

ED'S NOTE

The team at the CGA Grower Development Company spends a lot of time on the road. We travel from Limpopo to the Eastern Cape, from KwaZulu Natal to the Western Cape. On our trips, we meet a lot of citrus growers. We see the changing face of our industry up close. Some growers are new in the industry, while other are established. We sit down with them, talk, understand and make plans.

Through these interactions, it is clear that these growers contribute significantly to our country's agricultural landscape. So many black growers contribute to food security, rural development, and economic growth in their respective areas.

We travel far to support them, but they are close to our hearts. We understand their burdens and we celebrate their successes.

Sometimes we travel even further - such as recently, when a GDC delegation visited Asia Fruit Logistica in Hong Kong. As more and more black growers contribute to the export of citrus, seeking expanded market access is of vital importance. The Asian market is one that holds immense potential. Read more about that in this issue of the newsletter.

More often though, immediate concerns more close to home receive our attention. One highly valuable tool that can contribute to both food security and the transformation of the citrus industry, is farm extension services. The importance of extension services is a topic that receives attention in this edition.

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As part of the large citrus community in South Africa, the GDC shares the sorrows and joys of the people we care so much for. It is with a heavy heart that we said farewell to the beloved Eric Nohamba, a figure of importance in citrus circles.

While we are deeply saddened by the loss, we also remember how hard Eric worked for an ever-expanding and ever-transforming South African citrus landscape. It is in that spirit that we also celebrate in this newsletter the remarkable story of Majeje Citrus. A truly successful black citrus enterprise worth taking note of.

Black citrus growers are instrumental in promoting transformation and inclusivity in the agricultural sector. They challenge historical inequalities and empower marginalized communities by creating opportunities for land ownership, entrepreneurship, and skills development. By participating in the global market, black growers contribute to the diversification of the South African economy and enhance our country's reputation as a supplier of high-quality citrus.

The success of black citrus growers is essential for the long-term sustainability of the agriculture in Southern Africa. Whether near or far, sad or celebratory, the GDC helps tell the stories of a remarkable community, a community we are proud of.

MESSAGE FROM THE CGA CEO



October is the month that the citrus season winds down. It is a time of looking back and taking stock.

The 2024 citrus season has been an unusual one. There have been a number of unforeseen events. Weather factors played a big role. Drier and warmer weather resulted in generally smaller fruit sizes. Growers in Citrusdal had to face devastating floods. Frost in Limpopo had serious consequences. High winds in the Eastern Cape caused fruit to drop from the trees.

Another surprise this season was the high local juicing prices. While of course good news for growers, it did influence export volumes, and, together with the weather factors mentioned, made the downward adjustments of export projections necessary throughout the season.

However, the growth trajectory of the citrus industry is still very clear. More fruit will be coming off the trees in the next few years and we are set to export more fruit in the future. Despite the unforeseen challenges, we are still projected to export roughly the same amount of citrus as in the 2023 season. This in itself is a remarkable achievement.

Good prices for most citrus towards the end of the season certainly supplied a boost in exports.

Looking forward towards future export market, the single biggest trade issue facing citrus is the European Union's unscientific and unnecessarily trade restrictive measures on Citrus Black Spot and False Codling Moth.

These measures on imports from SA are being challenged by the South African government at the World Trade Organisation in two historic trade dispute cases. In the past couple of months, progress has been made on this front. The cases will be heard in December. Should a satisfactory outcome be reached at the WTO, it will stimulate citrus export trade significantly.

Logistics also remain a very serious concern for all growers, especially the efficiency of the container terminals at our ports. Even though there have been no major backlogs or delays at the ports this season, efficiency was low. When you are dealing with perishable products, time is of the essence. This past season we have set up information sharing channels with Transnet so that everybody could respond in real time to severe bottlenecks and problems. But this is a short-term solution. The only sustainable way to increase port efficiency is through Public Private Partnerships. Due to a court case, the private partnership introduction of an appointed private operator of Durban's Pier 2 container terminal has been delayed. This is a great disappointment, as this type of partnership is sorely needed. If rolled out with speed and success, not just in Durban but at our other ports, it could revolutionise container efficiency for our industry and create thousands of jobs and boost the agricultural economy.

While we can't control the weather, we can control logistics. And if we get it right, so many more black growers will have the opportunity to become part of South Africa's international citrus success.

As the 2024 season ends, we look towards the future – the challenges remain, but our resolve remains.



ASIA FRUIT LOGISTICA:

EXPORT MARKETS OPENING TO SOUTH AFRICAN CITRUS

The GDC recently had the privilege to attend Asia Fruit Logistica in Hong Kong. This conference is the biggest gathering of global fruit exporters to Asia, and countries such as China, Vietnam, South Korea, and India represent huge growth opportunities for South African fruit exports. The delegation of GDC officials was there to represent the growing interests of black citrus growers in South Africa, and as a testament to how this grouping has been able to commercialise their enterprises and take part in South Africa's citrus success story.

The CGA and GDC work closely with other industry partners and government to enable black farmers to participate in the export market. Black growers are increasingly becoming successful, commercial exporters of citrus. If all role-players in the government and industry unite to clear obstacles, projections estimate black citrus growers will be able to produce citrus to the equivalent of 50 million 15kg export cartons by 2032.

Earlier this year, industry and government united to address one such obstacle: unfair and unscientific trade measures placed by the European Union on SA citrus.

SA lodging a trade dispute at the World Trade Organisation on Citrus Black Spot (CBS) trade measures meant a lot to growers. One successful grower, Siseko Maqoma, in charge of Gonzano Citrus the Eastern Cape midlands, explains: "If the CBS matter is resolved once and for all, it would be incredible for our business. We export to the EU. The direct costs involved in meeting those unnecessary requirements are right crippling to many people in the industry."

Greater access for our citrus in Asia can be achieved and stimulate even more inclusive growth. That was especially clear at Asia Fruit Logistica recently.

SA citrus gained access to the Chinese market in 2004, making this year the 20th year of exports to this market. It now makes up almost 10% of our exported citrus. It shows much promise.

So does India. The SA government and the CGA are currently making strides in improving our export protocol for oranges to India.

South Korea, the Philippines, and Vietnam are also markets that hold immense promise for South African citrus.

This huge annual gathering at Asia Fruit Logistica made it clear once again that Southern African citrus has a unique appeal, valued for its freshness and quality.

The GDC plays a vital role in engaging with government on all levels – national, provincial and local. The knowledge and skillset within the GDC complement the activities of government.

And as new and larger markets can be opened, especially in Asia, black South African growers will have access and be a critical part in South Africa's citrus success story. It is in our entire economy's interest to make sure citrus succeeds.



IN MEMORIAM

ERIC NOHAMBA

It is with sadness that the GDC notes the passing of Eric Nohamba of Konzi Farm in the Eastern Cape. Nohamba has been an active commercial citrus grower in Fort Beaufort since 1993, and was a steadfast champion of black growers in the citrus industry.

Nohamba served on the Citrus Growers' Association board for six years, from 2017 to 2022, and was an active member of various working groups and committees in the Eastern Cape and nationally. He was serving on the RBX Board and on the executive of the Grower Development Chamber.

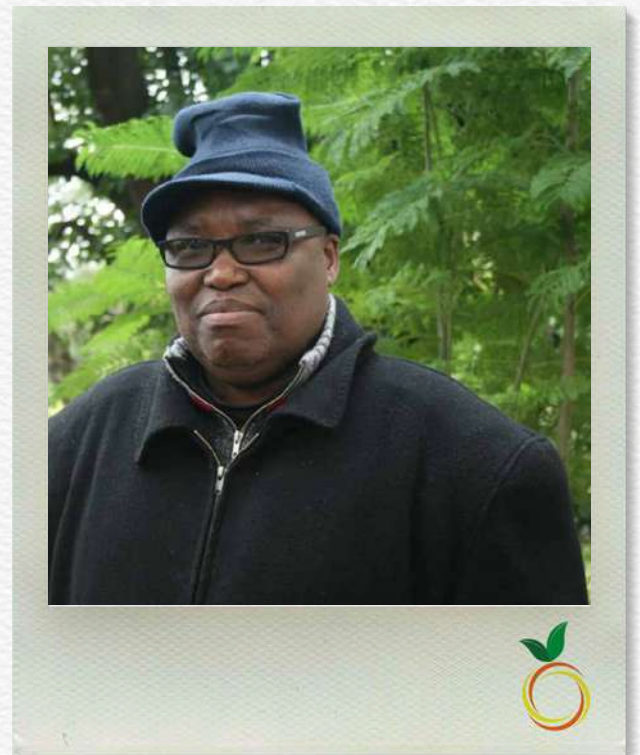
"He was a cornerstone of our community, a pillar of strength, and a source of inspiration. His passing leaves a profound sadness," said Lukhanyo Nkombisa, general manager of the Grower Development Company.

"Eric always represented his constituency with passion, had impressive expansion plans, and was always available to represent the industry. He had an infectious sense of humour, and was firm, but fair. Eric will be sorely missed, and our thoughts are with his family," said Justin Chadwick, CEO of the CGA.

After serving on the CGA board, Nohamba resigned in 2022 to spend more time on his farm.

His story starts in the 1980s. After completing a diploma in agriculture, Nohamba successfully applied for a farm under the former Ciskei's privatisation scheme in 1989. After the support programmes ceased, Konzi Farm received support from CapeSpan, which bought from Nohamba's farm, and also provided him with production loans.

The citrus industry supported Nohamba, and fruit from Konzi Farm is currently exported with the assistance of SAFPRO. Nohamba is survived by his wife and four children. Agriculture and citrus runs in the family, with his children all working in or studying to be in agriculture.





MAJEJE SITRUS: LIMPOPO COMMUNITY PROJECT A SHINING EXAMPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

Majeje Citrus, a 51% black-owned citrus company near Tzaneen, Limpopo, is a wonderful recent success story of what happens when all role players invest in the success of black farmers and local communities.

Recently, Limpopo Premier Dr Phophi Ramathuba praised the Majeje farming project during his State of the Province Address. Majeje is a prime example of how citrus farming is benefiting local traditional communities.

Founded in 2021, the company is a partnership between the Majeje Traditional Authority, Komati Group Holdings and Bruboer. The resultant Majeje Citrus company currently leases its land from the Majeje Traditional Authority. More than 450 hectares of citrus orchards have been planted on the grazing land of the Waterbok and Masala farms.

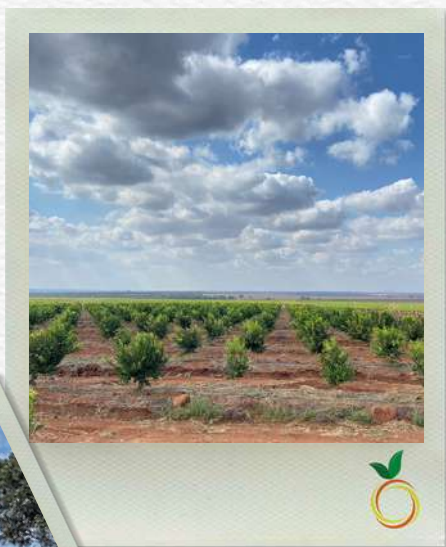
This was done without displacing the livestock, which still has plenty of land to graze in surrounding fields. The newly planted citrus orchard includes 66 hectares of oranges, 96 hectares of lemons, and 50 hectares of Star Ruby grapefruit.

To set up this ambitious project, there have been significant upgrades to the farming infrastructure, including solar plants, dams, and the refurbishment of buildings. The project is expected to reach commercial maturity in 2027.

As a result, the local community now has access to numerous job opportunities, both seasonal and permanent. Currently, over 70 people are employed by the project, and this is expected to grow as the project matures. This will have a significant impact on the lives and livelihoods in this rural area of Limpopo.

"This is an example of how traditional communities, the citrus industry, private farm owners and government can all work together for the betterment of traditional rural communities. The benefits of the Majeje Citrus project will be reaped by the Majeje community for generations to come," said Lukhanyo Nkombisa, general manager of the GDC.

The Majeje Citrus project's purpose, in collaboration with Komati Fruit Group and Masalal Packers, is to eventually deliver citrus fruit for export markets under the GRASP (Gravelotte, Selwane and Prieska) plan of the Limpopo Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. The GRASP plan benefits cooperative projects like Majeje in the areas around Gravelotte, Selwane and Prieska.



GDC EXTENSION SERVICES AN EXAMPLE OF ADDRESSING CRITICAL ISSUES IN SOUTH AFRICAN AGRICULTURE

According to the recent National Food and Nutrition Security Survey, done by Human Sciences Research Council on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, South Africa is worryingly food insecure. Almost two thirds of South Africans suffer from some form of food insecurity. The report recommends many interventions to combat this worrying trend, including access to agricultural land and proper extension services for those who farm.

The GDC has been providing extension services in the citrus industry since it was founded in 2016 by the Citrus Growers' Association (CGA). A substantial part of the levies citrus growers pay, funds the CDC's activities and is the way established growers invest in a transformed future.

President Cyril Ramaphosa recently mentioned this successful model when he spoke in parliament about the Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan, a government tool designed to address ownership, production and market access for designated groups.

President Ramaphosa answered a question about transformation about the great example the citrus industry is setting: "I think the operative word here should be opening up access to all and that process is already under way – and I'll give you a good example with the citrus industry. In the citrus industry you've got the established farmers who are churning out a lot of citrus, but you've also got emerging black farmers who are also producing citrus. And as we are advocating for the [further] opening of the European market, we do so for both. We want to advance both. But we also want the existing farmers to give maximum support to the emerging farmers."

He emphasised the support that emerging black farmers need, and that established farmers as well as the government should offer support for "inclusive, competitive, job-creating, sustainable and growing".

A key strategy to unlock this potential lies in the effective implementation of farm extension services. These services, provided by agricultural experts of the GDC, offer invaluable guidance and support to farmers, helping them to increase productivity, improve livelihoods, and contribute to a more sustainable food system.

Farm extension services play a crucial role in enabling food security by providing farmers with the knowledge and skills necessary to adopt modern agricultural practices. This includes training on crop selection, pest and disease management, soil fertility enhancement, and efficient irrigation techniques. By equipping farmers with these tools, extension services can help them to produce higher yields of crops, reducing food insecurity and improving dietary diversity.





Furthermore, farm extension services can contribute to job creation in rural areas. By increasing agricultural productivity, farmers can expand their operations and hire additional workers, generating employment opportunities for local communities. Moreover, extension services can support the development of value-added agricultural enterprises, such as processing and marketing, which can create further jobs and stimulate rural economies.

However, the effectiveness of farm extension services depends on several factors. Adequate funding is essential to ensure that these services can reach a wide range of farmers, particularly those in remote areas. Collaboration between various government departments and agencies and the private sector is also crucial for developing and implementing effective extension programs.

Farm extension services offer a promising avenue for promoting food security and job creation in rural South Africa. By providing farmers with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed, these services can help to alleviate poverty, improve livelihoods, and contribute to a more sustainable and equitable society. Investing in farm extension services is a wise investment in the future of South Africa's rural communities.

