The Beefmaster as a breed or a cross-breed offers every cattleman the opportunity to earn more income per hectare on most South African farms. This is the view of Frans Odendaal of WO Beefmasters in Vrede.

The Odendaals have been involved in cattle breeding for the last five decades. Since the introduction of Beefmaster as a breed, and by following the Lasater philosophy as a guideline, these cattle have started generating income. The most important reasons why they farm with Beefmasters are:

- **Wide gene pool:** You can never develop genes for certain traits in a breed if they do not exist in your own herd. You have to get those genes from another breed to optimise your genetic composition. The Beefmaster is a composite breed that uses the best international genes that are kept in the mix for daily improvement. The Beefmaster constitution has allowed breeders with cross-bred Brahman herds to join the breed if they mate their cattle to Beefmaster bulls. You as a farmer can start your own Beefmaster herd from an adapted cow base, and use bulls with desired traits. The Beefmaster is not a new breed and bulls with good prepotency are available. There are never-ending options at your disposal to introduce new effective genes to your herd. The chance to develop the best animal is in your own hands.

- **Cross-breeding:** Something that is extremely important when considering Beefmasters in a cross-breeding programme, is heterosis or hybrid vigour. This is defined as an increase in hybrid performance over that of purebreds. Because of their origin as a three-breed composite (commonly expressed as approximately 50% Brahman, 25% Hereford and 25% Short-horn), Beefmasters’ built-in heterosis is much higher than that of a purebred or two-way cross. This is a given and the farmer must simply seize the opportunity.

- **Brahman influence:** The *Indicus* factor is one of the most important aspects that differentiate the Beefmaster from other breeds. Every farmer will know which percentage would suit his farm. The beef market is expanding throughout Africa where adaptable, hardy cattle that are resistant to ticks and diseases, are sought after. They must be able to produce beef after having been transported. By selecting the best traits from *Bos Indicus* and *Bos Taurus*, the Beefmaster bull will pass on all these good traits to your herd’s offspring.

- **Colour:** Although the bulk of the Beefmasters tend to be red, they are not discriminated against if they are of another colour. Many of South Africa’s best cattle are slaughtered because of hide colour, which is an enormous mistake. By using the correct bull, one can breed animals with the right colour within two generations. Rather select heifers based on conformation and acquire a bull with the desired skin colour. South Africa will soon become used to the honey-coloured cattle– the sooner the better!

- **The commercial market:** More commercial farmers are buying Beefmaster bulls with great success. The breed is thriving in Southern Africa, a region where they need to beef up their cattle herds. It is predicted that demand for the breed will be much higher than supply. It would be best to acquire efficient, adaptable cattle.

We are all in the cattle industry to profit from it. The Beefmaster has all the right attributes to help you achieve it. With their constitution, the Lasater philosophy and available genetics, you will definitely notice a difference early on. We must all try to breed these superior animals and contribute to global food demands. It is never too late to buy a Beefmaster bull.

For more information, contact the Beefmaster office on 056 817 2404 or visit www.beefmastersa.co.za.