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PAARDEKLOOF OoF WILLIE KOTZE

What is the objective of this OoF?

The main objective was to improve the output of class 1 fruit. Secondary objectives included a migration to more dwarfing rootstocks and less labour intensive orchards.

What is the progress on the orchard to date?

In December 2014 we covered half of the orchard with nets to determine what the effect on the trees would be. It is still 'early days'. We only have one complete season's data. In general we get a lot higher class one packout from the orchards under nets due to sunburn reduction. In comparison with the uncovered part, the netted area has logged a 20 - 30% saving in water. We would like to analyse the records to quantify the

tonnage produced by 'good trees' and compare the OoF financially with conventional orchards. We would like to farm with trees like these in the future. The current season's crop is estimated at 100t/ha.

Lessons learnt:

- Do not grow M9 on weak/sandy soil
- Difficult to chemically overthin.
- Do not overcrop the trees at an early stage. Aim to fill the space as soon as possible.

o This is especially important for less vigorous varieties, but might be less of an issue for stronger growing scions like Gala.