



BLUE SKIES



May 2016 | #123
Blue Skies Newsletter

Pelican News

School Farm Competition launches

The second Blue Skies School Farm of the Year Competition was officially launched in Ghana on the 18th of May at a ceremony held at Fotobi Junior High School. The ceremony was attended by dignitaries, special guests and staff and students of local schools. The deputy Agriculture Minister Hon Louisa Hannah Bissew who attended the event said “the government is willing and ready to help raise the image of agriculture in the country” and advised Teachers to desist from using farming as a form of punishment. This year over fifty schools are participating in the competition which encourages students at Junior High and Senior High School levels to manage and maintain a school farm and compete against other schools to be crowned the School Farm of the Year. The award ceremony will be held in December.



Above: scenes from the School Farm Competition launch held at Fotobi School

Albert Heijn winners see Blue Skies



Blue Skies Ghana hosted a three day trip of a lifetime for winners of competition held by Albert Heijn for customers and store managers. In total three customer winners and their partners and two winning store managers visited Ghana where they toured the Blue Skies factory and farms and saw local Foundation projects and tourist attractions. The group are pictured above.



www.twitter.com/blueskiesfruit



Veg farm project yields first greens

An update on the Blue Skies Vegetable Farm project by Abraham Amoako Atta, National Service intern



After land preparation and transplanting, the farm began to take its form and shape. The field was segregated into several sections, each section for every crop. The crops successfully transplanted included; tomatoes, sweet pepper, hot pepper, cabbage, lettuce, cauliflower, French beans (planted in-situ), cucumber (planted in-situ).

The growth Process

After crops were transplanted, most of them suffered instant shock on the main field. This was because of the high temperatures we are experiencing now. This shock was severe in the first phase of lettuce transplanted which led to the loss of about 20% of the lettuce but with constant watering and extra care we were able to recover most of them. At this point, the cucumber, pepper (*both sweet and hot*), cabbage and tomato had already taken form and were well established.



Insect attack/ Disease /other challenges.



As it is normal with every vegetable farm, insects have made their presence known on our field, with cabbage being the most susceptible. To curb this, insecticides were introduced on the crops. This is done weekly to help minimize the activities and population of insects on the field. Temperatures lately haven't been favourable enough for our crops, high temperatures have caused a lot of "leaf

curls" almost throughout the field. Another major challenge has been inadequate rainfall in recent times and this has had a negative impact on the growth and physiological look on the crops. Through a brainstorming session we came out with several ideas on how to adequately supplement the rain water with irrigation systems. We started off with extending taps onto the field to speed up watering using watering cans and hose.

The success story

On April 12th 2016, our first harvest was made from the farm. We harvested 6 crates of fresh lettuce on our first harvest; about a week later additional 8 crates were harvested from the same field which was delivered to the kitchen directly from farm. Cucumber and spring onions were also harvested from the farm for canteen use.



Pictured: fresh vegetables being prepared and served at the canteen

Best practices identified in ethical audit



Twenty five examples of best practice were identified at a recent ethical audit at Blue Skies Ghana. They included the provision of amenities and health care for staff, the company's policies on pay, leave and training and development and even the publication of a monthly newsletter! Congratulations to all who took part in the audit and who showed Blue Skies as a shining example of a responsible business. Internal Auditor Ethel (left) is pictured above with HR Manager Emily (right).

AA score for Brazil factory



Congratulations to Flavia, Daniele and their teams on a very successful BRC audit this month in Brazil. John Currie is a very experienced auditor from NSF in the UK and conducted a very thorough audit to BRC version 7 and we achieved an AA result, which is the highest possible. John commented that Flavia's comprehension and implementation of the revisions from BRC 6 to BRC 7 was excellent, and that change has been difficult for some other businesses that he has seen. Very well done to all in Brazil! Report by Stephan Morris

Why the EU referendum matters to Blue Skies



Next month those of us in the UK will be voting to remain or leave the European Union. Many of us have not thought much about the issues or indeed whether it really matters whether we stay or quit. Some who have given it a little thought will be influenced by the immigration crisis facing Europe and Britain itself and others may have pondered the consequences on security, agriculture, the economy, trade and other subjects.

My mind turns to the impact on Blue Skies. Our brave little factories in Kent are populated by Europeans who travel freely to these shores under the EU principle of free movement between member states for employment purposes. Would we find ethnically British people who would be prepared to work so efficiently and loyally? Then there is the matter of quotas and tariffs. Again we live in a free trade zone of 28 countries; we supply five of them and our energetic sales team in Europe is determined to supply still more in the coming years. We just don't know whether we would negotiate during a prolonged exit exercise a tariff free deal with these and other states; we might. But we might not!

I am not going to list more areas that might affect our decision except to say we should not ignore the response of nations irritated by what they might perceive as British perfidy and the possibility of taking disproportionate action against us which could leave its mark for a number of years.

It is going to be a tight contest. They say the older people are going to want to "Brexit" and the young will want to stay in the club. In spite of my age, I know which way I shall vote and I hope you do too!

By Chairman and Founder, Anthony Pile

The UK's forthcoming referendum on whether or not to stay in the European Union has stirred the imaginations of many with both sides of the debate banding about fantastically misleading figures and using every opportunity to accuse the other side of deception, ignorance or doom mongering. So with the Pro European's extolling the benefits that the EU brings its members such as trade, security and the free movement of people, what is the Anti-European lobby saying? Below Stephan Morris outlines his views on the EU...

Anthony has written in this edition of Pelican News about the benefits to Blue Skies of the UK remaining in the European Union. On rare occasions, Anthony is wrong, however on this occasion I think that he is right that Blue Skies benefits from British EU membership. However I believe that the UK as a country would be better outside the European Union. I have several reasons for this belief and I will set them out briefly here.

1. The European Union has an institution called the European Commission that is responsible for initiating legislation. The European Commission is made up of people who are appointed not elected. The European Parliament who debate the legislation is made up of elected people, but it has less power than the Commission. For these reasons Democracy is weak within the European Union. Three million people signed a petition against a trade agreement with North America which the Commission refused to consider.
2. The European Union is wasteful of money, and British membership costs too much. The administration of the EU costs £10 billion every year, and the bureaucracy achieves very little that is worthwhile. The UK pays £13 billion each year to the EU and £4 billion is received from the EU. It costs the UK £9 billion every year to remain in the EU.
3. The European Union creates too many regulations and creates many regulations that are wrong. The EU bureaucracy must make regulations otherwise it does not need to exist, and it is now making regulations that citizens do not want. An example of a regulation that is wrong is that the EU says that the UK is violating the rights of prisoners by not letting them vote in parliamentary elections.
4. The European Union does not allow the UK to make some decisions about the people who live there. Foreign people living in the UK who have committed very serious crimes cannot be sent back to their own country if they have members of family in the UK because they have a right to family life.
5. The European Union is committed to ever-closer union, with the goal of a federation of states similar to the USA. This commitment has not been agreed with EU citizens, and it is probable that most EU citizens would oppose this policy.

By Stephan Morris, Group Technical Manager

The EU referendum takes place on the 23rd of June and we'll be reporting the full results in the next edition of Pelican News.

Our winning Distributor



Congratulations to Kwesi Ntow (pictured) who won our Juice Distributors Rebate competition for March and April.

Blue Skies talk at World Bank Business Forum



Blue Skies spoke at the World Bank's African Diaspora Business Forum in Washington on the 3rd of May. The forum brought together business leaders, NGO's and Government representatives to discuss how to stimulate development by engaging the African Diaspora. Simon Derrick spoke on a panel with Coca Cola, Mars and Mondelez about the Blue Skies model and how it has created an entire value chain. He also talked about some of the challenges faced by the business and what is needed to address them.

...and at GUBA Ghana Expo...



Blue Skies spoke on a panel at the GUBA Expo at Charlton Athletic football stadium this month. The Expo aims to showcase African inspired products and help entrepreneurs and startups enter the UK market. The Expo was attended by representatives from Government and the Private Sector including ASOS, the Body Shop, delegates from UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) and the UK's Ghana Trade envoy Adam Afriyie.

Foundation reaches out to local South African communities



A team from Blue Skies South Africa recently embarked on a drive to engage three communities near to its factory in Balfour in the province of Mpumalanga. The drive was part of a renewed effort to raise awareness and manage expectations of the Foundation activities so it might identify some suitable projects to undertake in 2017. Starting with a meeting with the Mayor and Councillors of the Dipaleseng Local Municipality, the team consisting of Waydu, Justice and Denzil made presentations to gatherings in the towns of Balfour, Greylingstad and Grootvlei (pictured above) where they spoke about Blue Skies, highlighted what the Foundation has achieved, and outlined the objectives of the Foundation in South Africa over the next eighteen months. The team also visited several active and prospective projects including Balfour Primary School where the Foundation has renovated a kitchen, and Isifiso Sethu Secondary School which has made an application to the Foundation. The first project ideas for 2017 will be discussed at the next Foundation Board meeting on the 7th of June. Final approval will be given in December.



New Generator arrives in Ghana



Above: One of two new Cummins generators arrives in Ghana to make the electricity that ECG (Electricity Company Ghana) fails to provide every day. Thanks to Stephan Morris for the photo and caption.

Shalaby speaks at Science and Tech Academy



In April Blue Skies Egypt was invited by the Arab Academy for Science and Technology to speak about the fresh fruit supply chain and the use of responsiveness or agile tactics in fresh produce sector. Logistics Manager Mohamed Shalaby spoke at the event. He is pictured in the middle and also celebrated his birthday in May. Happy birthday!

#SayHello



Say hello to Lindiwe Ngema, Operations Manager at Blue Skies South Africa. Lindiwe joined Blue Skies in 2013 and says she enjoys the job very much. #HelloLindiwe

