



## PRODUCTION TRAINEE PROGRAMME

As is the case with various elements of the agricultural and agri-processing operations, Tongaat Hulett Starch requires specialised skills in production. As the only wet-miller in South Africa these skills are not readily available and tend to involve a steep learning curve for new employees, resulting in long training periods to reach full competence.

To address this, a 24-month production training programme was initiated in June 2014 with the following objectives:

- To increase the number of competent people in various areas of the wet-milling operation.
- To increase the skills supply pipeline for production functions.
- To address the issues of youth unemployment.
- To respond to the gap created by highly experienced senior employees nearing retirement.
- To address employee transformation imperatives.
- To address the socio-economic issues of the areas in which the starch plants are situated, providing opportunities to previously disadvantaged local community member, specifically youth.

The company partnered with Youth Employment Accelerator, Harambee, who were responsible for assisting in attracting and selecting candidates as well as providing an eight-week employment readiness bridging course. While matric certificates were required, one of the key focus areas was on candidates with high learning potential. 24 trainees were selected as part of the first intake, 35 percent male and 65 percent female. They were placed across the four starch operations, four based in Bellville in Cape Town and the balance in the three Gauteng operations.

This work integrated learning programme included training in various areas of the starch operations, including SHE, HR, IT, food safety and chemistry, with trainees gaining a detailed understanding of the wet-milling process and the organisation from a financial and operational point of view. With this being the first time a fully comprehensive programme of this scale was being implemented, training modules and assessments were custom-designed to meet these outcomes. Trainees were integrated into the day-to-day operations of the plant, in collaboration with line management and other leadership structures.

The 24-month project, at a cost of about R3,7 million, was completed in 18 months and all trainees were integrated into the organisation upon completion.

