

# Quality and standards are king: An auditor's perspective

By Lynette Louw

**D**irk Bezuidenhout was involved in the livestock industry for more than 30 years, 15 of which he spent working for Afri Compliance. He was part of a team responsible for conducting specialist audits and verifying quality standards for agricultural establishments. In 2008, the Animal Feed Manufacturers Association (AFMA) adopted the AMFA Code of Conduct (CoC). Afri Compliance was contracted to serve as the independent auditing body to perform the compliance audits relating to the CoC.

Dirk was part of this process from the start. The audits entail ensuring that feed manufacturers meet regulatory requirements and quality standards set out in the CoC. In his role as an auditor, Dirk witnessed first-hand how an industry with a shared goal could succeed in meeting and sustaining the highest of standards.

## From concept to conduct

The auditing process ensures that aspects such as transparency, traceability, honest business practices, adherence to regulations, responsible raw material use, respect for human capital, the promotion of sound working conditions, and more are entrenched in feed manufacturing processes. "Ultimately the AFMA Code of Conduct logo became a mark of integrity. The entire process of manufacturing safe feed to ensure safe food means consumers can rest assured that the highest quality standards were met."

Dirk's high school career at Brits Agricultural High School (now Wagpos) in North West laid the foundation for his passion for the livestock industry. When he joined Afri Compliance after serving at Agri Inspec, he learned a lot from his colleagues, especially Herman van Zyl, whose knowledge of the feed industry served as an inspiration and enormous source of information.

Dirk is passionate about the value of maintaining high standards: "It is about much more than adhering to rules and regulations. It is also about an ethical responsibility and ensuring quality as it affects both animal and human health. The CoC assists producers in meeting their ethical obligations. Producers have very little margin for error as almost 70% of their input costs revolve around animal feed and getting their animals market-ready. They have to be able to rely on a trustworthy, well-regulated feed industry."

## Independent auditing is key

Third-party auditing, he says, ensures an independent, neutral process. "We know that state organs do not have the capacity to perform all their duties and that is where we can, and certainly do, make a difference. We strive to perform these auditing duties to the highest standards possible, and this is evident in the standard of feed manufacturing witnessed at AFMA members' facilities. AFMA members follow the correct procedures, and they have us to ensure that it remains this way. Nowadays there are even processes in place for producers to talk to their transport suppliers about the quality of the feed delivered to the farm."

During his 15 years with Afri Compliance, Dirk visited numerous sites and had to assist in establishing procedures and quality standards where it lacked. It wasn't always smooth sailing as the process had a cost implication. However, he witnessed a marked change in the attitude towards the third-party audits, and today AFMA's members are industry leaders in their respective fields. "They are proactive and responsible, and this says everything about the CoC and its goals. This is a success story worth telling, and I will always be thankful to have been a part of it."

New technologies are making compliance and audits easier, and make it easier to manage risk, especially given the fact that trade, here and globally,

require various stamps of approval before business can be conducted. "So, make AFMA your friend, as the organisation and its members are visibly committed to quality and ethical standards."

## Brendon Clement: Rising to the challenge

At 37, Brendon Clement has already made his mark in compliance auditing, and he now steps into a pivotal role at Afri Compliance, succeeding industry veteran Dirk Bezuidenhout.

Brendon's diverse academic background includes a Computer Engineering degree from the University of Pretoria and a Psychology degree (*cum laude*) from the University of Johannesburg. His technical expertise and understanding of human behaviour make him a standout professional. Qualified as an ISO Lead Auditor with a top score of 96%, he exemplifies analytical excellence.

Brendon's career began when he managed the Hanekom family farm before joining Afri Compliance in 2016. He played a key role in pre-export inspections for animal feed companies exporting to Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, and Swaziland (BLNS markets). Over the past year, he trained under Dirk Bezuidenhout and Herman van Zyl to refine his skills. Earlier this year, he accompanied Afri Compliance's leadership on audits, which confirmed his readiness for this position.

As he takes the reins, Brendon brings a fresh perspective, ensuring that Afri Compliance continues its legacy of excellence in regulatory integrity and industry standards. ❖

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