

The V.O.C. , Simon van der Stel, and the first farms at the Cape

The Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC/ Dutch East India Company), which had established the colony at the Cape of Good Hope since 1652, was under the administration of Commander Simon van der Stel from 1691-1699.

Formal agriculture was established in Stellenbosch around 1680. Farms of 60 morgen in size (51.4ha) were granted to "free-burgers (mostly Dutch, German and later Cape-born and French Huguenot).

Grain farming was the focus. In addition to the produce sold at the Cape, the farmers had to deliver one tenth of their production free of charge to the VOC. The farms fed the numerous company officials, soldiers, slaves, sailors, hospital patients, as well as the Dutch- and foreign ships calling at port.

The early grants had odd shapes, and were situated on the best land, along rivers. Disputes over boundaries and water-rights soon overwhelmed the Political Council at the Castle.

(Reference: Archaeologist, Hennie Vos: Historical Survey and Structural & Archaeological Investigations of the Historic Buildings of Diamant, 2010)