

Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa welcomes new Chairman Gerrit van der Merwe

The Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA) welcomed Gerrit van der Merwe as the new Chairman of its Board for a two-year term. He is the Managing Director of ALG Estates (ALG) for the last six years.



The CGA welcomed Gerrit van der Merwe as their new Chairman.

ALG is situated in Citrusdal and comprises a number of citrus farms with a proud history. His family has been farming on the upper reaches of the Olifants River Valley for eight generations. Van der Merwe himself started doing holiday work on his father's farm at the tender age of eight – cementing a lifelong passion for citrus.

Van der Merwe has worked in the citrus industry in the US after his studies in accounting. He returned in 2008 to join the team at ALG. "Being part of a family agribusiness, I feel a great responsibility of stewardship. You must aim to leave an endeavour in a better state than how it was entrusted to you. Not just in terms of finances and assets, but also in terms of improving it by focusing on the wider community. A citrus farm, just like the citrus industry, is made up out of a collection of hard-working people, people who believe in contributing to the South African economy through working the land. It is one of my goals to make citrus more community-centred and hopefully contribute in that way."

Van der Merwe added that this sense of community and unity was on display in July last year when a devastating flood caused damage of near R500 million to growers in the Citrusdal valley. All role-players came together to rebuild and look towards the future.

CGA CEO Justin Chadwick congratulated Van der Merwe: "He brings a lot of energy and enormous experience to this essential role. He knows the business of citrus through and through. His leadership will be appreciated. This is a critical and decisive time for South African citrus. The industry made huge investments in plantings a few years ago and we are seeing crop sizes increase accordingly. Projections show we can, if all role-players work together, export an additional 100 million 15kg cartons of citrus within the next eight years. This can create 100 000 new jobs and generate billions in foreign earnings."

Van der Merwe highlighted poor logistics and market access as the two main challenges. "Our rail network and ports need to be much more efficient and unfair EU trade regulations need to be fought. These two obstacles are standing in the industry's way. As Chairman I have a team of dedicated and talented CGA board members behind me."

The outgoing Chairman, Hannes de Waal, from the Sunday's River Valley in the Eastern Cape, will now become one of two Vice Chairman.

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