

Ripples

THE SOUTH AFRICAN
NATIONAL BOTTLED
WATER ASSOCIATION

& waves

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South African National Bottled Water Association

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Message

from the Chairman

Are we starting to enter a new phase in the bottled water industry? This question popped up in my mind after a recent interview that I had with Erika van der Merwe of Geldsake, that most interesting radio program between 5 pm and 6 pm on Radio Sonder Grense.

Two of the matters that I often deal with as Chairman of SANBWA are firstly discussing water bottling potential with owners of good quality water sources, and secondly, being interviewed either on radio, or by reporters for written articles.

When I receive a phone call from a prospective bottler, there are 2 aspects to the business that I emphasize. The first aspect is water quality. Many of the callers are farmers that are looking for a source of additional income, and they have been told that their water is excellent quality and "is the best tasting water ever!" The comment I make at this stage of the conversation is that "yes, the quality of water must be excellent, but please appreciate that there are 50 000 other farmers who also have the best tasting water in country". I then go on to explain that the quality of the final bottled product must be excellent, with no compromise, but that this only 10% of the business of bottled water. 90% of the bottled water business is packaging, marketing and distribution. If you are not able to ensure that you can sell the product to a buyer, that the packaging will entice the consumer to choose your product over another on the shelf, and that you are able to ensure that when stocks are low that your product is on site to replenish the shelf, then you will not succeed in the bottled water business. I tell the caller to go and look in the mirror and if he does not see a "smous" then he should not even start in the business, because if his heart and soul is not in those 3 factors then there is a good chance for failure.

The radio and hard-copy interviews that I have done to date have been mainly about bottled water quality. These have included bottled water versus tap water, bottled water labeling, and "is there a need for bottled water".

Now to get back to my opening paragraph and why I reckon we are entering a new phase of the industry. This interview started off with a discussion about farmers who have sources of good quality water and what are the opportunities and obstacles. So we went through the above discussions as per usual, and then the following thought struck me: this was the first interview in which the interviewer showed no