple farmers (in this study) were driven by a cost-cutting motive to meet the demands of the global supermarkets whilst making a profit as well.

The cost-cutting exercises of the selected apple farmers (in this study) led to the voluntary violation of labour legislation pertaining to farm workers in South Africa. Starting with employment creation, farm workers (in this study) mostly secured work through association with gatekeepers who were mostly male supervisors. Those farm workers who were not associated with these gatekeepers resorted to cash and noncash forms of bribery, whilst others secured work through labour broking (recruited from the former homelands in the Eastern Cape). The labour broking arrangement is exploitative as the farmer pays the labour broker a lump sum of money to pay the worker they recruited. In this case, the labour brokers pay the workers less than the minimum wage.

The selected apple farmers (in this study) also pay the farm workers directly; in turn, they have to pay a portion of their wages to the labour broker as a gratuity for recruiting them for seasonal work on the apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. Most coloured and black people from the Langkloof Valley come from generational cycles of poverty (ECSECC, 2017), which places them in a position of desperation when they enter farm work in the region. Their precarious socio-economic backgrounds, together with the increasing entrance of migrant labour (mostly from Zimbabwe) who are willing to accept extremely low wages compels the locals, to accept low wages as well, as there are limited alternative employment opportunities in the region outside the agricultural sector (Rutherford and Addison, 2007; Addison, 2019). This competition for scarce jobs on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley also creates tensions between the immigrants and the locals (Hågensen and de Jager, 2016).

The securing of employment on farms through male associates (gatekeepers) who are permanently employed on farms (in the Langkloof Valley and the South African agricultural sector as a whole) is a long-standing tradition which dates back to the colonial and apartheid eras (Atkison, 2007; Bekker et al., 1982; Davies, 1990; Marcus, 1989). The rights at work pillar of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda is also highly compromised for the majority of (mostly seasonally employed female) farm workers who participated in this study. This study showed a blatant violation of the rights of most of the farm workers who participated in this study at their places of employment. Pre-1994, farm workers in South Africa were not protected by labour legislation; as such, they were exploited by their employers (Davies, 1990; Marcus, 1989). Post-1994, many farm workers in South Africa are still exploited, even with the existence of labour legislation (Devereux, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2011; Visser and Ferrer, 2015).

Non-compliance was a regular practice on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. The issue of the wage affected both permanently employed and seasonally employed farm workers, as the former enjoyed slightly higher wages than the latter. Permanent farm workers also worked throughout the years, which means that they enjoyed a wage throughout the year, whilst seasonal farm workers only enjoyed a wage for six months in a year. Nevertheless, this study showed that the wages for farm workers (in this study) were so low that a vast majority of them relied on alternative sources of income (regardless of employment status) such as state grants, remittances, selling of goods or services (labour) and owning a garden (and livestock) to supplement the low wage. The notion of the wage needs to be seriously interrogated by the ILO and the government as a minimum wage does not necessarily equate to a living wage.

This wage is singled out because it has a direct impact on the livelihood outcomes of farm workers. Even in a case where workers enjoy all the rights at work, the existence of a low minimum wage means that they cannot upgrade their livelihoods from the wage but have to rely on other forms of income. From an SLA perspective, the farm workers in this study were utilizing various forms of capital to supplement the low wages and sustain their livelihoods. GC discourse cannot conclude that workers have experienced social upgrading when only their employment conditions have improved whilst they remain impoverished. The incessant preoccupation with cost-cutting measures to absorb the price pressure imposed by global supermarkets (whilst making a profit) induces the violation of labour rights by the selected apple farmers in the Langkloof Valley.

This study also showed that social protection was experienced by a small group of (mostly) permanently employed male farm workers, whilst the majority of the (mostly) seasonally employed female farm workers did not enjoy it. During the apartheid era, farmers in the Langkloof Valley (and in South Africa as a whole) provided most of the enfeebled social protection measures for their employees (Bekker et al., 1982). Post-1994, the selected apple farmers (in this study) have externalized the social protection to the government or the farm workers' social networks. Even the UIF, which the seasonal farm workers in this study contributed to, proved difficult to access for some farm workers due to non-compliance by their employers and failures by government officials tasked with distributing UIF money to these farm workers. The majority of the seasonal farm workers in this study also indicated that the UIF money was very little and could not last the six months they were unemployed during the off-season.

This is also another consequence of cost-cutting measures by the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley. The rampant non-compliance on the selected apple farms in this study also speaks to a greater problem of poor performance by public and private labour auditing institutions and worker representative structures (Visser and Alford, 2024). This study showed that there were internal and external channels and platforms for workers to engage in social dialogue about their workplace grievances. The internal channels included trade unions, farm workers' committees and strikes. Only a small group of (mostly) permanently employed male farm workers had trade union membership, whilst a sizable number of seasonal farm workers were part of farm workers' committees.

These committees were heavily monitored by the farmers (in this study) through the supervisors who chaired them; as such, the farm workers did not engage robustly in these committees because they did not want to be labelled 'troublemakers' and compromise their future employment on these selected apple farms. The strikes that took place in 2014 and 2015 were only at Kloof Fruit Company, and only a few permanently employed farm workers benefited from them, whilst the rest were retrenched and the company reduced and casualized the bulk of its labour force. It is important to note that having these platforms of social dialogue within the farms does not mean that they are effective, as most farm workers did not find them to be effective, as evidenced by the rampant non-compliance identified in this study. Externally, the channels available for social dialogue for farm workers (in this study) included the ANC office, CCMA, DEL, SCLC and SIZA.

This study showed that most of the farm workers who participated in this study did not have knowledge of these external platforms for social dialogue. Only a small group of (mostly) permanently employed male farm workers (in this study) knew of or interacted with these external channels. The rampant non-compliance on the selected apple farms in this study shows that most of the farm workers do not access these platforms, and there is also poor monitoring of labour standards by DEL and SIZA. Literature on farm workers in South Africa shows that DEL is under-resourced and is generally poor in conducting thorough labour inspections on farms (Visser and Ferrer, 2015). Private labour inspections have also come under criticism for failing to identify the glaring noncompliance on farms in South Africa. These private labour auditing organizations have been accused of being closely aligned with white farmers and, as such, blatantly ignoring violations on farms in South Africa (Hastings, 2019).

Global supermarkets cannot be absolved from the poor labour auditing on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley, as they either send their own private inspectors or approve the reports by SIZA. This shows that the global supermarkets that purchase apples from the selected apple farms are also complicit in the poor labour auditing by private institutions. The CCMA is very effective in dealing with workplace grievances, however, the referral rate to the CCMA from the Langkloof Valley is extremely low. The ANC office in Joubertina plays a mediating role between farmers and farm workers, however, they end up referring cases to the CCMA when the farmers refuse their mediation. SCLC is based in George in the Western Cape and is under-resourced and can only reach certain parts of the Langkloof Valley that are closer to the Western Cape, such as Haarlem, meaning only a small number of workers enjoy their services.

Overall, most of the farm workers who participated in this study did not engage or benefit from the social dialogue platforms available to them. Anner (2015) explained that employer control and market control can stifle worker activism. This study showed that workers avoided engaging robustly in platforms for social dialogue because they know their employers view these platforms as a hindrance to production and profit accumulation, as such they do not want to be blacklisted and jeopardize future employment. Langkloof Valley has high unemployment and limited employment opportunities outside the agricultural sector (ECSECC, 2017), hence, they avoid engaging in any activity which their employers are not happy about. Literature on farm workers in South Africa also shows that many farmers in South Africa have always been hostile towards any form of worker organizing (Daves, 1990; SAHistory, 2015; Devereux, Levendal and Yde, 2017).

This research has shown that there is a causal relationship between the (vertical and horizontal) cost-cutting strategies and non-compliance on farms. The employment outcomes of the majority of farm workers in this study are highly segmented, and only a small group of (mostly) permanently employed male farm workers experience decent work (as per the ILO) and social upgrading. In terms of the employment outcomes of farm workers, according to race, this study showed both the continuities and discontinuities of pre-1994 racial discriminatory practices on selected farms in the Langkloof Valley that favoured coloured farm workers over black workers. However, some employment outcomes favoured black farm workers in this study, which shows the discontinuity of the racial employment practices in some selected farms in the Langkloof Valley.

Overall, the outcomes of farm workers in this study according to race are mixed, unlike sex and employment status, which are significant determinants of employment outcomes on the selected farms in the Langkloof Valley. Most of the farm workers in this study experienced social downgrading and relied on various alternative forms of capital to sustain their livelihoods. Social downgrading in the global apple value chain (in this study) is caused by several factors, which include non-compliance, poor worker representative structures, poor public and private labour auditing, and profit maximization strategies. Even the economic upgrading outcomes of the apple farmers who participated in this study were uneven, as those who had access to deep reservoirs of diverse forms of assets/capital enjoyed better outcomes than those with shallow reservoirs of diverse assets/capital.

The answer to the overarching research question informing this study is that inclusive economic and social upgrading for apple farmers and farm workers (in this study) from the Langkloof Valley was not possible due to the intense drive to extract as much surplus value as possible throughout the global apple value chain which induced non-compliance and governance deficits. Selwyn and Leyden (2022) are correct in perceiving GCs as oligopolistic, as this study showed that those organizations with economic strength thrive in GCs, while smaller players are marginalized. The same goes for workers, as only a small group of (mostly) permanently employed male farm workers enjoyed social upgrading, thus showing an intersection between the capitalist race for profit and patriarchy (Eisenstein, 1979; Kritzinger and Vorster, 1996; Sokoloff, 1981). These findings echo the sentiments of Selwyn (2017), who indicated that global capital trading arrangements such as GCs cannot provide inclusive development but rather produce extreme wealth, exploitation and poverty concurrently.

The creation of profit, by nature, does not lend itself to equitable distribution, which is why it is seemingly disingenuous to expect a global capitalist trading framework which is profit-driven to produce inclusive outcomes for its participants. This study sought to debunk the assumption of inclusive developmental outcomes for selected apple farmers and farm workers (from the Langkloof Valley) in the global apple value chain. The outcomes of both parties were unequal, and this was determined by their positions within the global apple value chain.

## 11.4 FUTURE RESEARCH AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

As much as this study tried to cover as much as it could to study the outcomes of apple farmers and farm workers in the Langkloof Valley in the global apple value chain, some areas need further interrogation and research in the future.

### 11.4.1 Land Reform and Global Agri-Food Value Chains

The first area that needs further study in the future is land reform within the context of global agri-food value chains. This study has shown how poor government support for land reform beneficiaries has driven them into 'new age sharecropping' arrangements, which do not empower them but use them as buffers to absorb cost pressures from global supermarkets. The research would examine land reform beneficiaries participating in the global apple value chain in other provinces to determine whether the same result surfaces. Furthermore, land reform should be examined in the deciduous fruit sector as a whole and other fruit sub-sectors before going into other export-driven sectors of the agricultural sector of South Africa.

Such findings could help provide valuable information to policymakers in the area of land reform because currently, land reform in the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley is performative rather than substantial, and it does not threaten the land ownership patterns nor challenge the monopoly enjoyed by white agri-business in the apple value chain. Policymakers should consider approaching land reform beneficiaries (who wish to engage in commercial farming) from a market perspective, meaning they should study the market demands in the apple value chain to empower them to meet the market demands. A thorough understanding of the apple value chain can help policymakers to empower land reform beneficiaries and disengage them from the 'new-age sharecropping arrangements' they find themselves in this study. Greenberg (2013b) notes that "land reform as it unfolded was not designed to build small-scale production in any meaningful way and remains ill-equipped to do so.

Market-based redistribution (‘willing seller, willing buyer’) is the first constraint to a small-scale farmer strategy. In phase one, it resulted in groups acquiring land not for any purpose other than this being the only way to accrue enough money to purchase the land. There was little consideration of how the land would be used. The result was a combination of settlement and some production but with no production support. Beneficiaries were essentially left to get on with it themselves”. The policy suggestion above will address this concern noted by Greenberg (2013b).

### 11.4.2 Migration in the South African Apple Value Chain

The second area which needs further interrogation is migrant labour in the apple value chain of South Africa. This study briefly touched on this topic but combined it as evidence of cheaper forms of labour used by farmers to cut costs to meet the demands of global supermarkets. A study solely focused on migrant labour in this value chain in other provinces and other export-driven agri-food value chains in South Africa would be ideal. The increasing employment of migrant labour on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley threatens the livelihoods of the locals, as the migrant labourers are accepting extremely low wages. The growing preference for low-cost migrant labour by the selected apple farms in the region is creating resentment and xenophobic tensions in the region. Policymakers should pay attention to this matter before it reaches intense xenophobic attacks like those that took place in De Doorns in 2009 (Hågensen and de Jager, 2016). This study is not villainizing migrant labour, but it points to the issue of non-compliance on the selected farms in the region.

### 11.4.3 Labour Monitoring in the South African Apple Value Chain

The third area that needs further interrogation is non-compliance and the poor labour monitoring systems in the apple value chain of South Africa. This study has shown that the selected apple farmers in this study were exporting their apples to international markets, meaning that they were receiving certification (after passing labour audits) whilst violating the rights of most of their employees. It is difficult to accept that both the public and the private labour audits do not pick up non-compliance on the selected apple farms in this study. Although non-compliance is voluntary, it is induced by the cost pressures placed upon the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley by global supermarkets.

This thesis is not suggesting that the selected apple farms (in this study) would not make profits if they adhered to labour laws, but the vertical and horizontal profit maximization strategies in the global apple value chain cannot be ignored as it is a strong determinant of non-compliance by these farmers. A value chain approach can help the government understand the sub-ordinate positioning of the commercial farmers in the global apple value chain which induces non-compliance and social downgrading for the majority of workers who participated in this study. To this point, Visser and Ferrer (2015:7) argue that the "government's failure to take a value chain perspective of the industry's woes has resulted in a macroeconomic policy that is increasingly weakening producers' bargaining power in the market. Supporting farm workers without simultaneously supporting producers will be an exercise in futility.

It is necessary to strengthen the bargaining power of both producers and workers to ensure that profit is distributed more equitably along the value chain. If retailers are concerned about sustainable value chains, also they have to engage with this problem". Government efforts to protect both farms and farm workers may help reduce compliance, but Visser and Ferrer's (2015:7) last sentence recognizes the role of global supermarkets but almost treats them with kid gloves, as the global supermarkets are the chain drivers and they place farmers under pressure. Willoughby and Gore (2018:9) contend that it is no coincidence that the growth of supermarket power has taken place at the same time as governments in many countries have pursued an agenda of trade liberalization and deregulation of agricultural and labour markets. The result of this public policy approach has been a radical weakening of the bargaining power of farmers and workers.

This thesis argues that, although work can be done to remedy the issue at the horizontal level, a greater policy recommendation is for multilateral institutions (such as the World Bank and the IMF) to regulate the aggressive pricing strategies of global supermarkets in the global agri-food value chains. Additionally, Visser and Ferrer's (2015) assumption that government intervention in the sector will lead to more equitable distribution is unlikely if the aggressive vertical and vertical profit maximization strategies in the global apple value chain persist. Equitable distribution in the global apple value chain would require a greater policy shift in global capitalist trading practices. Nevertheless, the government needs to pay attention to non-compliance and poor labour monitoring by public and private stakeholders. This study has shown that the deregulated global capitalist system facilitates aggressive competition, which has made GCs oligopolistic.

This competition also creates a race to the bottom in GCs to appropriate as much surplus value as possible, thus inducing non-compliance, governance deficits and social downgrading. This speaks to the ILO's decent work agenda as well. Selwyn (2013) expressed concern about the possibility of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda being co-opted by elite international institutions, states, and firms reflects a fundamental weakness of the ILO. Lerche (2012) also asserts that the ILO has no powers of enforcement at its disposal, apart from 'naming and shaming' those in breach of conventions. Compared to the economic and political power of capital and neoliberal governments, and even compared to the sanctions available to the WTO. Overall, the discursive powers of the ILO are extremely weak. This study also agrees with Selwyn (2013), who noted that the ILO's Decent Work Agenda lacks an authentic acknowledgement of the profit maximization strategies that take place in GCs and the class disparities as well.

This study also shows that the ILO's Decent Work Agenda needs a greater emphasis on the living conditions of the workers employed by producers in developing countries such as South Africa. Decent work and social upgrading cannot be measured simply by working conditions. Marx (1967) noted the importance of acknowledging the sphere of social reproduction that helps sustain and revitalize the worker to return to work in the GC. This thesis argues that a great measure of social upgrading is determining how the engagement of workers in the global apple value chain has improved the living conditions of farm workers without alternative sources of income, as is the case according to this study. The minimum wage can be legal; however, it cannot be equated to a living wage.

The minimum wage is not the sole responsibility of the national government because the price-setting practices of global supermarkets have an impact level of this wage. Additionally, some countries use their low minimum wages as a strategy for attracting foreign direct investment and trade with multinational companies. This study shows that inclusive development can be achieved through an overhaul of the current global trading system and finding a more collective empowerment policy approach. This approach, however, goes against the principles of the free trade model, which advocates the 'survival of the fittest' rather than a bottom-up approach to empower more people, not just a few big businesses and permanent workers that are mostly male.

### 11.4.4 Feminist Analysis in the South African Apple Value Chain

The ILO's Decent Work Agenda needs to be cognizant of the broader systems of power (such as capitalism and patriarchy) that subjugate groups of people, such as women employed in the production segments of many GCs. This study has shown that female farm workers were the most vulnerable farm workers on the selected apple farms in the Langkloof Valley because they were mostly employed on seasonal contracts and experienced social downgrading from participating in the global apple value chain. This finding reflects long-standing discrimination (by sex) that has remained in the agricultural sector of South Africa since its inception (Devereux, 2020; Kritzinger and Vorster, 1996; Marcus, 1989; Visser and Ferrer, 2015). Greenberg's (2013) study reinforced findings that have long existed in the South African agricultural sector, that female workers are concentrated in lower-paid, more fragmented and insecure employment. Future research in the apple value chain of South Africa may apply a Feminist approach, guided by an interpretivist philosophy, to the study of female farm workers and those who are land reform beneficiaries as well.

A study of this nature could provide greater insights to uncover a holistic account of females employed on apple farms in the Langkloof Valley or other apple-producing regions in South Africa. Findings from such a study could help policymakers reduce the vulnerability of female farm workers and empower them in diverse ways. Nevertheless, this thesis has shown that the profit-obsessed buyer-driven global apple value chain with market forms of governance produces uneven outcomes for the selected apple farmers and farm workers from the Langkloof Valley. The positionality and economic class of the participants in this study influenced their outcomes. This study has shown that apple producers have chosen a mixed approach to addressing the demands of global supermarkets, which includes economic upgrading, social upgrading and social downgrading (Milberg and Winkler, 2011). However, unlike Milberg and Winkler (2011), this study has gone beneath the tip of the 'iceberg' and shown the role of vertical and horizontal profit-driven trade relations in producing these outcomes.

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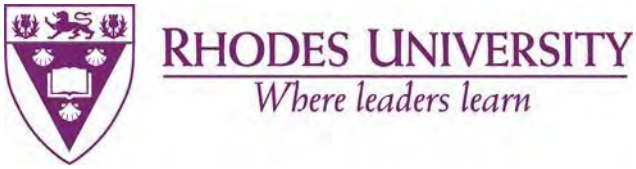
# APPENDIX 1 - FARMER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE




## LANGKLOOF VALLEY FARMER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### SECTION A: INTRODUCTION

**Respondent Details**

| | |
|---|---|
| First name | |
| Surname | |
| Position / Job title | |

**Contact details**

| | |
|---|---|
| Cell phone number | |

**Interview Details**

| | |
|---|---|
| Place of Interview | |
| Date of interview | __ __/__ __/201__ |
| Interview start time | __ __:__ __ |
| Interview finish time | |

## SECTION B: BASIC DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

What is your age?

What is your gender? (Male or female)

What population group do you belong to?

What is your nationality?

## SECTION C: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Where were you born and raised?

What is your guardian's highest level of education?

What was your guardian's employment or career when you were growing up?

What is your educational background?

What is your employment history prior to managing your current organization?

## SECTION D: CURRENT ORGANIZATION

### Overview of the business

What is the name of the organization you lead?

What is the ownership structure of this organization?

What is your role within the organization? (What does it entail?)

What is the core business of this organization? (Describe your entire production process of your organization.)

Describe the history of this organization.

Provide a description of the different divisions in your organization. (List and describe the functions in each division).

Describe your input costs. (What are your highest input costs and why?)

How long is your production cycle? (What happens on and off-season?)

Where and how do you secure capital to fund your production every year?

### Value Chain

Please describe the value chain that your organization is a part of. (Describe your organization's role in this value chain)

Describe the governance structure of the value chain that you are participating in.
Describe the relationship between your organization and the international buyers. (What is the price negotiation process?)
Describe your relationship with the government. (What do you think about their position regarding agriculture?)
Is your organization part of an industry association? (Describe the nature of the relationship between your organization and industry associations)

Which service providers does your organization? (List and explain their input in your overall production process)

Do labour inspectors from the Department of Labour visit your organization? (Describe the nature of their visit)
Do labour inspectors from the SIZA visit your organization? (Describe the nature of their visit)
Describe the public accreditation that takes place (through the PPECB) at your organization.
Describe the private accreditation that takes place at your organization. (How regular?)
Describe the different ways that your business has grown since its inception. (Product, process, functional and intersectoral upgrading?)
What does it take for an organization to grow to the level of your current organization?
What is your opinion on mechanization and the use of technologies in apple production?

**Workers**

Describe the organogram?
How many people are employed in this packhouse?
How are workers monitored in your organization?
How many supervisors do you have working in the packhouse?
How do they become supervisors?
How do you ensure maximum productivity from your workers? (Discuss)
Is there a trade union at your organization? (Is it effective?)
Is there any other platform available in your organization for workers to express their grievances? (Is it effective?)

Have you had any strikes in your organization (What are your opinions on strikes?)
What is your opinion on the minimum wage for farm workers?
Do you give your workers bonuses?
Do your workers have opportunities to grow within your organization?
Do you adhere to the Occupational Health and Safety Act in your organization? (Do you have toilets and water basins for washing hands, drinking water for your workers and protective clothing?)

What is your opinion of the current Land Reform programme in South Africa? (Is it necessary? How should it be rolled out?)
Do you want to contribute anything else regarding your organization, value chain, workers or anything?

# APPENDIX 2 - LAND REFORM FARMERS INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

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## LANGKLOOF VALLEY LAND REFORM BENEFICIARIES INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### SECTION A: INTRODUCTION

**Respondent Details**

| | |
|---|---|
| First name | |
| Surname | |
| Position / Job title | |

**Contact details**

| | |
|---|---|
| Home address | |
| Work telephone number | |
| Household telephone number | |
| Cell phone number | |

**Interview Details**

| | |
|---|---|
| Place of Interview | |
| Date of interview | __ __/__ __/201__ |

| | |
|---|---|
| Interview start time | __ __:__ __ |
| Interview finish time | __ __:__ __ |

**SECTION B: BASIC DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

What is your age?

| | |
|---|---|
| 18-30 | 1 |
| 31-50 | 2 |
| 51> | 3 |

What is your gender?

| | |
|---|---|
| Male | 1 |
| Female | 2 |

What population group do you belong to?

| | |
|---|---|
| Black | 1 |
| Coloured | 2 |
| White | 3 |
| Asian | 4 |

What is your nationality?

| | |
|---|---|
| South African | 1 |
| Zimbabwean | 2 |
| Other country | 3 |

What is your current marital status?

| | |
|---|---|
| Married | 1 |
| Single | 2 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Divorced | 3 |
| Widowed | 4 |

How would you describe your current health status?

| | |
|---|---|
| Healthy | 1 |
| Not healthy | 2 |

**SECTION C: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Place of origin?

| | |
|---|---|
| Eastern Cape | 1 |
| Western Cape | 2 |
| Free State | 3 |
| Kwa Zulu Natal | 4 |
| Gauteng | 5 |
| Zimbabwe | 6 |

Places of origin in the Eastern Cape?

| | |
|---|---|
| Langkloof Valley | 1 |
| Outside Langkloof | 2 |

Describe the area where you spent your formative years. (i.e. the economy; the labour market; the quality of public services; crime; unemployment etc)

Describe the type of dwelling you grew up in. (Was it a brick house, a flat or a traditional dwelling? How many rooms did it have?)

What is your guardian/s' highest level of education? (why did they stop at this level?)

| | |
|---|---|
| No formal education | 1 |
| Grade 1-7 | 2 |
| Grade 8-12 | 3 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Post-school qualification | 4 |

What was your guardian/s employment?

| | |
|---|---|
| Farm work (orchards and packhouses) | 1 |
| Alternative sectors | 2 |
| Unemployed | 3 |

What are some of the main challenges that you and your family experienced when you were growing up? (Financial, emotional, health, etc.)

Describe the type of schools that you mostly attended.

What is your highest level of education? (Why did you stop at this level?)

| | |
|---|---|
| No formal education | 1 |
| Grade 1-7 | 2 |
| Grade 8-12 | 3 |
| Post-school qualification | 4 |

## SECTION D: EMPLOYMENT

### Employment history

At what age did you start working and why?

| | |
|---|---|
| 18 years old < | 1 |
| 18 years old > | 2 |

Employment history prior to current job?

| | |
|---|---|
| Agriculture | 1 |
| Unemployed | 2 |
| Other sectors | 3 |

**SECTION E: FARMING**

When and how did you get into farming?
How big is your farm (in hectares)?
How long has this farm been in operation?
How many people do you employ (what are their positions), and how many do you employ off-season & during the season?
Do you pay them the minimum wage?
How did you secure this farm (land restitution/redistribution/tenure)?
What is the ownership structure of the farm (is it group ownership/share scheme/trust)?
What do you farm or rather what is the core function of your farm?
Where and how do you secure the capital to fund the farm/farming activities? Where do get your farming inputs i.e. fertiliser, tractor etc (who funds them)?

Describe your production season (no. of months/when in the year) and what are your biggest input costs (top three)?
How many hectares do you actually farm (percentage of land where farming takes place)? Has your business grown since you started farming i.e. machinery, trade relationships etc.? (If yes, how)
In what areas do you still want your business to grow?
Who packs your apples for you? (and how do you fund the packing process)?
Do you get support from the government (if yes, what kind of support and is it regular)?
What is your relationship with the white farmers in the Langkloof?
What are the main challenges you experience as a farmer and why (list a few)?
Who is your target market (who do you supply to) and do you secure those contracts (intermediaries…or)?
Who does the marketing for you?
Would you say that your business is profitable?
What role do you think the government can play in assisting farmers in the apple industry?

# APPENDIX 3 - FARM WORKER QUESTIONNAIRE

RHODES UNIVERSITY
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## LANGKLOOF VALLEY LAND FARM WORKER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### SECTION A: INTRODUCTION

**Respondent Details**

| | |
|---|---|
| First name | |
| Surname | |
| Position / Job title | |

**Contact details**

| | |
|---|---|
| Home address | |
| Work telephone number | |
| Household telephone number | |
| Cell phone number | |

**Interview Details**

| | |
|---|---|
| Place of Interview | |
| Date of interview | __ __/__ __/201__ |
| Interview start time | __ __:__ __ |

| | |
|---|---|
| Interview finish time | __ __:__ __ |

## SECTION B: BASIC DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

What is your age?

| | |
|---|---|
| 18-30 | |
| 31-50 | |
| 51> | |

What is your gender?

| | |
|---|---|
| Male | |
| Female | |

What population group do you belong to?

| | |
|---|---|
| Black | |
| Coloured | |
| White | |
| Asian | |

What is your nationality?

| | |
|---|---|
| South African | |
| Zimbabwean | |
| Other country | |

## SECTION C: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Place of origin?

| | |
|---|---|
| Eastern Cape | |
| Western Cape | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Free State | |
| Kwa Zulu Natal | |
| Gauteng | |
| Zimbabwe | |

Places of origin in the Eastern Cape?

| | |
|---|---|
| Langkloof Valley | |
| Outside Langkloof | |

Describe the area where you spent your formative years. (The economy; the labour market; the quality of public services; crime; unemployment etc)

Describe the type of dwelling you grew up in. (Brick, zink or wood; availability of water and electricity?)

Who raised you and how many people lived in the household you grew up in? (List and explain their relation to you)

What is your guardian/s' highest level of education? (Why did they stop at this level?)

| | |
|---|---|
| No formal education | |
| Grade 1-7 | |
| Grade 8-12 | |
| Post-school qualification | |

Describe the types of schools that your guardian/s attended.

What was your guardian/s employment or career?

| | |
|---|---|
| Farm work (orchards and packhouses) | |
| Alternative sectors | |
| Unemployed | |

What are some of the main challenges that you and your family experienced when you were growing up? (Financial, emotional, health, etc.)

What type of schools did you mostly attend?

What is your highest level of education? (Why did you stop at this level?)

| | |
|---|---|
| No formal education | |
| Grade 1-7 | |
| Grade 8-12 | |
| Post-school qualification | |

## SECTION D: EMPLOYMENT

### Employment history

At what age did you start working and why?

| | |
|---|---|
| 18 years old < | |
| 18 years old > | |

Employment history prior to the current job?

| | |
|---|---|
| Agriculture | |
| Unemployed | |
| Other sectors | |

When did you start working for your current employer and what factors influenced this decision? (How were you able to secure your current job?)

Was it easy or difficult to secure your current job?

| | |
|---|---|
| Easy | |
| Difficult | |

What is the most effective way of securing employment in the Langkloof Valley?

| | |
|---|---|
| Personal connections | |
| Experience and employment record | |
| Bribery | |
| Apply at the organization | |

**Description of your current place of employment**

Have you seen labour brokers operating in the Langkloof Valley? (if yes, explain what you saw)

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

What is the name of the organization that you are employed in?

Describe the organization where you are currently employed.

Do you think your organization is profitable? (Why do you think this?)

**Employment conditions**

What is your job position?

| | |
|---|---|
| General Worker | |
| Box Packer | |
| Field Worker | |
| Driver | |
| Sorter | |
| Supervisor | |
| Pallet Packer | |
| Chemical Sprayer | |
| Scanner | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Quality Control | |
| Cleaner | |
| Specialist tree planter | |

Please describe your current job position and what it entails.

What is your employment status?

| | |
|---|---|
| Permanent | |
| Seasonal | |
| Contract | |

How are decisions made in your workplace? (Do workers have a say in the decision-making processes about work?)

How are workers monitored in your organization?

| | |
|---|---|
| Target System | |
| Supervisors | |
| Piece Rate | |
| Quality Control | |

Did you receive training for your current job? (If yes, describe the training process?)

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

How long was your training?

| | |
|---|---|
| 3 days < | |
| 3 days > | |

Are there opportunities for workers to upgrade their skills at your place of work? (If yes, describe this process)

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Do you have a signed written contract of employment?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Have you read your employment contract? (If no, explain why not)

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

How many days do you normally work per week?

How many hours do you work per day? (Do you think these working hours are fair?)

How many breaks do you get per day?

How many hours do you work per week?

| | |
|---|---|
| 45 hours < | |
| 45 hours > | |

Do you get paid for working overtime?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Do you work on weekends or public holidays? (If so, how many hours do you work and are you compensated for this?)

How many leave days are you allowed per year? (Is it paid leave?)

How do you get to and from work? (If you use a vehicle, then how would you describe the condition of this transport? How much do you pay for it?)

**Workplace health and safety**

Does your place of employment have a visible health and safety policy? (If yes, describe where it is positioned and what is in it?)

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Would you describe your workplace as safe?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Would you describe your workplace as hygienic?

Are there first aid services available at your place of work?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Do mobile clinics visit your place of work?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Is there drinking water available for drinking at your place of work?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Are there toilets and places to wash your hands at your place of work?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Do you receive protective clothing from your employer?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Have you seen labour inspectors from the Department of Labour visiting your place of employment?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Have you ever seen inspectors from SIZA visiting your workplace?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Do you feel like your rights as a worker (and as a human being) are respected in the organization that you currently work for?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

**Remuneration and income**

How much do you get paid per month?

| | |
|---|---|
| R3240 < | |
| R3240> | |

Are you satisfied with your monthly wages?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Do you get a payslip with every payment? (If not, explain why you think this is the case)

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

What monthly expenses does your wage cover?

| | |
|---|---|
| Household expenses (groceries, electricity, paraffin) | |
| Policies (funeral, life insurance etc.) | |
| School fees | |
| Clothes | |
| Stokvel | |
| Other (entertainment) | |

Are you able to save money (from your wage) for future purposes?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Are you aware of the minimum wage for farm workers? (If yes, explain what you think about it)

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Do you have any alternative source/s of income besides your wage?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

What is your alternative source of income?

| | |
|---|---|
| Child grant | |
| Family member/spouse/ acquaintances | |
| Selling goods | |
| Pension grant | |
| Loans | |
| Other | |

**Security**

Are you contributing to a pension fund and a funeral cover?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Do you receive any form of medical cover from your employer? (If so, explain how it works)

Do you contribute to the UIF? (If yes, describe the claiming process)

Do you feel secure in your job?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Do you receive an end-of-year bonus? (If so, describe it)

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

How do you survive off-season?

Have you had an opportunity to train for a better-paying specialist job?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

What is the highest level you can go as a farm worker in your organization?

| | |
|---|---|
| Supervisor | |
| Permanent worker (specialist) | |
| Management | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Owner | |

Are promotions open for all workers in your organization?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

**Rights at work and social dialogue**

Do you feel like your rights as a worker (and as a human being) are respected in the organization that you currently work for?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Are you a member of a trade union?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Is the trade union effective?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Are you a member of a workers' committee at your place of work?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Is the workers' committee effective?

Has there been a strike at your place of work? (If so, describe)

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Was the strike effective?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Do you know any external that cater to farm worker grievances in the Langkloof area?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

List the external organizations that assist farm workers in the Langkloof Valley?

Have you seen any children working on the farms in this area?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

## SECTION E: HOUSEHOLD AND LIVELIHOODS

Place of residence?

| | |
|---|---|
| On-farm | |
| Off-farm | |

Would you prefer to live on or off the farm? Why?

| | |
|---|---|
| On-farm | |
| Off-farm | |

How many people live in your household? (Describe each of their relationship to you and their current occupations)

What type of dwelling do you live in?

| | |
|---|---|
| Brick House | |
| Zink/wood | |
| Mud | |

Who owns the house that you are living in?

| | |
|---|---|
| Farmer | |
| Farm worker | |
| Relative, partner or acquaintance | |
| Rent | |

Do you have access to electricity?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Do you have access to water?

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Do you own a plot of land for agricultural activities? (If so, describe it)

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | |
| No | |

Is there any other way you secure your livelihood that you have not mentioned?

How many people reside in your household?

| | |
|---|---|
| 3 people < | |
| 3 people > | |

Do you have the following in working order?

| | |
|---|---|
| Stove | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Cell phone | |
| TV | |
| Refrigerator | |
| Satellite dish | |
| Washing machine | |
| DVD | |
| Radio | |
| Vacuum cleaner | |
| Computer | |
| Car | |

## APPENDIX 4 – VOLUNTEERS AT THE ANC OFFICE IN JOUBERTINA INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

RHODES UNIVERSITY
*Where leaders learn*

# LANGKLOOF VALLEY INTERVIEW SCHEDULE ANC OFFICE REPRESENTATIVES

### SECTION A: INTRODUCTION

**Respondent Details**

| | |
|---|---|
| First name | |
| Surname | |
| Position / Job title | |

**Contact details**

| | |
|---|---|
| Cell phone number | |

**Interview Details**

| | |
|---|---|
| Place of Interview | |
| Date of interview | __ __/__ __/201__ |
| Interview start time | __ __:__ __ |
| Interview finish time | __ __:__ __ |

## SECTION B: BASIC DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

What is your age?

What is your gender? (Male or female)

What population group do you belong to? (Black, White, Coloured, Indian)

What is your nationality? (South African or other)

## SECTION C: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Where were you born and raised?

Describe this area?

What is your educational background?

What is your employment background?

## SECTION D: THE ANC OFFICE IN JOUBERTINA

When and why did you start working as a volunteer at the ANC office?

What is the mandate of the ANC office?

What is the relationship between the farmers in this area and the ANC office?

Describe your approach to dealing with farm worker cases from the apple farms in the area.

What are the most reported cases to your office? (Explain and give example of some of the cases that you have dealt with)

Do you ever make farm visits? (What are the conditions on the farms when you visit?)

What do you think are the biggest challenges facing farm workers in the apple industry in the Langkloof Valley? (Discuss)

# APPENDIX 5 – CCMA REFERRALS BY SECTOR 2018

**REFERRALS BY SECTOR**

01 January 2018 to 31 December 2018

| Region | Sector | Count |
|---|---|---|
| ECPE | Business/Professional services | 3159 |
| ECPE | Safety/Security (private) | 1115 |
| ECPE | Retail | 933 |
| ECPE | Building/Construction | 812 |
| ECPE | Domestic | 452 |
| ECPE | Food/Beverage (manufacture & processing) | 393 |
| ECPE | Agriculture/Farming | 362 |
| ECPE | Transport (private) | 191 |
| ECPE | Educators (private) | 177 |
| ECPE | Contract cleaning | 158 |
| ECPE | Motor | 107 |
| ECPE | Restaurant/Catering | 86 |
| ECPE | Entertainment/Leisure | 76 |
| ECPE | Fishing | 70 |
| ECPE | Health (private) | 69 |
| ECPE | Rubber/Tyre (manufacture) | 65 |
| ECPE | Hotel | 62 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ECPE | Municipality/Local Government | 61 |
| ECPE | Banking/Finance | 49 |
| ECPE | Motor (manufacture) | 36 |
| ECPE | Waste Recycling | 29 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ECPE | Electrical | 28 |
| ECPE | Metal | 23 |
| ECPE | Hairdressing | 19 |
| ECPE | Religious/Community Service | 17 |
| ECPE | Paper/Printing/Packaging | 16 |
| ECPE | Post Office | 14 |
| ECPE | Transnet | 14 |
| ECPE | Chemical | 11 |
| ECPE | Cleaning/Laundry | 10 |
| ECPE | Mining | 10 |
| ECPE | Furniture (manufacture) | 9 |
| ECPE | Legal/Paralegal | 9 |
| ECPE | Public Health & Social Development | 9 |
| ECPE | Public Education | 9 |
| ECPE | Distribution/Warehousing | 8 |
| ECPE | Public Service (General) | 7 |
| ECPE | Public Safety & Security | 7 |
| ECPE | Trade Union | 6 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ECPE | Civil engineering | 6 |
| ECPE | Pharmaceutical (manufacture) | 6 |
| ECPE | Retirement Village | 6 |
| ECPE | Clothing/Textile (manufacture) | 6 |
| ECPE | Telecommunications | 5 |
| ECPE | Clothing Manufacturing | 4 |
| ECPE | Road Freight | 4 |
| ECPE | Marketing/Public Relations | 4 |
| ECPE | Wholesale | 4 |
| ECPE | Leather | 3 |
| ECPE | Electricity/Gas/Water | 3 |
| ECPE | Glass Manufacturing and Retail | 3 |
| ECPE | Bargaining Council | 3 |
| ECPE | Prisons (public) | 3 |
| ECPE | Non-educators (private) | 3 |
| ECPE | Wood and Paper | 2 |
| ECPE | Communications | 2 |
| ECPE | Computing | 2 |
| ECPE | Parliament (national) | 2 |
| ECPE | Information and communications technology | 2 |
| ECPE | Justice | 1 |
| ECPE | Media (private) | 1 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ECPE | | 1 |
| ECPE | Public Health & Welfare | 1 |
| ECPE | Office of the President | 1 |
| ECPE | Import/Export | 1 |
| ECPE | Manufacturing | 1 |
| ECPE | Premier's office | 1 |
| ECPE | Animal care | 1 |
| | **Total** | **8770** |

# APPENDIX 6 - CCMA REFERRALS BY SECTOR 2019

**REFERRALS BY SECTOR**

01 January 2019 to 13 March 2019

| Region | Sector | Count |
|---|---|---|
| ECPE | Business/Professional services | 778 |
| ECPE | Safety/Security (private) | 241 |
| ECPE | Retail | 140 |
| ECPE | Building/Construction | 116 |
| ECPE | Domestic | 91 |
| ECPE | Agriculture/Farming | 70 |
| ECPE | Food/Beverage (manufacture & processing) | 62 |
| ECPE | Transport (private) | 36 |
| ECPE | Restaurant/Catering | 16 |
| ECPE | Educators (private) | 15 |
| ECPE | Motor | 14 |
| ECPE | Rubber/Tyre (manufacture) | 12 |
| ECPE | Hotel | 12 |
| ECPE | Contract cleaning | 10 |
| ECPE | Health (private) | 9 |
| ECPE | Public Education | 9 |
| ECPE | Municipality/Local Government | 8 |
| ECPE | Motor (manufacture) | 6 |
| ECPE | Banking/Finance | 6 |
| ECPE | Public Service (General) | 4 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ECPE | Fishing | 4 |
| ECPE | Electrical | 4 |
| ECPE | Public Service & Administration | 3 |
| ECPE | Marketing/Public Relations | 3 |
| ECPE | Entertainment/Leisure | 3 |
| ECPE | Clothing/Textile (manufacture) | 3 |
| ECPE | Wholesale | 3 |
| ECPE | Civil engineering | 2 |
| ECPE | Chemical | 2 |
| ECPE | Post Office | 2 |
| ECPE | Public Health & Social Development | 2 |
| ECPE | Distribution/Warehousing | 2 |
| ECPE | Road Freight | 2 |
| ECPE | Paper/Printing/Packaging | 2 |
| ECPE | Manufacturing | 2 |
| ECPE | Import/Export | 2 |
| ECPE | Metal | 2 |
| ECPE | Non-educators (private) | 2 |
| ECPE | Cleaning/Laundry | 1 |
| ECPE | Waste Recycling | 1 |
| ECPE | Mining | 1 |
| ECPE | Public Health & Welfare | 1 |
| ECPE | Machine manufacturing | 1 |
| ECPE | Communications | 1 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ECPE | Religious/Community Service | 1 |
| ECPE | Hairdressing | 1 |
| ECPE | Animal care | 1 |
| ECPE | Telecommunications | 1 |
| ECPE | Transnet | 1 |
| | **Total** | **1711** |

# ARBITRATION AWARD

Case Number: _____

Commissioner:

Date of Award:

In the **ARBITRATION** between

_____

(Applicant)

And

_____

(Respondent)

**Applicant's representative: In Person**

Respondent's address: Telefax:

Telephone:

E-mail:

Applicant's address:

Telephone:

E-mail:

**Respondent's representative: Mr……**

*Telefax:*

***DETAILS OF HEARING AND REPRESENTATION***

1. *The matter was set down for a Con/Arb hearing on 17 April 2018 at the offices of the Municipality in Joubertina under the auspices of the CCMA. The Applicant, Mr…., attended in person and he represented himself. The Respondent, ……, was represented by its director Mr……. The parties could not reach any resolution in respect of the conciliation process. A certificate of nonresolution was issued and the matter proceeded to arbitration. The process were manually and electronically recorded. The parties submitted bundles of documents and reference to the Applicant's bundle are preceded by the letter "A" and the Respondent's bundle by the letter "B".*

***ISSUE TO BE DECIDED***

2. *I am required to determine whether the Applicant was dismissed and, if so, whether the dismissal was procedurally and substantively unfair.*

***BACKGROUND TO THE DISPUTE***

3. *The Applicant was employed by the Respondent as a general worker since 2014. He last worked on Wednesday 7 March 2018. It is common cause that he went to court on Thursday 8 March 2018. He earned a salary of R140.00 per day paid on a forth night basis.*

4. *The relief sought by the Applicant is compensation.*

***SURVEY OF EVIDENCE AND ARGUMENT***
***Applicant's evidence***

5. *I have considered all the evidence and argument, but because the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 ("LRA") requires only brief reasons (section 138(7) of the LRA), I have only referred to the evidence and argument that I regard as necessary to substantiate my findings and the determination of the dispute.*

6. *The Applicant testified as follows. On Thursday 8 March 2018 he went to court. On Friday 9 March 2018 he went to work to collect his salary and pay slip. At that time the employer did not mention anything about resignation. He received his salary and he went home. On Monday 12 March 2018, his grandmother was sick and he was the only one at home therefore he could not attend to work. On Tuesday 13 March 2018 he went to work and he informed his employer, Mr…., the reason why he was not at work on Monday 12 March 2018. Mr… .then said to him that he resigned on 7 March 2017 and that his name was no longer on the system. Mr….further said that he should wait for Mr… wife to make sure whether he was on the system or not. He then waited. Breakfast passed and Mr….. called him. Mr…said to him that Mr…. no longer need him because he already employed someone in his place. Mr… further said that he would let him know when he need someone. He recently learned that Mr….employed someone in his place. He believe that he was dismissed because he still waits to hear from Mr…as to when he should return to work.*

7. *During cross examination the Applicant stated as follows. On Tuesday 13 March 2018 Mr….. informed him that he had no work for him anymore and that he had resigned. He in turn informed Mr….. that he never resigned. It was put to the Applicant that on 7 March 2018 he informed Ms…. that he would be finishing and that she should inform the office to get his money ready. The Applicant stated that he never told Ms… this. On Friday 9 March 2018 he did not work because all employees received their salaries and they were all discharged at 09h00AM.*

8. *The week after 13 March 2018 he went to the ANC offices to report his case. The ANC official send him back to the employer to request the UI19 form because they wanted to see the reason for the termination.*

***Applicant's witness: Mr ……***

9. *Mr…..testified as follows. He serves as a community leader. At the constituency office he usually assist people with CCMA cases. He was at the office when the Applicant arrived. The Applicant informed him that the employer said that he resigned but he never resigned. The Applicant also informed that he went to work and the employer told him that there was no work for him. He informed the Applicant to go back to the employer and to request the UI19 form in order to see what appear on the on UI19 form. This was the week after 13 March 2018. The Applicant went to the employer and he brought the UI19 to the constituency office. The UI19 form reflects that the Applicant resigned but he never submitted any resignation letter to say that he has contractually resigned.*

***Respondent's case Respondent's first witness: Mr.….***

10. *Mr…… testified as follows. On 7 March 2018, in the middle of the day, the Applicant informed Ms….., the employees' committee representative, that she should inform the office that he would work his last day. ……conveyed the message to him and his wife. …..words was; "he would finish and he want all his money". It meant that he wanted his leave and holiday monies. He was surprise about the sudden resignation. He informed Natalie that the Applicant must submit his resignation but the employer did not received any resignation letter from him. The employer then drafted a resignation letter but he did not signed it. The resignation was a verbal notice and instruction from the Applicant through the committee member which was brought to the office. There was no mention made about any notice period. It was with immediate effect. He was under the impression that the Applicant had resigned because that is what he was told by Ms…... The employer accepted his resignation. On Tuesday 13 March 2018 when the Applicant came to work he informed him that he resigned and that the employer has employed someone else in his place. He informed the Applicant that the employer did not have work for him but if a vacancy becomes open he would inform the Applicant.*

11. *During cross examination it was put to Mr….. that on 7 March 2018 the Applicant worked throughout the entire day and Mr……did not asked the Applicant anything about resignation. Mr Murray stated that he asked Ms… about it. It was further put to Mr……that he should have asked the Applicant personally since no letter of resignation was submitted and also on the Friday 9 March 2018 when the Applicant received his pay slip nothing was mentioned about resignation. Mr….. stated that he was surprised and he does not know why he did not asked*

*the Applicant personally. It was put to Mr….. that on 7 and 9 March 2018 he did not asked the Applicant to sign any resignation letters. Mr…..stated that he informed Natalie that the Applicant should attend to the office to sign the resignation letter.*

***Respondent's witness: Ms…..***

12. *Ms…..testified as follows. She serves as a quality controller and on the panel of the employees' committee. On 7 March 2018, it was before 10h00 in the morning when the Applicant found her in the inspection room. He said that she should inform Mr…. that he want all his money because he would finish, he resigns. She went to the office and informed Mr and Mrs…..to get the Applicant's money ready because he want to resign.*

13. *During cross examination Ms Natalie stated as follows. Mr.…did not inform her that the Applicant should sign a resignation letter. On Wednesday 7 March 2018 the Applicant requested her to inform the office that he wanted all his money on the Friday. She asked him why he was resigning and he informed her that he was going to jail the following day therefore he would not return back to work. He also said that even if he could find work at another place but he would not return back to the Respondent.*

***ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE AND ARGUMENTS***

14. *In terms of section 185 of the LRA every employee has the right not to be unfairly dismissed or to be subjected to an unfair labour practice.*

15. *Section 192 of the LRA states that in any proceedings concerning any dismissal the employee must establish the existence of the dismissal. If the existence of the dismissal is established, the employer must prove that the dismissal was fair.*

16. *The employee must prove on a balance of probabilities that dismissal took place. In order to do so it is necessary to prove that an employment relationship existed and that the relationship was terminated in accordance with section 186 of the LRA.*

17. *It is common cause that an employment relationship existed and that it was terminated. The dispute before me is how the employment relationship was terminated. There are two different versions before me. Disputes of fact are resolved by determining the credibility of the witnesses; their reliability and the probabilities of the versions. Once the credibility, reliability and the probabilities are assessed, the final step would be to determine whether the party who carried the onus of proof has successfully discharged it.*

18. *The Applicant was consistent in his evidence. He was adamant that he did not resign but that he was dismissed when he returned to work on 13 March 2018. He maintained his version throughout the arbitration hearing. The majority of his evidence was not challenged by the Respondent. In fact, the Respondent initially elected not to challenge his evidence at all although the arbitration process was fully explained to the parties. The Respondent decided to put few questions to the Applicant after being cautioned by myself as the Commissioner. The Applicant showed confidence and boldness in his testimony. His evidence was not challenged that he worked the entire day on 7 March 2018 in full view of Mr…... He was not once approached or questioned by Mr…..about the resignation. It stands uncontested that on 9 March 2018 all employees, including him, received their salaries and were discharged at 09h00AM and again no mention was made about any resignation. It was not contested that the Applicant's grandmother was sick on 12 March 2018. It is common cause that the Applicant went to work on 13 March 2018 and he was informed that there was no more work for him and that he was replaced. The Applicant's evidence was tabled in a chronological manner of events.*

19. *The Applicant's witness was initially an observer during the arbitration process therefore I attach very little weight to his evidence. It is however noted that his evidence was not challenged at all by the Respondent party.*

20. *There are contradictions in the Respondent's evidence which raises concerns and which effects their credibility and reliability. Mr….. and Ms…. contradicted each other in respect of the time when the Applicant resigned. Mr……stated that it happened during the middle of the day and ……stated that it happened before 10h00AM. Mr…. stated that he informed Natalie that the Applicant should sign or submit a resignation letter. Ms…..stated that Mr…. did not inform her as such. These are material contradictions. Inconsistencies are also noted in respect of Ms…… direct words to the office and what she testified at the arbitration hearing. It is common cause that there is no resignation letter submitted or signed by the Applicant. As a result there is nothing to support Mr…. version because he received second hand information from Ms….. On his own version he was surprised by the sudden resignation but he failed to take any steps to ensure that the information supplied to him was valid. He had no defence and could not answer why he failed to speak to the Applicant in person about the resignation on 7 and 9 March 2018. Since there was nothing in writing from the Applicant and the information was conveyed to him by another person, the correct approach logically and reasonably was for Mr…..to personally speak to the Applicant. It does not make sense and it is irregular to accept a verbal resignation via another employee.*

21. *Ms…… on the other hand changed her version during cross examination and stated that the Applicant wanted all his money on Friday 9 March 2018 because he was going to jail on 8 March 2018. This does not make sense. She initially stated that he wanted all his money on 7 March 2018. However it is important to note that the Applicant did not received any monies on*

*7 March 2018 and there is no evidence to show that he insisted to receive his money on 7 March 2018. There is no evidence to show that his money was indeed prepared on 7 March 2018 as conveyed by Ms….. to the office. The evidence before me shows concerns surrounding the Respondent's versions.*

22. *The UI19 document which was submitted into evidence by the Respondent shows the termination date as 8 March 2018 which contradicts the Respondent's evidence that the Applicant resigned on 7 March 2018. It is common cause that the Applicant attended to the Magistrate' Court on 8 March 2018 and proof thereof was submitted into evidence. More questions are raised as to why the Respondent would write the termination date on the UI19 form as 8 March 2018 and at the arbitration they testified differently. The UI19 form is dated 9 March 2018 by the Respondent party. Yet when the Applicant and his witness testified that the UI19 was issued to the Applicant a week after 13 March 2018, the Respondent did not challenge this evidence at all. An inference can be drawn that an incorrect date, 9 March 2018, was written by the Respondent.*

23. *Resignation is a unilateral legal act and it must be unequivocally and unambiguously communicated to the employer party. Ms…… is not the employer party and not part of the management of the employer party. On 13 March 2018 was the first time that the resignation issue was conversed between the Applicant and the Respondent party. At that point in time the issue was confusing and perplexed because according to the Applicant he did not resign and according to the Respondent he resigned as informed by Ms….. Since the issue at that stage was ambiguous and unclear, the parties could have easily resolved the matter to eliminate the uncertainty. In assessing the probabilities, i.e. whose version is more probable, I considered all the evidence and I am not persuaded by the Respondent's evidence that the Applicant resigned on 7 March 2018 considering its contradictions and the short period between 7 – 13 March 2018. It is common cause that the Applicant was at work on 7 March 2018; he was at court on 8 March 2018; he received his salary on 9 March 2018; it is not disputed that his grandmother was sick on 12 March 2018. If the Respondent's version was true, the Applicant would have insisted on his salary on 7 March 2018. The Respondent gave minimum evidence and was hesitant to challenge the Applicant's evidence. Considering all of the above I find that the probabilities favours the Applicant that he was dismissed on 13 March 2018 when the Respondent informed him that he was replaced and that there was no more work for him. The Applicant has discharged the onus to prove the dismissal. Since the Applicant proved the existence of his dismissal, the onus shifts to the Respondent to prove that the dismissal was fair.*

24. *The Respondent must show that the dismissal was procedurally and substantively fair. A dismissal is unfair if it is not effected in accordance with a fair procedure and for a valid reason relating to the employee's conduct or capacity. The Respondent must show a justifiable reason*

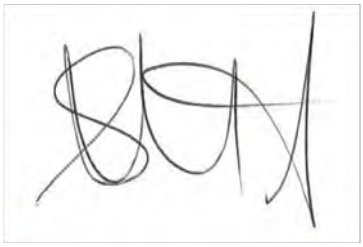
*for the termination of the Applicant's employment services. The evidence before me shows that the Applicant was verbally dismissed for no valid reason. Considering the above, I find that the Applicant's dismissal was procedurally and substantively unfair the reason being the Respondent introduced no evidence to conclude otherwise. The Respondent failed to show that the dismissal was procedurally and substantively fair.*

25. *The Applicant seek compensation as a relief. I see no reason why the Applicant should not be compensated taken into account the nature and extent of the unfairness of his dismissal. He earned R140.00 per day and he worked five days a week. Calculating a week's salary would be as follows; R140.00 x 5 = R700.00. One month's salary amounts to R3031.00 (R700.00 x 4.33). I considered that six weeks has passed since the Applicant's dismissal. His dismissal was procedurally and substantively unfair. I therefore find that three months remuneration would be a fair and equitable relief. Calculating three months' compensation would be as follows: R3031.00 x 3 = R9093.00.*

***AWARD***

26. *The dismissal of the Applicant, Mr……was procedurally and substantively unfair.*

27. *The Respondent, ……, must pay to the Applicant the amount of R9093.00 which represents compensation for three months by no later than 11 April 2018.*



Signatur_____

Commissioner ***Sharon Magdeline***

Sector: ***Agriculture/Farming***

# APPENDIX 8 – EXTRACT FROM DATA SPREADSHEET

| Name and surname | Race | Gender | Employment Status | Securing work | How to get work? | Age start working | Training | Length of training | Skills upgrading | Highest level of growth |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gill Freeman | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Apply | 14 | Yes | 2 days | No | Supervisor |
| Irene Cousins | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Apply | 15 | Yes | 1 day | Yes | Supervisor |
| Hendrika October | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Experience | 16 | Yes | 1 day | No | Supervisor |
| Caroline Conrad | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Connection | 20 | Yes | 1 day | No | Supervisor |
| Ms Florence Kaap | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Experience | 23 | Yes | 1 day | No | Supervisor |
| Nadine Nuwe | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Experience | 18 | Yes | 2 day | Yes | Supervisor |
| Brendon Kaizer | Coloured | Male | Permanent | Difficult | Experience | 18 | No | None | No | Supervisor |
| Sharney Meyer | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | connections | 21 | Yes | 2 months | No | Supervisor |
| Gill Shansein | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Apply | 18 | Yes | 1 day | Yes | Supervisor |
| Stephanie De Jong | Coloured | Female | Permanent | Difficult | Connections | 16 | Yes | 1 day | No | Supervisor |
| Martha Fortuin | Coloured | Female | Permanent | Difficult | Experience | 15 | Yes | 1 day | No | Supervisor |
| Marlene Lottering | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | connections | 21 | Yes | 1 day | No | Supervisor |
| Nomfanelo Duma | Black | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | connections | 20 | Yes | Ten minutes | No | Supervisor |
| Nomvelo Sibanda | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Connections | 18 | No | None | No | Supervisor |
| Garth Isaacs | Coloured | Male | Seasonal | Difficult | Connections | 17 | Yes | 3 days | Yes | Permanent/specialist |
| Justine Goliath | Coloured | Male | Seasonal | Not difficult | Experience | 18 | Yes | 1 hour | No | Supervisor |
| Nosipho Zinto | Coloured | female | Seasonal | Not difficult | Apply | 21 | Yes | 5 days | No | Supervisor |
| Pieter Matthews | Black | Male | Permanent | Not difficult | Experience | 18 | No | None | Yes | Permanent/specialist |
| Silvia Reinecke | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Experience | 19 | Yes | 2 days | No | Supervisor |
| Claudine Augustus | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Bribery | 20 | Yes | 1 day | No | Supervisor |
| Leroy January | Coloured | Male | Seasonal | Difficult | Bribery | 13 | Yes | 1 hour | Yes | Supervisor |
| Martina Beste | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Connections | 14 | Yes | I day | No | Supervisor |
| Jan Jaer | Coloured | Male | Permanent | Difficult | Connections | 19 | Yes | 5 days | Yes | Supervisor |
| Siphosethu Ludidi | Black | Male | Permanent | Difficult | Connections | 18 | No | None | No | Supervisor |
| Justin Davies | Coloured | Male | Permanent | Difficult | Bribery | 19 | No | None | Yes | Supervisor |
| Ayanda Nyanda | Black | Male | Permanent | Difficult | Connections | 20 | No | None | No | Supervisor |
| Calvin Xavier | Black | Male | Permanent | Difficult | Connections | 20 | No | None | No | Supervisor |
| Tendai Tshedzi | Black | Male | Permanent | Difficult | Connections | 21 | No | None | No | Supervisor |
| Jeremiah Mlenze | Black | Male | Permanent | Difficult | Connections | 19 | No | None | No | Supervisor |
| Thando Sinda | Black | Male | Permanent | Difficult | Bribery | 19 | No | None | No | Supervisor |
| Nosiviwe Dywili | Black | Female | Seasonal | Easy | Apply | 18 | No | None | No | Supervisor |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fezeka Ntamo | Black | Female | Seasonal | Not difficult | Connections | 17 | No | None | No | Supervisor |
| Jilhandre Thomas | Coloured | Male | Seasonal | Difficult | Connections | 16 | No | None | No | Supervisor |
| Foidal Devos | Coloured | Male | Permanent | Difficult | Connections | 28 | Yes | 15 days | Yes | Supervisor |
| Latishia April | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Connections | 17 | Yes | 15 days | Yes | Supervisor |
| John Roberts | Coloured | Male | Seasonal | Easy | Apply | 17 | Yes | 1 day | Yes | Supervisor |
| Sullette Meyer | Black | Female | Seasonal | Easy | Experience | 18 | Yes | 1 hour | Yes | Supervisor |
| Matthew Reinecke | Black | Male | Permanent | Difficult | Connections | 17 | Yes | 1 day | No | Permanent/specialist |
| Edeth September | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Connections | 14 | Yes | 1 hour | No | Supervisor |
| Calvin Zondani | Black | Male | Seasonal | Easy | Apply | 19 | Yes | 2 days | No | Supervisor |
| Eric Kahla | Black | Male | Contract | Easy | Apply | 19 | Yes | 1 day | Yes | Permanent/specialist |
| Bongani Jacobs | Black | Male | Seasonal | Difficult | Connections | 18 | Yes | 2 days | No | Supervisor |
| Bongani Zimbini | Coloured | Male | Permanent | Difficult | Connections | 19 | No | None | No | Supervisor |
| Louise Blaauw | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Connections | 16 | No | None | No | Supervisor |
| Nozipho Dubula | Black | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Connections | 15 | Yes | 1 day | No | Supervisor |
| Glenden Montvoer | Coloured | Male | Permanent | Difficult | Connections | 20 | Yes | 3 days | Yes | Supervisor |
| Hazely Nigels | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Connections | 21 | Yes | 2 days | No | Supervisor |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clinton Baaitjies | Coloured | Male | Seasonal | Difficult | Bribery | 16 | Yes | 1 day | No | Supervisor |
| Gershin Malinga | Coloured | Male | Seasonal | Difficult | Connections | 15 | Yes | 1 day | No | Supervisor |
| Alexandra Booi | Coloured | Male | Permanent | Difficult | Connections | 18 | Yes | 1 day | Yes | Supervisor |
| Bradley Leywer | Coloured | Male | Permanent | Difficult | Connections | 18 | Yes | 1 day | Yes | Supervisor |
| Renaldo Jantjies | Coloured | Male | Seasonal | Difficult | Bribery | 19 | Yes | 1 day | No | Supervisor |
| Brenda Bloem | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Connections | 15 | Yes | 2 day | No | Supervisor |
| Duncan Kalanga | Coloured | Male | Permanent | Difficult | Connections | 16 | No | None | No | Supervisor |
| Wilderine Kok | Coloured | Male | Seasonal | Difficult | Connections | 18 | No | None | No | Supervisor |
| Johan Minnaar | Coloured | Male | Seasonal | Difficult | Experience | 17 | No | None | No | Supervisor |
| Gilmore Mere | Coloured | Male | Permanent | Difficult | Connections | 16 | Yes | 2 days | Yes | Supervisor |
| Sonia Damons | Black | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Connections | 18 | Yes | 2 days | No | Supervisor |
| Denzel Bailey | Coloured | Male | Seasonal | Difficult | Bribery | 16 | Yes | 1 day | No | Supervisor |
| Mavis Stuurman | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Connections | 17 | Yes | 2 days | No | Supervisor |
| Marnus September | Coloured | Male | Seasonal | Difficult | Bribery | 18 | Yes | 1 day | No | Supervisor |
| Davien Willemse | Black | Male | Permanent | Difficult | Connections | 18 | Yes | 3 hours | Yes | Supervisor |
| Rochelle Van Rooyen | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Bribery | 18 | Yes | 1 day | No | Supervisor |

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| Mavis Leer | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Connections | 15 | Yes | 1 day | No | Supervisor |
| Chandre Zonke | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Connections | 18 | Yes | 1 day | No | Supervisor |
| Roseline Van Rooyen | Coloured | Female | Permanent | Difficult | Connections | 16 | Yes | 1 day | No | Supervisor |
| Jordan Daniels | Black | Male | Season | Difficult | Connections | 18 | Yes | I hour | No | Supervisor |
| Jaden Witbooi | Black | Male | Seasonal | Difficult | Connections | 18 | Yes | I hour | No | Supervisor |
| Byron Hlazo | Black | Male | Seasonal | Difficult | Connections | 18 | Yes | 40 minutes | No | Supervisor |
| Zain Booysen | Coloured | Male | Permanent | Difficult | Bribery | 17 | Yes | 1 day | Yes | Supervisor |
| Saylin Kopho | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Connections | 16 | Yes | 1 day | No | Supervisor |
| Elise Kopho | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Connections | 18 | Yes | 1 day | No | Supervisor |
| Solomon Duna | Black | Male | Permanent | Difficult | Connections | 17 | Yes | 2 days | Yes | Supervisor |
| Jilhandre Leen | Coloured | Male | Permanent | Difficult | Bribery | 17 | Yes | 1 hour | No | Supervisor |
| Royda Tima | Coloured | Female | Seasonal | Difficult | Connections | 18 | Yes | 5 days | No | Supervisor |