

GRAYMEAD OoF STEPHEN RABE & KEITH BRADLEY

Why was this OoF established?

To test the performance of M9 under South African conditions with a view to derive the benefits reaped by international players such as precocity, fruit quality, and early bearing.

What approach did you take in the management of the orchard?

It was a complete team approach. Farming on M9 takes a different approach to farming with conventional orchards. There was a relook at how we do things. From irrigation to fertiliser, tree training, and how we prune.

Are there any preliminary results? This orchard has cumulatively produced five times more income than the conventional orchards. We broke even in this orchard in year four. So from now on it is profit. In our conventional orchards we have not recouped the cost of planting yet. So, from a financial point of view this orchard has outperformed our traditional orchards by a considerable margin.

Lessons learnt:

- There are cost implications when not filling the tree space.
- High quality nursery tree quality is crucial.
- Tree stem to scaffold branch ratios are important, so careful manipulation is key.
- Rootstock-scion combination needs to be considered in plantings.
- You need to treat this rootstock/scion combination differently to a conventional tree.
- A paradigm shift is needed as far as what you consider good tree performance.
- Possibility is higher to convert to drip due to the efficiency and shallow root system.
- Trellis needs to be a solid support structure and not a training system.



Watch video on YouTube:
<http://bit.ly/2oBMBCE>