

# gW Workshop on Pesticide Alternatives

By Mr S.C. Hadebe

*groundWork's workshop on alternatives to pesticides, held from the 20th to the 22nd of April 2010, was much enjoyed by emerging farmer Mr S.C. Hadebe\**

The first of groundWork's pesticide workshops, which was held at Midrand on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of December 2009, was a real eye-opener to me. It was quite something to hear that we are living in danger.

The more recent workshop, which was held between the 20<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 2010, influenced us to change our way of farming to using fewer chemicals and beginning to practice organic farming. The field visits to Dove House and Evedon Estate were especially interesting.

## Dove House

Dove House is a small scale farm and the family earns a living out of organic farming on about four hectares. They plant vegetables, herbs and fruits, fertilizing with compost and manure. The family produces a lot of produce for their own consumption and sells the balance in their shop.

Before they start planting they use a chicken and pig tractor system where they keep chickens or pigs on the plot to till the soil. They make their own compost out of grass, leaves and tree trunks and branches. They use a grass mulching system which

protects the soil, and the water in the soil, from the sun. It also reduces the weeds.

## Evedon Estate

This is a commercial organic fruit farm. It is a very big farm with fruit planted on 150 hectare fields. They produce organic fruit for export. They have all the mechanisation and equipment that you would expect on a commercial farm. For fertilisation they use kraal manure and make compost directly under the trees. Their business is successful and is growing.

## Agricultural chemicals in society

Many people are unaware that they are being affected by the horrible mess that agricultural chemicals is causing. One thing that is necessary to address the problem is to introduce safer management of containers. Chemical containers are spread all over the place and are being used by people for carrying water. The sellers of chemicals do not collect their used containers. The legislation around this is not clear – it is good for the transporting of pesticides but is not specific when it comes to collecting back unused and empty containers.

## Pesticides and safety workshop

We also workshoped how to use pesticides safely. We should try to use alternatives to pesticides. We can use natural controls such as rotating crops and intercropping, or using barrier control methods. If we have to use pesticides we should make sure that we work with them safely and try to use pesticides that are less dangerous.

We thank groundWork because these workshops have helped to change our minds and influence us to use compost and kraal manure which are both lively and safe. ✕

\* Mr Hadebe is an emerging farmer who is based in Newcastle, KwaZulu Natal. He is a member of KwaNalu which is a farmers' union in KwaZulu-Natal. He does not own a farm himself but together with nine others he lease a 200ha mixed crop farm.

Organic vegetables provide a sustainable livelihood for the family on Dove Farm.  
Picture courtesy Dove Farm <http://dovehouse.co.za>

