I worked as farmer at Camphill Village 'West Coast' – previously known as 'Alpha' near Atlantis about 50km north of Cape Town on the west coast from 1986 – 1996. In the late 70's and early 80's a large nuclear power station was built at Koeberg about 20 km away from Camphill West Coast. Representatives from Koeberg power station arrived in the early 90's to take milk and soil samples from the farm. They reported back to us that there were unusually high levels of Caesium 137 (Cs 137) in both milk and plant samples. Unfortunately I don't have any records of that. The farm lies on very sandy soil (effectively beach sand) which is underlain with varying thicknesses of clay strata. The sandy soil naturally results in a high degree of leaching of salts from the top-soil. Consequently the top-soil is poor in Potassium, an important plant nutrient. Potassium belongs to the Alkali earth metals – as do Sodium, Lithium and also Caesium. The people from Koeberg suggested to us that the plants were somehow taking up Caesium as an alternative to Potassium. They also suggested that the Caesium 137 – a radioactive isotope – was a product of nuclear fall-out from the Earth's atmosphere. We never followed up whether it might or might not have also been a product of the work at the nuclear power station. They recommended that we should apply Potassium fertilizer to the fields to stop the take up of Cs137. Usually farmers will apply Potassium as a salt to their fields either as KCl (Potassium Chloride) or K_2SO_4 (Potassium Sulphate). I really didn't want to use these artificially produced fertilizers as they are water-soluble and effectively 'force-feed' the plants every time they take up water.

I had been studying Rudolf Steiner's bio-dynamic (BD) agriculture course since 1987 and had become an active member of the Bio-dynamic Association in South Africa. I had also used the BD Horn manure (500) preparation quite a lot on the farm but barely used the BD compost preparations. We did however have a big compost-making programme and I realised that now was the time to really put my money where my mouth is and start using these compost preparations in earnest. I was especially motivated by the indication of Rudolf Steiner that the Yarrow preparation could support the take up and availability of Potassium in the soil and plants. So we began making all the compost preparations ourselves in the quantities we would need on the farm and applying them to the compost heaps. Some 2 or 3 years later the Koeberg people came again to take samples and reported back that the Cs137 had disappeared completely. They told me that they assumed we had taken seriously their recommendation of applying Potassium salts to our fields and didn't believe me that we hadn't. They were certainly very sceptical when I told them about the BD compost preparations.

Unfortunately I have absolutely no records at all of this but am convinced that the regular use of the BD compost preparations 'healed' the Potassium deficiency in the soil and consequently in the plants and milk.

I left Camphill 'Alpha' in 1995 and have no idea how things are on the farm today regarding Potassium deficiency.

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