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**CITRUS GROWERS' ASSOCIATION OF
SOUTHERN AFRICA**

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FOREWORD

FEMININE FINGERPRINTS ON CITRUS FRUIT

It is only fairly recently in our history that women have been celebrated to any fair degree in our country, but women in the citrus industry have quietly been making their mark and there are now not many areas where the fruit is not touched by a woman. Agriculture in general has always been considered a man's domain, but that has changed, especially in recent years.

The process begins with the Minister of Agriculture and policies made and, in South Africa at present, this minister is a woman. At the NAMC we again find women who are involved in policy decisions. In the not too distant past, when attending meetings, I was the only woman present and men tended to look past me and what I said and took my presence as of no consequence. Now, although we are not in the majority, there are more women representatives, for example, the CGA Board has two female members.

When looking at women in the industry, it is apparent that it is the younger women who are becoming involved in roles which are not merely secondary. Previously, the tendency was that the women were mostly involved in family businesses and remained mostly in the background in a more supportive role, with the males still dominating and making the decisions. The younger generation though are no longer content to play that role and there are now many who are in fact the bosses and farm owners.

Regarding the actual production on the farm, we now find women in various managerial positions as farm, production and packhouse managers. In related fields, ever increasing positions are being filled by women – in logistics, marketing, exports, imports, nurseries, packaging, research and inspections.

The majority of packers and sorters in the packhouses are women, so there seems to be no area where a citrus fruit is not physically touched by a woman. The consumers who purchase the fruit are mostly women as well, adding further female fingerprinting to the fruit.

The one area where women are seemingly not present would be on ships, but that is not really true, as ships themselves are traditionally female.

There is a tendency for some to speak of “empowerment of women”, but this smacks a tad of patronisation and it is a condescending attitude implying that others [men] are allowing women more power and opportunity in the citrus industry. This is not the case as women are empowering themselves.

We indeed need to cease with such drivel and respect all those women, at whatever level they might be, in the industry who have positioned themselves with authority and who give the feminine fingerprint to every citrus fruit from our industry.

Let us acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of all women in our industry and the many more who will participate in the future.

Tini Engelbrecht



TINI ENGELBRECHT

**Citrus Grower and Executive
Director on the CGA Board**

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Vangile Titi

Deputy Director-General in the Department of Agriculture

Vangile Titi is a Deputy Director-General with the Department of Agriculture and her portfolio is Sector Services and Partnerships. Her path to this point has seen her and her family spend nearly two decades away from South Africa and throughout this period her commitment to alleviating poverty in rural areas of southern Africa has never wavered.

"I spent my childhood years in Bloemfontein and after school I studied nursing and midwifery," she explained. In this process, she constantly interacted with mothers and the subject of nutrition was always a very important issue. "In 1978 our family made the decision to leave South Africa. We spent 6 years in Lesotho and then in 1982 we moved to Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe the agricultural focus of my career really evolved as I became involved in rural sociology and worked in the field of rural extension." In the mid 1980's, the family relocated again, this time to Canada. "Once we had settled, I took up studying again and completed a course in Natural Resource Management. My area of focus is the sustainability of natural resources." A quick look on Google reveals that the title for Vangile's 1991 thesis for her qualification from the University of Manitoba was The Rural Afforestation Project in Zimbabwe: project effectiveness and the reality of women's participation. "During the period in Canada, I had the opportunity to visit Southern Africa as a guest of certain institutions, including the Wits Rural Facility and the mission was always the alleviation of poverty," she stressed.

At the time of the 1994 elections, the family had been in Canada for 9 years and returned home the following year in 1995. After their return, Vangile was able to continue working in the field of rural development. The year 1995 also saw the publication of "Empowerment towards Sustainable Development", a seminal document compiled by Vangile together with Dr Naresh Singh, principal technical advisor in Poverty and Sustainable Livelihoods for the United Nations Development Programme's Bureau for Policy Development. This publication is used internationally as a reference document within the field of rural development.

"If rural people have the necessary assets and access to agriculture they are able to grow their own food. Publishing this work has helped to spread this important message and has also formed part of my journey to help people out of poverty," explained Vangile.

"I have held my current position since 2002 and a large part of the job involves international relations and interactions with our government and other governments as well as between governments and stakeholders in the agricultural sector. We have been working with the citrus industry to facilitate the export of South African citrus to China. Some people ask me what is this process doing for black people and I answer by saying that this is contributing towards participation of blacks in the industry as providers of labour in the South African agriculture and agro-processing industries, but as well as owners and shareholders. In addition, the export revenues derived return to government and are used for the social and economic upliftment of poor communities."

Vangile explained that examples of these partnering processes have begun to show tremendous benefits to both the government and the private sector as the two sectors work together. "Agriculture requires an investment of time and labour and there certainly are no results without that. Land is important, but that is just the start of the process as mentorship is vital for success. Only people with experience can be mentors." She also explained that CGA is mentoring developing farmers and assisting them to export and to negotiate with their receivers in foreign countries. "This process is as a result of creating trust to make things work," she added.



COMMITTED TO ALLEVIATING POVERTY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

"Choosing to live abroad meant personal sacrifices for my family and I and living abroad one always feels like a displaced person. During our years in Canada we used to get together with fellow South Africans and reminisce about home. So, with this background, it has been wonderful to be able to return and use my skills for the advancement of my own people. A great deal changed in South Africa in the time we were away and returning to South Africa was quite a culture shock for my three children who were raised away from South Africa. Although they grew up in a political home and were exposed to the political side of their parents' lives, they also absorbed the values of the other countries and had to adjust to South African values on their return.

"In my position I am often in meetings with delegations from other governments and there are very few women in these groups. South Africa seems to be quite a progressive country when it comes to including women in government.

"As South Africans we seem to love being despondent and thrive on bad news. This is an unhealthy state of affairs as we need to foster hope for the future. I'm a strong believer in a positive future for our country. An example of the possibilities for success comes from recent successes in the wool industry. We visited farmers, many of whom were elderly, who were assisted by both government and the National Wool Growers' Association to improve the quality of their wool. Since then there has been a staggering increase in their wool's quality and yield and this has changed their lives for the better. This is indeed a win-win situation with benefits for all as things are happening as a result of trust and co-operation between the government, private sector and the beneficiaries in this process.

"The answer is quite simple - We have to work together. Alone we will get nowhere but together we can scale Mount Everest. Let's work together and make it happen!"

SRC Manager Domestic Markets

Even from the air Port Elizabeth lived up to its reputation as the friendly city as coming in to land over the beautiful white sands on a sunny day travellers were greeted by the sight of a huge pod of dolphins frolicking in the waves. This set the tone for a visit to the beautiful Eastern Cape with its deep sense of history and rugged, sundrenched landscape.

I met Zurena Reid at the Sundays River Citrus Company's (SRCC) marketing offices at the Port Elizabeth Airport. Previously SRCC outsourced much of their marketing, but during the past few seasons they have considerably expanded their marketing operations and now undertake most of their own local and international sales from these offices. This is where Zurena works with 5 colleagues as the manager for South Africa's domestic market sales and logistics. Aside from her friendly smile and exotic looks what was also soon quite apparent was that Zurena runs a tight ship and copes well with the responsible position she has held for the past year.



The job requires her to match available fruit from the SRCC packhouse to the requirements of clients and to arrange for the ordering, pricing and transport of the fruit to clients such as Pick 'n Pay and Shoprite/ Checkers throughout the country. SRCC is the single largest citrus producing company in South Africa with the longest production season and sells more than 1 million cartons of fruit on the South African domestic market annually.

"Zurena had worked for us for some time as a temp and we saw that she was sharp and sociable, and so when this position became available and we interviewed her, she was right for the job," says Jan Alberts, CEO of SRCC. "During the past season she sold more than 20 million rand's worth of citrus on our behalf and thus she is the person dealing with the biggest volume of citrus on the local market. The 2007 season was her first season in this position and I must say she has really done a great job."

"Success in this business is about building and maintaining good working relationships with clients," says Zurena. Although this season has yielded a good percentage of fruit of export quality, this means less fruit is available for the local market. "When our supplies cannot meet the demands of the retailers we supply, there is nothing to be gained by hedging or hiding the truth so I've learned to tell them the bad news first and then follow this up with the better news," she explained.

"I also have a good relationship with the packhouse managers at the SRCC packhouse and this is very important to the success of this position as we have to communicate on an ongoing basis. I have always wanted to work with people and now I certainly do."

Zurena's career started with her qualification as a legal secretary and she worked as a secretary for Capespan in the late 1990's, but was retrenched when Capespan underwent restructuring due to deregulation.

"Looking back at where I've have come from, I never thought I would be in a position like this. It has been quite a challenge and during the past year I have certainly learned a lot, but getting to know the demands of the position better every day has also given me quite a kick. I'm very grateful to my colleagues for their support in helping me to achieve this." Zurena is the mom of two toddlers and as she works quite a distance from home, accepting this position was quite a big step for her. She is therefore also grateful to her husband and parents-in-law for supporting her in this position and for helping out with her children when she is at work.

Commenting on her position in the company and working mostly with male clients, Zurena said that although women might be appointed to a position due to employment equity requirements, once they are in the position, they often seem to make big things happen. "Many people have watched me closely since I started here and I hope that they have been pleasantly surprised at what my team and I have achieved. We all are exposed to a certain level of chauvinism but I just take on the challenge and get the job done.

"This season has been a heck of a ride as in this job you never know what the day so going to be like. If you can go home most days and say it's been a good day, then things are generally pretty good," she concluded.



Sundays River Valley

The Sundays River Valley is a beautiful valley which runs roughly west to east approximately 80 km inland from Port Elizabeth. This is one of the oldest citrus production regions in South Africa, where the elegant old farmhouses are surrounded by large, rambling gardens and colourful bougainvilleas spill over dramatic indigenous euphorbias. The well established nature of the area speaks of many generations of dedicated citrus production and here the well manicured citrus farms sit cheek-by-jowl with game farms and game reserves and there is certainly something exciting about fruit produced a stone's throw from where the big five roam.

Sundays River Citrus Company (SRCC)

Kirkwood and Addo are the two towns in the valley and the Sundays River Citrus Company (SRCC) is situated along the road between these two towns. It is the largest citrus packing operation in South Africa, packing up to 8 million export cartons of citrus annually. The facility has 120 permanent employees and, during the packing season, provides employment for 3 000 seasonal workers from the area. Here I met Maretha Enslin, the SRCC IT Manager and Bev Swanepoel and Helena Tibshraeny, Production Planners at SRCC.

Bev Swanepoel and Helena Tibshraeny

Bev Swanepoel and Helena Tibshraeny are both Production Planners at SRCC and clearly both love their jobs. Bev works with approximately 80 producers in the east of the Sundays River Valley, closer to Addo, while Helena does the same for about 45 producers in the west of the valley, closer to Kirkwood. As production planners they liaise between the producers and the SRCC packhouse about what the quantities are and timing of the harvest in order to optimise the packaging process.

"It is our job to see that the fruit flows smoothly from our producers to the packhouse for packing. As things can sometimes get a little heated between these two parties, particularly at the height of the season, a woman's more diplomatic approach is often just what is needed to resolve the hitches," says Bev Swanepoel. As strength and empathy are clearly part of Bev's makeup, it comes as no surprise that she is a former teacher, a vocation where large dollops of patience and perseverance are required. Bev is originally from the Sundays River Family and Bev and her husband moved back to the Sundays River Valley as her husband's family has a farm in the area after previously having spent time involved in the citrus industry in Fort Beaufort.

"I've been with SRCC for ten years and Helena even longer. Although we work on our own, as we do the same job, we are forever bouncing ideas off each other and this is always helpful," explained Bev. Before and during the harvest the production planners need to be in contact with the producers on a daily basis and this has provided them with the opportunity to establish good working relationships with them over the

years. "Even though most of the producers are men, this does not create a problem for us. It is great to be thanked for our input as we often are and it certainly makes all the difference when your input is appreciated. We have really been well accepted by producers and, in many cases, we have got to know their families in the process as well."

Helena Tibshraeny's home language is Afrikaans and she explained that the Sundays River Valley tended to be more Afrikaans and settled in the West near Kirkwood, while the East of the valley closer to Addo had a larger proportion of English speaking producers and tends to have a larger turnover of owners. "This is why it is perfect to have Bev, who is English speaking down near Addo and for me to work in the Kirkwood area," she stressed.

"I have been in this post for 15 years and in that time it has grown exponentially and allowed me to grow with it," says Helena. "This has allowed me to get to know individuals and know how to interact with them. A colleague of mine is fond of saying that although we might be involved in the fruit industry, we are first and foremost in the people industry. This is my motto in my relationships with the producers in the area and often it takes a woman's diplomatic approach to smooth the relationship between producers and the packhouse." Helena's friendliness and open manner echo her words and it is easy to see why she is well liked and respected by producers.

"Smile and be diplomatic" seems to be the motto for these two ladies and by all accounts it seems to work!

Maretha Enslin

Maretha Enslin is a gracious brunette who radiates the sense of quiet confidence that comes with being in control of the job at hand. She told me that she graduated with a BSC in Computer Science and that in 1987 she and her husband moved to Sundays River Valley from the Western Cape when her husband, a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, accepted a calling to this community. During 1987 she was able to find work in her field of training when she started working for the Sundays River Irrigation Board writing computer programmes for them.

In the same year SRCC began to implement computer systems and they outsourced this to contractors who designed and installed their systems. As these systems grew fast, the Management of SRCC realized that they needed someone close at hand who could maintain and continue with the development of these systems. A systems administration post was thus created to fill this need.

"As a result of my involvement with the Sundays River Irrigation Board, I worked with the computer company during



Above: (from left to right) Helena Tibshraeny, Bev Swanepoel and Maretha Enslin

the setting up of the SRCC systems and in the process, they recognized my skills in this field. Although the post had been created, it was not filled immediately and I was simply contracted to work as a systems administrator," says Maretha. As the systems developed and grew, so did the extent of this job and in 1998 Maretha was promoted to IT manager for SRCC.

"The IT needs of the company have expanded far beyond what they were in those days. There are now four people in our IT department and our computer systems are some of the best available for a production unit like this. As SRCC is the biggest citrus packhouse in the Southern Hemisphere, our computer systems need to be highly efficient at handling the massive amount of data generated by our activities and I am in the

fortunate position to be very familiar with all these functions as I have been here since the first systems were installed."

Maretha recalls an amusing incident when a production manager who was not very fond of computers complained that his computer was losing time on its clock. She suggested that he should check if the battery wasn't maybe run down. As he was not aware that his computer had a battery, he was convinced that she was not very bright. Fortunately she was able to assist him with both his problem and perception!

"I have never experienced direct discrimination from men, but I sometimes detect a subtle lack of confidence which takes some time to break down, especially working in a non-traditional role as a woman," she says.



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Marlet Nel



Training co-ordinator and committed social developer in Kirkwood

On a crisp spring morning I meet Marlet Nel at the Sundays River Community Development Training Centre, set in a suburban street of Kirkwood. Although the building and grounds of the centre look like they could do with some attention, Marlet's warm smile and deep sense of commitment soon show that her heart is in the right place as she is focused on making a difference to the lives of the local community.

Marlet has been working at this facility since 1989 when she was appointed as an assistant community developer. "This was my first job and I still love it. I started here when I was 21 and have stayed ever since," she explained. "In those days this training centre was run by the Rural Foundation, which was active in rural communities throughout South Africa. When the Foundation ended its activities in 1996, the growers in the area decided to take over the running of the training centre as they recognised the need for continued development of their farm workers. They asked me to stay on and since then I have been running the training centre."

The centre offers technical skills training required on farms as well as life skills training in fields such as health, personal budgeting and conflict management. Once the training requirements have been identified, Marlet arranges this by sourcing accredited trainers to offer training courses in the specific subject at the training centre. These activities are funded by the growers who are using these resources.

"The centre is run by the Sundays River Community Development Association and the management is made up of local producers. I'm the only one that is executive in this organisation. Times are often tough, and although we have received funding from the Agriseta (Agricultural Sector Training Authority) and from citrus export companies, there is no long-term security in this position. Despite this, I continue because it

is very rewarding for me to see how our training develops people and often makes profound improvements in their lives. The recognition and appreciation that I receive from farm workers that I've trained provides me with enormous job satisfaction."

"To a large extent Marlet does a thankless job as for most producers training is not high on the priority list," says Pieter Nortje, a producer in the area and CGA director. "The training centre often battles financially which makes it difficult for Marlet to continue but her perseverance and passion for what she does makes her an inspiration to us," he added.

Marlet added that she has two sons, aged 6 and 9, and although they are still quite young, they have an appreciation for her commitment to her work. "Sometimes my boys are with me when people that I've trained greet me with great enthusiasm. This enables them to see that people in the community appreciate the training and development we offer at the centre," she explained. "Although this is supposed to be a half day post, quite often the activities spill over into the afternoon and the exposure that my boys have to this job has helped them to understand what I do."

Some farmers have a keen recognition for the needs of their workers and appreciate our efforts. "The farmers keep our doors open and at every AGM, they agree that we need to keep going. This is indeed a vote of confidence for which I'm grateful. Although our centre battles for funding, at present we are applying to the Government for funding to train unemployed people as packers and sorters for the citrus industry. As we are committed to the development of people in the Sundays River, we would appreciate the opportunity to extend our community development in the area," Marlet concluded.

Sitrusrand

**Junior packhouse
managers
Cynthia Yawa (left)
and
Linda Soyama (right)**



Sitrusrand is situated a few kilometres west of Kirkwood in the Sundays River Valley, where countless rows of verdant citrus trees grow in deep, fertile soils stretching for kilometers up and down the valley. During the off season the estate's large packhouse is deserted and quiet and in the adjoining office junior packhouse managers Cynthia Yawa and Linda Soyama share the experiences and joys of working in the Sitrusrand packhouse.

Linda is a young-looking, trim 34-year-old who is originally from Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape. "My mother died when I was 8 years old and when I reached Standard 5 (Grade 7), I left school. When I was 18, I had a child and as my father died in the same year, I went to stay with my boyfriend's parents. After my daughter was born, I returned to school, back to Standard 5 (Grade 7). I did not grow up speaking Xhosa, but when I returned to school this time, my education was in Xhosa. In 1999 I matriculated at the age of 25. The following year I started to look for a job and when I heard that there was work available in the Sundays River area, I came to look around here."

Linda's first job at Sitrusrand was as a packer and in 2003 she was promoted to supervisor. She held this post for four seasons in a packhouse with 380 seasonal workers and during the 2007 season, she was promoted to junior line manager.

"Sometimes this is a stressful job, but I'm proud of my progress and I certainly enjoy working here. Keeping people in line can be difficult at times as they can be rude and undermine your authority, but that is just part of the job. We are lucky in that our employer (Pieter Nortje, owner of Sitrusrand) is open to listen to us and helps us if we have a problem."

Today my daughter Felicia is 17 years old and it has meant a lot to her that I have a good, stable job. She calls me her role model and I am deeply grateful to my daughter's grandparents for helping me to look after her. Although I am now employed permanently on the estate, at Sitrusrand there is work available throughout the year for some of us. During this time we work in the orchards pruning and maintaining the orchards and also do maintenance of the systems in the packhouse.

"I am thankful for my job at Sitrusrand and my line manager Marius Pfister has been encouraging me to achieve. This has been a good incentive for which I'm most grateful. He has taught me a great deal in the workplace and in the course of my work I have also learned to operate the packhouse machinery. I'm happy at Sitrusrand and I'm staying," she concluded.

Cynthia Yawa is 41 and has spent most of her life in the Sundays River Valley. "I grew up at Addo and attended school there. When I was in Standard 7 (Grade 9) there was ongoing rioting as schools throughout the province and so I quit school and moved to Kirkwood in 1990 in search of a job," she explained.

Cynthia worked for Sundays River Citrus Company in Kirkwood for two years. "I started working here in 1994, soon after the Sitrusrand packhouse was completed. In 1998 I was appointed as a supervisor and in 2002 I completed a course in junior packhouse management and received a diploma in this subject. Now my post in the packhouse is junior line manager."

"Getting to this point has been achieved by my own hard work and as a single mother of two daughters, Belinda (18) and Thandi (10), I am grateful for my job security as I am able to assist with my children's education. What's more, I really enjoy my job and working here. Our work is appreciated and our employer is aware of our needs and listens to us. This is very important because during the height of the harvest season, we pack 40 to 50 pallets with 80 cartons per pallet daily in the lemon packhouse, so you can imagine that we are truly working flat out to achieve this each day. Our season runs from April to September but the busiest months are April and May. I am also now employed permanently but have been able to work at Sitrusrand year-round, helping with pruning and orchard and packhouse maintenance."

Linda and Cynthia explained that in the packhouse during the season there is a friendly rivalry and competitive edge between the two of them as they are each responsible for one of the lines in the packhouse. They help each other and plan how to optimise productivity by providing packers with productivity incentives.

Both Cynthia and Linda stressed that they were contented at Sitrusrand. "Our employer walks the extra mile for us and we have no reason to complain and also no plans to move on, just upwards at Sitrusrand" said Cynthia.



Phindi Kema

Citrus Producer, Sundays River

In the heart of the Sundays River Valley I meet Phindi Kema who is a director of Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa and she is certainly one of a kind. You see Phindi is a Xhosa woman, a single mom, a citrus farmer, a breeder of thoroughbred horses and a board member of a JSE listed company. She is also pint-sized, highly articulate and glamorous...

Phindi received me at her farm Green Acres at the guest accommodation which is part of a horse stable and horse trailing business located on her farm. It was spring and as we were surrounded by the smell of orange blossoms and freshly mowed lawn and the sound of bird calls, it was again clear to see why city folk are often beguiled by the farming way of life. Phindi explained that she is originally from the Eastern Cape and that she grew up in Komga where her parents farmed with pigs. After working in the Eastern Cape for a while, she decided to move to Johannesburg for economic reasons. Here she climbed the corporate ladder at Spescom Ltd., a JSE listed ITC (Information and Communication Technology) company for a number of years and today she still sits on the board of Spescom.

"I left the corporate world because I did not want my security to be dependent on a job and I wanted to apply what I had learnt in business to something that I was passionate about," she explained. "At that stage, I was not sure about which direction I would follow. It was while I was working with Spier Wine Estate's new marketing division in Johannesburg that I realised that I enjoyed the agricultural aspect of this job more than the customers and this pointed me in the direction of agriculture. This prompted me to start looking at business opportunities in the Eastern Cape."

In the process Phindi met representatives from SAFE (South African Fruit Exports) and they introduced her to the Addo area. Once she had decided that she wanted to farm with citrus, she approached the Department of Land Affairs for funding. "Funding was a big issue and although the Department did help me, the process was a nightmare as the time frame was open-ended, making it impossible to plan ahead or budget. By then I had quit my job and moved here from Johannesburg with my three daughters and had to cover all the expenses while my request for funding was being processed," she explained. "This took nine months, from February 2006 until November 2006 and so this has been my first harvest and I'm pleased to say that it has gone well."

Phindi owns 2 farms between Addo and Kirkwood – Green Acres (28 ha) and Nebraska (25 ha) and between them, the units have 28 hectares of citrus. "I am committed to making this work as packing my bags and heading back to Jo'burg is simply not an option for me. As I arrived here with no knowledge of citrus farming I've been learning on the job as I go along. Although this has proved to be quite a steep learning curve, I have been fortunate to receive a great deal of support from my neighbours and I think that many of them respect the tough decisions it has taken to get involved in citrus farming."

Sundays River Citrus Company has also been very helpful and has provided invaluable technical assistance in the orchards. The farms were somewhat run down when Phindi took over, but with the help from her staff the condition of the orchards has been improved to the point where almost 100% of the first harvest was of export quality. The farms have also achieved Eurepgap accreditation this year. Phindi exported her fruit through SAFE and SRCC and added that they had both been a great help to her.

"One of the biggest problems that we as fruit farmers face is that our value chain is too long. We cannot determine the cost of our products yet the production costs are continuously escalating. Added to that the payment terms from our receivers are simply too long. This places severe strain on the cash flow position of farmers, some of whom have not yet been paid for last season's fruit and but have to fund the preparations for the next harvest which is starting during the next month. This is a problem affecting the entire agricultural sector and unless Agriculture engages with Government for better incentives on this, South Africa could end up experiencing a food shortage," stressed Phindi.

Initially it was quite challenging for Phindi to take charge of the workforce. "I was very honest with them and simply told them that I don't know much but I'm prepared to learn. We have developed a mutual sense of appreciation and good working relationships.

"I am a new entrant to the agricultural sector and am still getting to know the environment, but I have made a few observations. One of the fundamental needs for agriculture to contribute towards growing the South African economy is the need to make black business take farming seriously and in turn we need to make white farmers take black business seriously.



Phindi with her thoroughbred mares and foals

The voice of black business is currently missing from agriculture. We can't just leave things the way they are. Everybody talks about not wanting the Zimbabwean situation repeated here, but preventing this from happening is really up to us as government can only do so much. Although agricultural transformation is very important, the sector is seen as unattractive and risky and therefore black business is not engaging in agriculture.

"I believe that there are other sectors of the economy that are as risky as agriculture, but as the agricultural sector is always seen to be struggling or complaining and seldom celebrating its successes, the negative perceptions surrounding agriculture are largely due bad marketing. If we are to compete globally, agriculture needs more investments in terms of skills, technology and funding and I believe that the involvement of black business is the key to success in this field.

"When I moved to Jo'burg I did not really have a choice; it was where the money was and I simply had to go. Moving to the Sundays River has been a watershed decision in my life and my daughters (aged 17, 12 and 10) have been my inspiration. When we arrived here I was not able to show them a pleasant start to living in the valley. This process has brought me closer to my children as I have appreciated the sacrifices that they have made moving from the city to this rural environment."

While we were speaking a neighbour dropped by to deliver something for Phindi and judging by the friendly banter, Phindi certainly seems to have developed good relations with her neighbours. "My neighbours have been great and it truly gladdens the heart to feel welcome in the community. This place feeds my soul and here I have been able to simplify my life and focus on the things that matter. Here people are just people and have the time to stop by for a cup of coffee without any agenda."

Phindi showed me her beautiful thoroughbred mares and foals and she was anxious about one of the mares that was about to foal. "I am really looking forward to seeing this new little one, but since I have become involved in farming, Mother Nature has certainly taught me about patience!"

Leaving the farm one sees the name board for the horse trailing business "Ipi'nThombi", which is Xhosa for "Where are the girls?" This certainly seemed fitting as we can certainly do with more like Phindi.

Since this interview Phindi has resigned as a CGA director in order to focus her attention on her production unit.



Sundays River Valley view near Kirkwood

Louise Jackson

CIP administrator at the Citrus Foundation Block Uitenhage

On the outskirts of Uitenhage, some distance down an unlikely road through the industrial area I meet the CRI (Citrus Research International) Citrus Foundation Block and Louise Jackson, the CIS (Citrus Improvement Scheme) programme administrator at the Foundation Block. Louise receives me in this beautiful rural setting and seems quiet and retiring and not accustomed to talking about herself. She is originally from Zimbabwe and after a spell living in the UK, she and her husband settled in Port Elizabeth in 1985, where her husband had a municipal job. "Once we were living in PE, I had a number of unsatisfactory jobs until I started working for the Citrus Exchange Board in 1986 and have remained in the citrus industry through its many changes since then."

"Two years after I joined the Citrus Exchange Board, Outspan International was formed and I worked for Outspan until Outspan amalgamated with Unifruco and became Capespan. I remained with Capespan until 2002, when further structural changes took place, and the Foundation Block was incorporated into CRI."

Louise is still in the same post she was appointed to in 2002 but during the past 6 years it has changed beyond recognition. "Initially I worked from the Port Elizabeth Capespan offices and then, due to the nature of my job it made sense for me to be based here at the Foundation block. This entails a 50 km commute every morning and although I don't enjoy the driving, working out in the country has its own pleasures. This is a good place to work as we are growing good, healthy food for people and it is commonplace for us to see peacocks, baboons and monkeys out here. I enjoy working for the citrus industry on both a local and international level. The international citrus community that I deal with is represented by a relatively small group of friendly people - we have a lot in common that connects us."

"Louise is entirely responsible for the financial side of our operations, and as our head office is in Nelspruit, they rely heavily on her," says Thys Du Toit, the Manager of the Citrus Improvement Scheme. "She really does a great job and when I have to travel, which is quite often, she takes over responsibility for the production side of our operation as well and copes comfortably with this. It is good to know that I can leave the running of our operations in good hands when I'm away," he explained.

"I have recently started doing the administrative functions on Pastel software and am still getting to know this," says Louise. "On the operational side, I have written a computer programme that suits our needs to do the invoicing for sales and to issue the tree sales certificates. I also keep track of the statistics of which cultivars have been popular as well as comparative market results. We often



receive information requests about the quantities supplied and so it is important to have this information available for the industry.

"The industry has been in a state of dynamic change for many years and this process is still continuing today. The biggest change in the last decade has happened since deregulation, when our industry moved from a single channel market to a free market system. We are still busy with this learning curve and in order to move forward successfully, it is important to have the right people in place. Although the Grower Clubs that own and administer the rights to certain cultivars might provide growers with better returns, these organisations do tend to politicise and fragment the industry. I believe the South African industry has a good base and we need to build on this for success."

The Foundation Block is the only certified seed and budwood supplier in South Africa and they supply budwood and seeds to certified nurseries for plant propagation. At the Foundation Block, CRI sources seeds from orchard blocks cultivated for this purpose. This process happens in winter and the seeds are mechanically extracted from the harvested fruit. They are then treated with fungicide and then packed in order to be sold. These are bought by accredited South African nurseries and surplus seeds are exported. The block regularly produces a surplus of seeds and exports large quantities of seed to China.

Budwood is sold in summer and is carefully delivered to selected nurseries by courier. The Citrus Foundation Block receives material from Nelspruit after it has been through the shoot tip grafting process. "Mother" trees are established and evaluated for their suitability and are then used to produce trees for budwood production. The Foundation Block is isolated to prevent the risk of infection from outside and all vehicles arriving at the nursery go through a dip, as do people on foot.

Ilse (du Plessis) Klopper

Multi-tasker with a mission at Patensie Citrus Ltd.

The road to Patensie from Port Elizabeth is not as innocuous as it looks on a map. It is an old-fashioned road with no camber or shoulder and follows the contours of the undulating countryside to the letter. After many patient kilometres of pleasant rural scenery, the road passes through the town of Hankey, most famous as the final resting place of the ill-fated Saartjie Baardman. Soon afterwards the traveller is treated to glimpses of the magnificent Gamtoos Valley, enticing one to explore this striking landscape.

At Patensie Citrus Ilse du Plessis' warm and caring manner was evident from the moment she greeted me and invited me in for a cup of coffee. Patensie Citrus Ltd, a former co-operative converted to a company, has a citrus nursery division, packhouse that packs and markets the citrus on behalf of its members and conducts farming operations on its own farm as well as on a joint venture BEE farm.

Ilse started at Patensie Citrus as a secretary in 1988, but in recent years her area of activity has expanded way beyond this.

"I was a secretary here for 17 years and when the need for compliance to Good Agricultural Practice accreditations was introduced to our industry, I started helping our producers prepare for audits. I am still involved with the ongoing process of accreditation and at present 100% of our producers have Global-Gap accreditation and 50% have achieved Nature's Choice accreditation," Ilse explained.

"The 2000 production year was a bad season throughout the citrus industry and our co-operative was forced to reduce its staff complement quite drastically. This left the nursery short staffed and so I started getting involved with the administration of that division and I still do this today."

In 2005 Ilse also took on the job of co-ordinating the flow of fruit from the farms to the packhouse and this also involves keeping a close watch on phytosanitary issues. This certainly takes some doing as Patensie Citrus packs fruit for 50 producers in the area, but Ilse takes this in her stride.

"As I grew up on a farm in Humansdorp, I understand farmers and agriculture. I have also got to know the producers around here and enjoy working with them as people as well as the involvement with the fruit production process. As Patensie Citrus also has the nursery and orchards, it is important that we also set an example, also practicing what we preach when it comes to the various accreditations and phytosanitary issues."

She also explained that when new varieties became available, the co-operative often tested these on behalf of their members. "We have a good relationship with CRI (Citrus Research International)



and they keep us well informed. Our Managing Director Gerhard Uys travels to our markets regularly and keeps us up to date with the performance of various varieties in the market place.

"It is of the utmost importance that the producers in the Gamtoos Valley need to work together to place the best product possible in the market. On a broader level, another very important issue is that our country cannot make progress without agriculture and I believe that proactive government support is necessary to achieve this.

"I am very grateful to Ian Grieb, the Production Manager of PSB for the wealth of information that I have learned from him over the years that we have worked together. Without his assistance I would certainly battle at times. The ongoing advice from Pieter Lamont, the Manager of Paksaam Farm is also of great use to me. Without the support of my family members, who are from farming stock and are still involved in agriculture, I would not be able to make a success of what I do here at Patensie Citrus.

"Women have always played an important role in our business, representing the majority employed group. The skills and ability of a woman, especially to attend to detail, are characteristics that are well utilized at Patensie Citrus to pack and administer the fruit for the export market," says Gerhard Uys, Managing Director of Patensie Citrus. "Ilse has however taken it further than most, through diligence and passion for her work, by venturing into the complex arena of Global-Gap, technical management of growing citrus trees and producing quality fruit. Ilse is a fine example to prove anything is possible if you believe you can achieve it."

On leaving, Ilse's concern about my travels again showed her empathy and judging by the organised nursery and healthy young trees in her care, Patensie is certainly a richer place for her presence.

Since the interview, Ilse has married and is now Ilse Klopper.



KATCO, Fort Beaufort

From Grahamstown the road to Fort Beaufort winds northwards through dramatic scenery of rugged, imposing hills where the statuesque and massive aloes of the region defy the heat and stand tall as warriors on the skyline. Nearing the town, glimpses of the verdant green of the region's citrus orchards is occasionally visible in valleys below, set amongst the untamed bush.

Fort Beaufort is some 190 km from Port Elizabeth and the main economic activity in the region is the production of citrus. The bulk of the region's population is made up of Xhosa people, who have had very little opportunity to learn skills and as a result, this remote rural area is fairly impoverished. The main co-operative citrus packhouse in the town is the Kat River Citrus Co-operative, better known as Katco. Katco packs one million cartons of citrus annually and is supplied by 17 producers. From March to September the co-operative employs 750 seasonal workers and has 24 permanent staff members. The women that work at Katco are excited about recent changes at the co-operative.

Claire Wasdell, Financial Manager

Claire is trained as a teacher and hails from the neighbouring town of Alice. Having grown up in the area, Claire is able to speak Xhosa and has a good understanding and appreciation of the Xhosa culture, both invaluable skills in her line of work. Her warm, friendly manner certainly helps as well.

"I did not apply for this job," explains Claire. "I am a trained teacher and applied for a job at the school in Fort Beaufort, but Jock Danckwerts, who is chairman of the Katco board of directors, was also on the school board and decided that my skills were needed far more at Katco, so I was appointed here instead!" (Some things really do only happen in a small town...)

Claire is married to a farmer in the area and started at Katco in 2001 as a wages clerk. Working as closely as she did with the packers at a facility that only operated during the citrus season, Claire started thinking about what could be done to assist the seasonal workers, mostly women, during the period that they were unemployed out of season. "Many of these women have been diligent seasonal workers at Katco for years and they really have a tough time between seasons," says Claire. "Paying them off at the end of the season was always hard as we would wonder how they would cope without an income for a number of months."

In 2005 Claire, together with Pam Magongoma, a fellow employee at Katco and Kathy Knott, a local teacher started an initiative to implement a skills training programme for their seasonal workers during the off season. "At around that time Jock Danckwerts put the Waitrose Foundation principle to the Katco Board of Directors. This concept was a good fit to our needs, which were that training and development of job creation projects need to happen simultaneously," she explained.



The timing of this helping hand was very good and the substantial financial support and mentoring provided by the Waitrose Foundation has assisted Katco to establish and staff a skills training and job creation centre on the Katco premises.

The employment projects in gardening, beadwork, leatherwork, sewing as well as laundering overalls were started in 2005. Claire explained that although these initially required a great deal of input and presented many challenges, these projects are now well established and are providing an income for seasonal workers during the off season.

Katco has provided the training and job creation initiatives with a building on the premises where these activities are conducted. "I would like to see this place becoming a community centre, both for our training projects and for recreation as a visit to the centre should also be seen as a pleasant outing. This must be part of an ethical process and must work for the whole community," stressed Claire.

"We train our project participants in ABET (Adult Basic Education Training) training, life skills training and basic farming practices. Computer training in Word and Excel is also offered, as well as how to use the Internet. This is broadening people's horizons and increasing the skills of people who are geographically disadvantaged in remote Fort Beaufort."

The Department of Labour has also been of great help to the project as they have assisted with the skills training for the job creation projects. They have trained the project facilitators free of charge. "We are truly most grateful to them for their assistance," stressed Claire.

Katco realizes that it is important to take care of basic needs before it is possible to reach the next level of needs such as self improvement and as a result they have introduced an incentive for full attendance at ABET training classes. "Last year our ABET training classes were quite empty, but since we started providing sandwiches and a cup of tea with our training and a food parcel at the end of the month for full attendance, our classes are full. After all, you can't be expected to learn with an empty stomach."

In a region where dire poverty has reduced the lives of many to constant despair, at Katco there is now a sense of hope for the future. The



assistance from the Waitrose Foundation has helped the Katco management to get to know many of 850 employees as individuals and, judging by the sense of commitment and jocular banter between participants in the job creation projects, these highly successful projects have created a sense of hope for the future and look set to go from strength to strength.

“Without the financial assistance and ongoing mentorship of the Waitrose Foundation all this would not be possible. They are always available and willing to help us and this has made a vast difference to the lives of people in our community,” concluded Claire.

Lynne Trollope - Research, Technical and Protocol Co-ordination Officer

Katco packs approximately 1 million cartons of citrus on behalf of its 17 growers in the Fort Beaufort district and Lynne co-ordinates the implementation and certification of the various quality protocols at the packhouse and on the farms on behalf of Katco. “These include BRC, EurepGAP, Tesco’s Nature’s Choice, the Waitrose’s LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) audit will be implemented in 2009, and thus far we have succeeded in achieving EurepGAP certification for all of our producers,” explained Lynne. Anyone who is familiar with the rigorous requirements of some of these protocols will realize that this is no mean feat and Lynne’s extensive experience in the research and technical field have certainly stood her in good stead in these endeavours.

Lynne explained that she had spent 30 years working in the field of Microbiology and various other projects at the Eastern Cape’s University of Fort Hare. “This was a well equipped and interesting place to work, but I resigned in 2001 as the political agenda had simply become too strong,” she explained. She added that during the 2000 season, Katco had sustained huge losses due to quality control problems and in response to this, Dr John Mildenhall, a retired Microbiology Professor and citrus producer, had developed a laboratory at Katco for post harvest waste management.



“As a result of my experience at the university I worked at Katco during 2000 for two months towards the end of the season and then my job was to train a lab assistant. I enjoyed working in the Katco lab and when the season started in 2001, I returned, ostensibly to work for only two weeks, and I have been here since!”

One of the reasons for this was that there was a huge need amongst the producers to become compliant with the quality protocols prescribed by the international receivers of Katco’s citrus. In order to assist Katco and its suppliers to achieve BRC accreditation, Lynne wrote a manual for this purpose and has also developed a pesticide training course for people who are not literate. “As many of the packhouse

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Job creation Projects

Beading

In the Katco training and skills development centre the women sit chatting around a table, heads bowed over their work whilst they thread thousands of tiny beads. It certainly requires a practiced eye in order to thread the needles and create the intricate patterns that these ladies produce daily. Beadwork is a traditional art of the Xhosa women and the project has extended the designs to include a wide range of beautiful jewelry. They sell their beadwork at local fairs, although the remote location of Katco places them at a disadvantage. Waitrose places big orders with the project and they sell the beadwork to their staff members. They are also working at further refining some of their designs as they hope to sell these in the upmarket British John Lewis supermarket.



Bead workers display their beautiful creations

Leather work

A range of beautiful handmade handbags proudly displayed is a clear indication that the leather work project has developed well despite some initial setbacks. The men have received training and their enthusiasm for these new skills is reflected in the beautiful products that they are making. The offset for these is also at the local fairs, some Katco producers as well as orders from Waitrose.



Leather project workers proudly display some of their creations

Sewing project

The sewing project has been highly successful and the advantage of this project is that the women are producing overalls and they have a direct offset to Katco co-operative as well as the Katco growers, who all require overalls for their workers. The order book for producing overalls is pretty full and these highly creative ladies are also producing a range of striking clothing.

Laundry project

With the large number of employees at Katco, the need for a laundry service to wash the facility's overalls has created the laundry project. The project certainly has no shortage of work. It is located on the premises and makes use of industrial sized washing machines and a tumble drier.

Gardening project

Project facilitators teach workers how to prepare the soil and grow vegetables for their own consumption. This ensures a more balanced diet and allows workers to sell any surplus to others in the community.



Sewing project workers modelling the uniforms that they have made (inset - their own Waitrose Foundation label)

and farm workers have Xhosa as their home language, it is also imperative that information is translated and the assistance of Thembekile Dick, one of the Packhouse Line Managers, is greatly appreciated in this regard."

Monitoring post harvest fruit management in the packhouse is still one of Lynne's responsibilities and she was involved in the Citrus Research Institute's initiative to investigate the development of resistance by the two main *Penicillium* species responsible for significant post harvest waste in export fruit to the recognized internationally permitted chemicals for its control. Due to the expansion of the project it has been transferred to the University of Pretoria.

Aside from her responsibilities at Katco, Lynne also consults on the use of fire in the management of natural vegetation. This is done in conjunction with her husband Professor Winston Trollope, previously the Professor of Livestock and Range Management at the University of Fort Hare. "This is becoming time consuming as we consult in neighbouring and East African countries and I am grateful to the management of Katco for allowing me to work in both fields," stressed Lynne. "I'm also grateful to my husband because without his assistance and understanding, I would not be able to do this."

Lynne added that the international exposure and years of experience have certainly contributed to broadening her vision and abilities. "I work well with people and if people get a little scratchy due to tension prior to audits, this is simply how life is."

When asked if she had a message for the citrus industry, Lynne responded as follows: "One of the biggest problems we have here is the combination of massive unemployment and of lack of opportunities for social upliftment. This is being addressed to a certain extent within the local citrus industry, but the extent of the problem in the area really needs a serious commitment to this beyond our industry. Service delivery in our area is slack and as people have little hope for a better future, proactive initiatives to create local jobs and uplift the community would make a big difference to people in our region."

Katco produces and packs some of the sweetest and juiciest citrus in the world. Katco produces sufficient citrus to create a critical mass and basket of cultivar sorts to facilitate efficient marketing and supply the most discerning markets.

Katco is committed to the growth and sustainability of the citrus industry in South Africa. In order to achieve this, Katco must ensure that it produces and packs perfect fruit that meets the most exacting requirements of our export markets.





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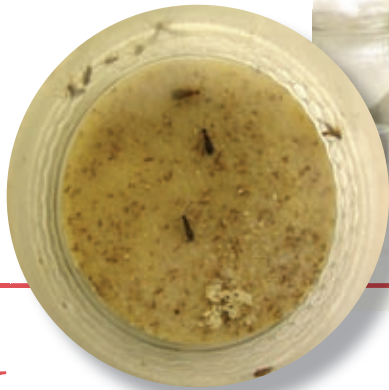


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Kierryn Keeton Gendall

Technical Officer at Katco and
Entomological crusader
against False Codling Moth



Kierryn in her lab where she rears *Agathis Bishopi*
(seen at left) in the fight against False Codling Moth

It was early morning when I met Kierryn on the campus of Rhodes University amidst the throng of students and lecturers scrambling for parking. We went into the Zoology and Entomology building, passing the usual paraphernalia of pigeon holes, offices and lecture venues on our way to Kierryn's temperature and humidity controlled lab. It is here that she fights the good fight against the insidious FCM (False Codling Moth), scourge of the citrus industry, as part of her masters degree in Entomology.

"I did not set out to be an entomologist," says Kierryn. "When I came to university in 2002, I was planning to do a Physical Education degree, but somehow I changed tack and I ended up studying Microbiology and Entomology. During my honours year I did a project in forensic entomology and at that time Professor Martin Hill, the head of Rhodes University's Entomology Department approached me and asked me to set up the experimental techniques for a project with the *Cryptophlebia leucotreta Granulovirus* (CrLeGV) for the control of False Codling Moth. This was initiated on a request from CRI (Citrus Research International) and also formed part of my honours degree. I enjoyed this immensely and in doing this, I realised that entomology was the field where my future lay.

"It was during this period that Sean Moore of the CRI told me about the Citrus Academy and the availability of bursaries and so I immediately applied for a bursary to do my Masters. The Citrus Academy responded promptly and my application was successful. I am most grateful for this funding and the support that I have received from the Citrus Academy and Citrus Research International.

The subject of Kierryn's two year masters degree is to investigate the potential of a biological control system in which a tiny wasp (*Agathis Bishopi*) could be used as a biological control agent for the False Codling moth by interrupting its life cycle. This larval parasitoid wasp lays its eggs inside the larvae of the False Codling Moth, using the larva as a host and thus preventing the larva from maturing and hatching. This wasp is endemic to the Addo area of the Eastern Cape and it has been found to cause a decline in FCM infestations.

In order to do this, Kierryn is mass rearing the *Agathis Bishopi* wasps to release in confined test areas in citrus orchards. "To do this, I need to find FCM larvae that have been parasitized by *Agathis Bishopi* eggs," Kierryn explains. "This is the source of my breeding material and these

I hatch and multiply in the lab. The next process is to find enough FCM larvae to act as a host for the wasps when they are ready to lay eggs. In order to do this, I collect oranges infested with FCM larvae and extract the larvae and rear the FCM larvae in a medium."

This is no mean feat as the *Cryptophlebia leucotreta Granulovirus* (CrLeGV) can decimate the larvae and Kierryn also needs to use an autoclave to sterilize the diet medium for the larvae to prevent disastrous fungus growth. To succeed with this process, Kierryn also has to carefully time having male and female wasps ready to breed and optimally develop FCM larvae. "Often there is a very small window period to make this happen successfully," explained Kierryn. Kierryn recently got married and has appealed to her husband for patience and assistance when things get a little hectic. "My husband has been a great support as looking after the wasps takes daily attention. At times when I have been away, he has come into the lab to do this for me."

"In order to find infested oranges, I have worked with growers in the Addo and Kirkwood region and they have been most helpful. The process of mass rearing the wasps is complicated and it would really be great if we had some more resources for this project. Rhodes University is currently developing a new agricultural unit and it is likely that this project will move to this facility once it becomes operational. I am very grateful to my supervisor Martin Villet for his encouragement and for taking me on as a Masters student and hopefully this process will develop into a doctorate."

If this pilot study is successful, the *Agathis Bishopi* wasp could be used as part of an IPM (integrated pest management) system. FCM has traditionally been controlled by the use of chemicals, but as these are often non-specific, they also kill the beneficial insects such as the parasitoids and other harmless insects. The current chemicals used for controlling FCM are far from ideal and are not compatible with an integrated pest management (IPM) system.

Kierryn is passionate about Entomology. "We need to give young people more information about the wide range of career opportunities offered in the field of entomology. There are actual jobs where this knowledge can be applied and make a big difference and yet this field is largely overlooked by career advisors," she stressed. "I have no regrets about pursuing this career and I am very grateful to my parents for supporting me during my studies."

Since this interview, Kierryn has been appointed as the technical officer at Katco, Fort Beaufort

Sharon Stewart

Export logistical co-ordinator at Riverside Packhouse and winning graduate of “Top of the Class” course

On the western outskirts of Fort Beaufort is the large Riverside Citrus Packhouse. During the citrus season Riverside employs roughly 300 seasonal workers while there are only 5 permanent employees. I visited during the off-season and here I met Sharon Stewart, the export logistical co-ordinator for the packhouse. Sharon is irrepressible with a mischievous twinkle in her eye and before we had even sat down, she was chatting and gesticulating expansively.

Sharon has been a permanent employee at Riverside since 2006, but her history prior to this point is certainly interesting. “My parents had a piece of rural property near Hertzog, but I was still very young when this was appropriated by the Government in 1989. My father was given a house in Fort Beaufort and we moved there with our parents, but a few months later my father passed away. After that my mother and I moved to Cape Town for me to complete my schooling while my sister stayed on in Fort Beaufort. When I finished school in 1997, I came back here and stayed with my sister. At that stage the Riverside Packhouse was under construction close to where we lived and I plucked up the courage to ask if they had a position for me. I was 16 at the time and although initially they told me that I was too young, when the packhouse opened in 1998, I worked as a seasonal worker on the switchboard for two consecutive seasons. In between harvests I returned to Cape Town and worked in a clothing shop as a casual. Brad Knott the manager from Riverside called me a few times to ask me if I would return, so I decided to return to Fort Beaufort permanently in 2005.”

She was still a temporary worker at Riverside in 2005 when she attended the Top of the Class Training Course (the course designed and offered by the Fresh Produce Exporters’ Forum). The course was offered at Katco, the other packhouse in Fort Beaufort and Sharon joined the class half way through the course. When the exam results were made available, she was told that she had achieved top marks in the course throughout the country. The annual reward for this achievement is a sponsored trip to Fruit Logistica, the top international trade fair for fruit and vegetables held in Berlin during February each year.

“Well, I was very excited but I did not even have a passport and Michelle Kruger from the Fresh Produce Exporters’ Forum helped me to organize all my documentation in time. During the flight to Berlin I was terrified as this was my first plane trip ever! The other people travelling with me calmed me down and showed me how things worked on the plane. The Fruit Logistica show was quite an

experience and although I learned a great deal, I come from a small town and those crowds were quite overwhelming. I will never forget how cold it was in Berlin or how beautiful it was to see the snow thick on the trees.”

While she was at Fruit Logistica, Sharon helped the Fruit South Africa team at the Fruit South Africa stand and had the opportunity to meet many role players within the South African fresh produce industry. On her return she was appointed as a permanent staff member at Riverside and her job description is export logistical co-ordinator.

“The Top of the Class Course has been of great help to me as it gave me a background of why certain procedures have to be followed in the packhouse to support processes in the rest of the supply chain. I have a better perspective of the entire industry, for instance like understanding why different customers require fruit of varying colour and size requirements. I enjoy my job at Riverside even though we sometimes work very late hours loading containers. During the time I’ve been doing this job, I have learned a great deal from Joyce Fortuin, the financial manager, who has taught me the basics of logistics and still helps me every time I have a problem. I’m here to stay and I do not want to disappoint the management of Riverside who gave me this opportunity.”

Given the backdrop of massive unemployment, lack of skills and impoverishment that plagues this part of the Eastern Cape, both Sharon and her employers are indeed lucky to have found each other.



Wendy Wienand

Farm administrator, farmer's wife and unofficial patron of the Anglican Crèche in Cookhouse

The late afternoon light was weaving its magic on the rugged Eastern Cape landscape on the approach to the farm of Brett and Wendy Wienand just outside the small town of Cookhouse. As this is mostly sheep country, Wendy's instructions on the phone were to look out for the citrus trees on the left. "I'll be around there," were her words and that was precisely where she was, looking groomed and fresh while checking on the orchards despite the long hot day.

The day's work was just ending and amidst the swirl of dust and evening's greetings from the workers departing on the farm "bakkie", we found a spot to chat in the farm office amongst the orchards.

Wendy is a qualified teacher and is originally from Grahamstown. She told me that at the time that she and Brett got married, he was farming at Bedford. "Once my parents-in-law retired from this farm, we moved here and took over the reins," she explained. Eight years ago they started the citrus project in partnership with Jock Danckwerts and have since involved two other partners, Chris Louw and Gerhard Scheepers.

"For the first few years I was largely responsible for the staff as well as the administration and chemical spray programme. We started with 90 hectares originally and are currently developing a further 50 hectares. Since those early days the project has grown substantially and we now have a manager, Bruce Knott, who has been a great help and has taken over most of these responsibilities."

In Cookhouse there is a crèche attached to the Anglican Church and aside from the building, there is no funding or support for this little school. The assistant Anglican Minister in the area, Jean Underwood, started this facility and appealed to Wendy for support. The plight of these preschool children motivated Wendy and as a result, she has become involved in their welfare.

Wendy explained: "The crèche building is a tin shed in the church grounds and there are currently 52 children in the school. The parents are supposed to pay fees of R20.00 per month but many of them simply cannot afford this. During the nine years that the crèche has been running, the position has sometimes been so dire that at one stage the teachers taught for four years without receiving salaries.

"I have now been involved with the crèche for five years. We see to it that the children receive 2 meals per day – porridge in the mornings and brown bread peanut butter sandwiches at lunch time. We take care of other social needs where possible, but this is a huge task and sorely requires additional resources. I have appealed to friends and family for assistance and we have a friend in Australia who funds the crèche as an anonymous donor to the tune of R2 000.00 per month. My son has also sent some funds from the UK and every bit helps."

Wendy added that when the St Andrews and DSG (private schools in Grahamstown) pupils spend a night on their farm during their annual Grade 10 Great Fish River hike, they

incorporate an outreach programme to the Anglican crèche at Cookhouse. "The school children assist us by cleaning up the grounds and have also painted cheerful murals at the crèche," Wendy explained. "We have also been blessed to receive help from Kathy Knott, our manager's wife. She is a qualified preschool teacher and has been able to assist the crèche teachers in planning their school activities."



Some of the children that attend the crèche at the moment are the children of pickers on the farm. "It is becoming increasingly difficult to find seasonal labour in our area," says Wendy. "The lack of employment opportunities in the region has made people move elsewhere for work and we have to look for labour from further afield. By providing a nurturing environment for young children in Cookhouse, the crèche offers a vital resource to the women who live and work in the area."

One of the other big challenges in the area is the shortage of skills. The Waitrose Foundation has presented an ABET (Adult Basic Education Training) course on the farm and this was well attended. "We would appreciate the opportunity to train workers on the farm with specific technical skills such as measurement training, tractor driving courses and spraying courses."

"I remain involved at the Anglican crèche because it is important to me to provide these children with a good start to life. It is wonderful to see them grow and develop while they attend the crèche and we make sure that they are also well fed. My children have grown up and left home and when I spend time at the crèche, the children steal into my heart. My commitment there is from the heart. It's that simple."

As I'm leaving, in the spirit of warm Eastern Cape hospitality Wendy invites me to visit when I pass this way again. Driving through Cookhouse, I conclude that the young children at the Anglican crèche in Cookhouse are indeed blessed to have a beautiful and caring "guardian angel" in Wendy Wienand.



Tini Engelbrecht

CGA Director and Trustee of the Piet Engelbrecht Trust

The Groblersdal and Marble Hall fruit production region [the SenWes area] is approximately 150 km north-east of Johannesburg. After travelling this distance from “the big smoke” through the highveld countryside, it is a pleasure to arrive in this green oasis, where neatly aligned rows of orange trees and vineyards thrive on water from the Moses-, Elands-, Elephants River and the nearby Loskop Dam. The Loskop dam is source to the Loskop Irrigation Scheme which has a length of almost 100 km – feeding water to some 16 117 ha of prime agricultural land which is divided into 702 plots. Thanks to the Loskop Dam as many as three crops can be harvested annually. These include citrus, table grapes, stone fruit, grain, cotton, potatoes, tobacco and any vegetable imaginable.

It is in Groblersdal that I met Tini, Marketing and Financial Director for the Piet Engelbrecht Trust. Tini is an executive director of the CGA [Citrus Growers' Association], as well as a director of PPECB [Perishable Products Export Control Board]. Tini is responsible for the marketing and logistics for all the fruit on their farm. It soon became apparent that Tini's quiet reserve is complemented by a heartfelt passion for the success of the citrus industry. Despite her initial reserve, Tini's presence resonates a determined strength of character. She is a woman who is very focused and has worked hard to get where she is, in what is perceived to be a man's world. Her voluntary involvement in various industry bodies over the past eight years has not only been for the benefit of their own family business, but for the greater benefit of the entire citrus industry in South Africa.

Tini was raised in Marble Hall on the family farm where her father, Wim Engelbrecht, farmed extensively with citrus. After school she completed a B. Com. Accounting Degree at the University of Pretoria. She then started building a career for herself at the Pretoria Municipal City Council Treasury and later worked at Datafusion as a Cost Accountant in Centurion. She never had any intention of becoming involved with the family farming.

“It was a quirk of fate that brought me back here and I have remained here ever since. In 1995 my parents were both injured in a car accident and so I was urgently needed to assist with the running of the farm. My financial training stood me in good stead and I took over the financial running of the farm. Although my parents both recovered over time, I have remained involved on the farm ever since. After deregulation of the citrus industry in 2000, we started to export our own fruit. I took responsibility for the marketing of the fruit and the following year I also took control of the quality of the

fruit and the logistics.” During the past 15 years, the citrus crop on the farm has realised substantial expansion. When Tini returned to the farm they had 100 hectares and today the farm has 300 hectares. “We export approximately 800 000 cartons of oranges and lemons between March and August annually.”

She explained that the South African citrus industry represents 60% of all fresh fruit exports, and in 5 years the annual export figure has grown from 40 million to 90 million, making South Africa the second biggest citrus exporter internationally.

“One of my biggest frustrations about our industry at the moment is that despite this exponential growth, it has still not succeeded in getting its data flow and capture methods flowing efficiently. We have put in a motivation from PPECB and CGA to DoA that the industry needs to have Electronic Data Interfaces between PPECB and packhouses up and running by 2008. The DOA needs to legislate the matter, and make it compulsory for all packhouses to comply with the legislation. Where possible, the CGA will assist the packhouses to become EDI compliant. We need to make the industry information available as it happens and this needs to be done electronically as soon as possible. It will improve the flow of fruit through the ports (cold stores, roads etc.), and vessel planning can be done before the fruit or the vessel arrives in the port.

“Another big issue is the lack of skills within the industry. We are addressing this at a local level through the Loskop Marketing Club. The producers pay an annual fee for membership and for this, the club arranges for various forms of training by accredited training entities. During the past four years we have trained around 1 600 people annually.”

“On a personal level, the involvement in the citrus industry and the international travelling involved, has given me a better understanding of the industry and with this level of exposure comes extended vision. Kallie Schoeman, of Schoeman Boerdery (South Africa's largest citrus farmer and a neighbour of Tini's), has been a good support and inspiration to me and has encouraged me to continue to represent growers within organised agriculture.

“It is tough to be one of the few women involved in the citrus industry and, at times, it is very difficult to make an impression on men, particularly a group of men. This is no nine-to-five job and does not come without a price as the time I spend travelling does require me to make sacrifices within my private life.”

The following Afrikaans saying “Die hoogste bome kry die meeste wind” translates as the highest trees catch the most wind and means that often the people in positions of power receive the most resistance and opposition from their detractors. Representing fellow growers within organised agriculture is both voluntary and unpaid and for Tini and other directors, this can often be a thankless task. One truly hopes that Tini's commitment and hard work are appreciated.



Professor Lise Korsten

Head of Plant Pathology Laboratories, Department of Microbiology and Plant Pathology, University of Pretoria

A quick Google (Internet) search on Professor Lise Korsten gave some interesting insight about this dynamic figure in the South African citrus industry. It listed a very large number of publications and other entries under her name. It also revealed that she has more degrees behind her name than letters in her name. This all clearly shows that she is an internationally respected and highly published authority in the fields of post harvest diseases and citrus and subtropical crops. Also revealed were some glimpses of her character, as it listed one of her students thanking her for her guidance and support. The words used were; "You have been my anchor and compass through this project."

Lise has been involved with the citrus industry for the past 20 years and before she changed her focus to food safety, post harvest diseases and biological control, she had spent many years working on citrus greening. "Over the years, experience has taught me some valuable lessons regarding interaction between industry funding bodies and academic researchers. To address industry's short-term problem solving needs, and still retain academic excellence, measured in postgraduate outputs and publications in top peer reviewed journals, we need to meet each other halfway. The dynamics of the challenge is that we are looking at the same problem but from different angles and we need to understand and appreciate the differences, and use it to strengthen

the relationship and ultimately to get the most out of it for both parties. The most important message that I have for the agricultural sector is that if industry want to remain relevant and competitive in the future, we must support long-term basic research at academic institutions of excellence, and invest in developing human capacity to ensure sustained growth. If industry wish to fund research, make sure that the institution has the credentials, world-class facilities, and a track record of research and academic excellence in the relevant field of study," she stressed.

One aspect that Prof Korsten feels strongly about is that scientists should not work outside their field of expertise since it can lead to incorrect information entering the scientific domain. This she illustrated with the example of citrus greening research done by a group of scientists with a medical microbiology background. In the early 1990's this led to much confusion since the group claimed that they could isolate the greening organism. This fact was strongly disputed by several citrus greening research groups i.e. the French (Proff Jose Bove and Monique Garnier), Dr Barry Manicom of the Agricultural Research Council, Nelspruit and Prof Korsten's group. Although the medical group's claims were disproved a few years later, the incident exposed vulnerability within the system and distracted researchers from pursuing more important issues related to the disease. This also highlights the importance of training adequate numbers of plant pathologists and the need for industry to appoint trained plant pathologists within this highly specialised field of science. "If you are feeling sick you most certainly won't go to a plant pathologist or veterinarian even though these disciplines have many common dominators," she said.

During her research career working on citrus diseases, she has developed a wonderful working relationship with the previous Outsplan and the researchers at Nelspruit. According to her names such as those of "Oom" Dawid Lötter, Louis von Broembsen, Laurence Marais and Fanie van Vuuren from ARC, Nelspruit come to mind. Her long-standing friendship with Prof John da Graca from the then Natal University, Pietermaritzburg and Prof Moshe Bar Joseph from the Volcani Institute in Israel, ensured wonderful support and encouragement. She also described one of the classic characters in the citrus world namely Dr Chester Roistacher who obtained a Honorary doctorate degree from the University of Pretoria as an inspiration to her because of his commitment and passion for the citrus industry. But most importantly for her was the man who shaped her thoughts and awakened her passion for research and fruit health, Professor Jan Kotze, who was the head of the Department at the time. "He was more than a mentor, he was a father to me and today funnily enough he is in fact my stepfather," she explained.

As the international trend towards minimising the use of chemical pesticides and fungicides increased, it created a need for increased knowledge of post-harvest diseases and biological control and this has since been one of Lise's main areas of research. Prof Korsten and her team have since developed a series of biological control products that can be used particularly in the organic sector. These products are at different development stages and will soon be available to industry for commercial use once product registration has been secured.

Another major new direction of research from Prof Korsten's research team focuses on the movement of fruit from the farm through to the customer overseas. Following the citrus

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Isabel Potgieter

General Manager of Morone Citrus Beperk

If it is true that the journey of life teaches us lessons, this one's lesson was that potholes come in three sizes: small, medium and Mpumalanga! Morone Citrus Beperk is near Burgersfort off the beaten track in Mpumalanga and although the roads in the region must be some of the country's most neglected, it certainly is heartening to see that all along these potholed roads there are currently extensive roadworks underway, showing strong government commitment to improve and maintain the province's roads.

So reaching Morone Citrus Beperk much later than expected, Isabel Potgieter's warm welcome and the pleasant smell of rain on warm earth provided a welcome respite. Petite and well groomed, it was soon clear that Isabel and her team run a tight ship. "The management of Morone is a team of women; I'm the general manager, Hanti Oosthuizen is the packhouse clerk and Esmé Vorster is our admin and finance clerk," explains Isabel. "On occasion we have had agents arrive at our offices and when looking for the boss they ask where the men are! Some stereotypes simply die hard," she laughed.

Morone Citrus Beperk is a co-operative packhouse with 8 members and an annual production of 10 000 tonnes. The packhouse packs soft citrus as well as Navel and Valencia types and their season runs from February to September. The packhouse has 20 permanent employees, but during the season this number swells to around 140 workers.

Isabel completed a B. Comm. degree through the universities of Pretoria and Unisa before marrying her husband, a farmer from the Morone area. "We came to the area in 1990 and in 1993 Morone needed someone to help with their administration. Initially I was to help out for only three months and 15 years later I'm still here," laughed Isabel. "In the 15 years I've been here, my job has changed and grown far beyond my initial brief. At first I was responsible for the administration and finances. Between 2000 and 2002, we had a high turnover of packhouse staff and when our packhouse manager left in February 2002, a month before we were to start packing Satsumas, I ended up running the production side of the packhouse as well.

"Initially we needed to see if the relationship with the packhouse supervisors would work in the process of packing. This is crucial for success as the supervisors have the skills to teach the workforce the packing

techniques. Fortunately this was successful and still works well today. The current situation motivates and gives recognition to the supervisors, while my team and I give direction and the Board of Directors is quite satisfied with this arrangement. As a management team, we get on with the job and if we need assistance, we consult our service providers.

"In 2006 we changed over to electronic packing and we have adapted to this and got to know the process. We realised that we needed someone with good computer skills so we have a lady in charge of the function of the sizer and grader and we have also recently employed a young man to help with the mechanical side of the packing operation.

"The citrus industry is dynamic and stimulating. In this industry it is impossible to stagnate as every year is different and has its own challenges and rewards. Citrus production is one of the few types of farming that still has the potential to be lucrative if producers and exporters work together to keep the industry sustainable. On a personal level, I am very grateful to my husband for his incredible support. My involvement in the citrus packhouse has made me have a better understanding of the production side of farming, thus helping me to understand my husband's business as well. It also keeps me focused and involved as well as in tune with what is happening on the farms. On the other hand it is also very important to separate the business and personal side of matters in order to keep the peace! My children have grown up and left home and they accept and respect my involvement at Morone.

"If there is a message I have for other women in the citrus industry is that even though you work in a man's world, it is important to retain your femininity and self-respect. Elsa de Beer from Potgietersrus Citrus Korporasie set this example for me years ago as she was both very efficient, yet still retained her good feminine grooming and respect."

Isabel recounted an amusing story by way of illustration. A few years ago one of the agents for mechanical parts for the packhouse machinery arrived at Morone to proudly present the management with a complimentary calendar from his company. He unfortunately lacked the sensitivity to realise that the team of three women would not appreciate a calendar of virtually naked women draped on electric motors, but Isabel wasted no time in pointing this out to him and also wrote to the head office of the company to lodge an objection. Apparently the next year the company's calendar was more tasteful! Clearly Morone Citrus Beperk is in strong and capable hands.





Irma van Rooyen

Founder of Kaross Embroidery Project

Kaross Shangaan embroidery project is set amongst citrus orchards in the countryside near Letsitele in the Limpopo province. There is something of a carnival buzz in the air as many women in brightly coloured clothes sit working and chatting in and around the elegant buildings and grounds. They certainly do more than just chat as their exquisite works of art on display in the shop at the front of the building clearly show. Kaross now also boasts a coffee shop, a recent addition and Irma van Rooyen tells of Kaross and its origins over a frothy cappuccino.

Irma is the founder of this highly successful Kaross Embroidery Project that has taken the embroidery craft of the Shangaan people and turned it into big business.

"In the farming situation we work very closely with the people who work on the farms and get to know the whole family situation as well as being involved in most facets of their lives. I saw how limited the opportunities are that are available to rural women and how many potentially productive hours are lost as a result. I am inclined to be creative and as these women have always been an inspiration to me, I was looking at ways in which I could inspire them to achieve more. I started the embroidery project 18 years ago and the beauty of their traditional Shangaan embroidery gives them the confidence to be creative. This exquisite creativity is being honoured internationally as the American Museum of Anthropology has commissioned a wall hanging and this is there for the world to see," Irma explains.

One of the huge benefits of Kaross's operation is that most of the workers do not have to work on site. Irma's talented young artists Calvin Mahlaule and Solomon Mohati draw the designs onto cotton cloth and then the men and women who do the embroidery fetch the cloth and embroidery cotton

from the studio. The cotton and cloth are light and portable, which makes the work easy to carry around and work on during spare time. Kaross pays the embroiderers for their work as soon as the product is delivered, thus providing an immediate income for the embroiderers, many of whom have no other employment.

The embroidery project has boosted the lives of the women who embroider for the project as it has given them an income that they had no access to before and this income has been a great help to many of these rural families. It has also empowered women by providing them with an independent source of income, thus lessening the need to rely on the income of their spouses. The project has also boosted the level of pride in tradition of Shangaan embroidery and instead of this art being lost as was the trend previously mothers are teaching this to their daughters. Irma recounts how she and a colleague travelled into a nearby village recently and they saw young girls of 9 and 10 doing embroidery. They asked them what they were doing and the answer was that their mothers have taught them to sew the outlines of the pieces for Kaross and then their mothers finish the more intricate parts.

"In the rural areas the people at Kaross have become famous and this initiative will sustain itself beyond me one day," says Irma. "I have a great respect and gratitude to my husband Burgert for his support for all the projects I've tackled in my life, as well as for the understanding that my three children have for my passion to uplift others. My youngest daughter Janine is also involved with Kaross and runs our Kaross outlet in Parkhurst in Johannesburg. Her help is a great boost, as is the support from Henk and Andriette, my other children," says Irma.

Irma shared an amusing and telling tale about a commission from South African Airlines for the international departure lounge at the Oliver Tambo Airport in Johannesburg. "Their request was to create a very large wall hanging and I discussed this with one of my artists (Calvin), who



Embroiderers at Kaross

Irma van Rooyen

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does the drawings on the cloth for the ladies to embroider. I explained my vision to him and that the wall hanging should depict all the processes travellers go through from when they arrive at the airport until they board the plane. I described the trolleys for the luggage as well as the security check points. Calvin, who has not travelled by plane before had a somewhat different visual interpretation. The trolleys he drew looked like supermarket trolleys with the luggage inside and at the security check point he had the police handcuffing a suspect on the ground with an AK47 rifle pointed at him! I had a good giggle at this interpretation, but SAA were not amused and would have none of it! Well, we completed a wonderful piece for them nonetheless and if you should find yourself in the SAA departures lounge, have a look and see what we came up with for them."

"This job provides me with the most wonderful job satisfaction. On a Monday morning I cannot wait to get to work to see what the women have created. They also love what they do and are most grateful for this opportunity. From my perspective, I truly love the people involved at Kaross and it is certainly a privilege to work with such inspired and talented people."

Lisa Korsten *continued from page 22*

supply chain and identifying critical points of contamination from production to consumption is critical if industry wants to secure product integrity and safety. "What happens with our fruit once it leaves the farm gate has always been a mystery that few producers have insight into. When a consignment gets rejected overseas, it is the producer's loss. Ownership without control is a recipe for disaster and with the current emphasis on food safety assurance producers need to be more aware of what happens along the supply chain. Producers need to know that service providers in the supply chain are handling their fruit in a sound and safe manner and that product integrity will not be compromised. This all boils down to trust between all the role players within the supply chain."

Monitoring compliance or the lack of it in the supply chain was a major eye opener for Prof Korsten and has resulted in her research team developing a rapid detection method to determine point of possible contamination. "With this knowledge and tools we hope to eventually improve operational functioning within the supply chain and ultimately reduce losses and increase profit margins for farmers," she said. This novel focus area in plant pathology namely forensic pathology can be used to determine who is most likely responsible for product spoilage and loss. This technology will go a long way to provide producer assurance and customer satisfaction and can ultimately be used in dispute cases. The most recent work of Prof Korsten's team has been on food safety assurance and developing rapid detection methods that can also be used in supply chain studies.

"My career has engulfed me and my passion for plant pathology has eaten into my personal life, yet my family has been extremely understanding, forgiving and supportive and has provided that strong support base that one needs to climb to the top. If I could have my life over, I would not have it any other way except I would spend more time with my family." Lisa also admit that she has had wonderful role models in her career such as Dr Ella Johansen and her own mother, who made her realise that "working mummies can also be good mummies". Being a woman in the citrus research environment, and being able to operate on an equal footing with my male colleagues, has so far been one of the biggest challenges of my career."

"If we are to address future food shortages and retain our competitive edge on the international markets, agriculture and government needs to invest in research and support and empower academic institutions to train enough students for the future needs of industry. We need a strong, shared vision to deal with the legacies of the past once and for all, so that we can put it behind us and move on. That is the only way we will all ever be free and allowed to evolve to our full potential as a nation."

The advertisement features a large, vibrant orange as the background. Overlaid on the orange is a semi-transparent world map. In the center of the map is the Capespan logo, which consists of a stylized 'C' with a leaf inside, followed by the word 'CAESPAN' and the tagline 'we deliver' below it. To the right of the logo, the word 'fresh' is written in a large, white, sans-serif font. Below 'fresh', the word 'Worldclass' is written in a similar font. Underneath 'Worldclass', the text 'We procure fruit from the 4 corners of the world and deliver fresh... no compromise!' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. At the bottom of the advertisement, the logos for 'OUTSPAN®' and 'Goldland®' are displayed. Below these logos, the website 'www.capespan.com' is written in a white, sans-serif font.

fresh
Worldclass
We procure fruit from the 4 corners
of the world and deliver fresh...
no compromise!
OUTSPAN® **Goldland®**
www.capespan.com



Sonja Helm

General Manager of Du Roi Nursery

The phone very seldom rings more than three times before it is answered at Du Roi Nursery near Letsitele in Limpopo Province. "I believe that good service is the best form of advertising," says Sonja Helm, general manager of Du Roi Nursery. "The first impression that our clients have of us is the level of service they receive when they phone or pop in and if the receptionist is busy, I dive for the phone rather than let it ring. It is of vital importance to make sure that clients are not left unattended," she explained. Clearly Sonja's approach works as she later mentioned that Du Roi seldom advertises. "We believe that our product must sell itself," she explained. This is quite an accolade for a nursery with the largest production of citrus seedlings in the Southern Hemisphere!



"I would ascribe Du Roi's success to teamwork between myself and the rest of the staff as we have a very democratic way of running the nursery, allowing individuals to have an opportunity for input. Although we believe in hard work, it is also important for us to enjoy our jobs and to have empathy with our fellow workers." Whatever the method, this trim go-getter seems to have a great deal of verve and energy as

Du Roi Nursery is a member of the South African Citrus Nurserymen's Association (SACNA) and participates in SACIP (Southern African Citrus Improvement Programme). Citrus plants are produced as per laid down specifications set out by CRI with certified plant and seed material, i.e. the trees conform to the highest horticultural and pathological requirements.

the various sectors of this mammoth undertaking seem to run as smoothly as a well-oiled machine. Seedling houses stretch off in all directions as well as buildings housing the other aspects of the nursery.

Human resource management is also one of great importance and at Du Roi it revolves around all the staff members that work there. This takes place in the form of skills development, literacy classes and a crèche facility for the workers' children.

At Du Roi, there are only women in the front office while the technicians in the technical office all happen to be men. "The technicians go out into the field with producers and although we work well together with the guys as a team, visitors arriving at the front office are often surprised to find only women here!"

Sonja grew up in Tzaneen and after a number of years working in Johannesburg, when she had children, she and her husband moved back to the area in order to give their children a more relaxed rural upbringing. Initially she worked for a large citrus farm in the area and started at Du Roi as a receptionist in 1995 and has worked her way up from there during the past 13 years. "I have qualifications in hard work and experience from the University of Life," she laughed. "Given my background I certainly have acquired a broad knowledge of the citrus industry. My husband is involved in the chemical side of the industry and my son works for a company that exports citrus, so we often tend to complement each other with our individual fields of knowledge and experience.

"A very important issue is that the citrus industry needs to invest in the development of new citrus cultivars in South Africa. We need to do this domestically and the producers need to be involved in this process and invest in it. Development is crucial for the future and the more progressive growers are already investing in this process. We certainly hope that this trend will grow."

Given the growth of the citrus industry over the past few years, managing a large nursery such as Du Roi is certainly a huge responsibility, yet Sonja seems to manage this with grace and excellent customer relations. "I am grateful to the citrus industry for their support and their trust in our product," she concluded.

Lillian Letsoalo

Chairperson of Mariveni Farmers' Co-operative

“I would like to encourage women to support agriculture and get involved. I have been a woman farmer for many years and take it from me – women can do this” says Lillian, a plucky citrus and banana farmer in her 60’s who was voted Mopani district’s Woman Export Farmer of the Year in 2005 by the Limpopo Departt of Agriculture. “Through God’s help I’ve been successful and other women could also follow the same path.”

Lillian is a member of Mariveni Co-operative in Letsitele, Limpopo Province. She has been farming her 10 hectare farm since 1987, when the previous government established a farming co-operative as part of the Gazankulu Homelands Agricultural Scheme. From the late 1980’s and through the 1990’s a total of 26 farmers were established at Mariveni in this initiative by the Agricultural and Rural Development Corporation (ARDC). In 2000 however, the ARDC disbanded and this left these emerging farmers without any financial support. They then approached the government and Du Roi Nursery for assistance. Abraham van Rooyen, owner of the neighbouring Du Roi Nursery assisted the members with production finance and at the same time attempted to source long-term finance from the commercial banks. During this time the members, with the assistance of Du Roi, established the Mariveni Farmers’ Co-operative. Funding was eventually approved by the Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA) and a “special purpose vehicle” entity, Masema (Pty) Ltd. was established in order to administer the funding from the DBSA and other funding entities. The same funding and procedures applied to two other emerging farmer projects in the Letsitele area namely Mabunda Farmers’ Cooperative and Seloane Farmers (Pty) Ltd.

“We realised that farming our small farms was not a financially sustainable way to operate and that in order to operate effectively, the full 260 hectares that made up Mariveni needed to become one commercial entity,” explained Lillian. Du Roi Precision Farming acts as the management company and all the members were offered employment within DRPF. “The people who work here now have seen that the old Cooperative system did not work and now Mariveni operates as one economic unit. The members’ plots have subsequently been valued by an independent

valuator and the proposal is that this value forms the basis of determining each members’ share in the proposed operating company”.

“It is an honour for me to act as chairperson of our co-operative. We have to work hard sometimes in getting everybody to co-operate and to keep everybody happy,” she laughed.

Lillian radiates the sense of peace and the wisdom gleaned from many years of experience. She has done many things in her life before becoming a farmer and is known as “Ouma” by her fellow trustees. She was born in Letsitele on Christmas Day 1942 and grew up in the area before working as private teacher and also as a nurse in Pietersburg (Polokwane). She also spent some years working in Johannesburg before returning to Mariveni in 1983.

“In 1987 I found out about the opportunity offered here to establish oneself as a farmer and I remember that I was very excited about this possibility. When I went to investigate this I was encouraged to be part of the initiative. I was thrilled to be accepted and in 1987 I started farming here with cotton. In 1992 I planted bananas in order to improve my cash flow situation and in 1997 I diversified further and planted my first citrus. I was the first woman to plant citrus at Mariveni.”

Lillian’s hard work has been recognised by both government and organised agriculture as besides being voted as Woman Export Farmer of the Year in 2005, she was also nominated as Woman Citrus Farmer of the year in 2002. In 1991 she travelled to Jakarta as a guest of the Gazankulu Development Corporation and in 2006 she was sponsored to travel to the Foodex Conference in Japan by the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC).

“Over the years I have thoroughly enjoyed farming. It has not been easy but I have enjoyed the challenges and learned a great deal about the crops that I have produced. I would like to thank my son for telling me about the Mariveni project all those years ago as well as George Nkhwashu for encouraging me to join. My thanks also goes to Justin Chadwick and Andile Maxwell Hawes from the Citrus Growers’ Association for their recognition and support as well as to Du Roi Precision Farming and Bernie Stopforth, the manager of the Mariveni project.”

Lillian is indeed an inspiration for other women and she has not allowed the challenges of farming to get in her way. She has achieved much through hard work and an unshakable faith in God.



Kate Hlongo

Citrus Academy student at Mariveni

Kate Hlongo is a 31-year-old Plant Production student currently in her third and final year of a degree in Plant Production. She is studying at the Lowveld College of Agriculture in Nelspruit and is a recipient of a Citrus Academy bursary. I met her at her parent's home at Mariveni near Tzaneen, where she was about to start her 2008 year of internship at Du Roi Nursery and I was immediately struck by her enthusiasm and sunny disposition.

as consumers eat food but generally don't know very much about its production. It was while I has helping him at Mariveni that I heard about the Citrus Academy bursaries."

During 2006 and 2007 Kate studied at the Lowveld College of Agriculture in Nelspruit. "This has been quite challenging and has required a great deal of discipline, but I was determined to succeed and fortunately my studies have been successful to this point. I really have a huge debt of thanks to Jacomien and Desiree from the Citrus Academy for their help and guidance, because without them I would not be where I am today!"

Kate says that her family are pleasantly surprised at her determination to study. Her sister Betty is also working in agriculture locally after completing studies in vegetable production and is also furthering her studies. "Yes, our parents did not expect us to have these ambitions as their attitude was that we are just girls. Although they did not have these high expectations for us, today they are certainly proud of our achievements," she laughed.

Unlike many young people from rural areas, Kate has no interest in moving to a city. "I have become involved in citrus as I want to return here after my studies and to work in the local citrus industry. Going to the city is not the life for me as city life is too rushed and it will certainly be good to use my training close to home. If I'm working here, it will also inspire others around me to follow the path of education and apply this in the rural areas where it is much needed. As women we need to be proud of ourselves. The food needs to be produced and we can get on with this. We have proved that we can do this and do not need to stand back any longer."

As a parting comment, Kate says that she believes that friendliness is very important in life and that she tries to make friends wherever she goes. Taking in her tall, straight-backed poise and abundant warmth as I leave, I certainly believe she will succeed at this and at most other things she sets her mind to.



Above: Kate Hlongo in formal attire at the launch of the Citrus Academy

"My path did not lead me straight to the citrus industry, but I am very happy to have found this direction," says Kate. She matriculated in 1996 and after school she studied Early Childhood Development at Soshanguve College in Pretoria. "Once I'd completed these studies, I could not find a job around here and although it was my ambition to start a crèche, I could not afford it," she explained.

Kate's brother Joseph is a shareholder in the Mariveni Farmers' Co-operative and he had asked her to help him with his citrus trees a few times. "My brother's involvement in the citrus industry was a motive for me to go in the same direction. I enjoyed working with the trees but realised that I did not know anything about the production process. This interested me and motivated me to find out more about plant production because we



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Golden Frontier Citrus



Golden Frontier Citrus is a subsidiary of TSB Sugar and is situated in the picturesque Nkomazi region of the South-Eastern Lowveld of Mpumalanga, South Africa, approximately 60 kilometres east of Nelspruit. Their head office is on the N4 highway with the Kruger National Park to the north and Swaziland to the south in the narrow but strategic corridor of South African soil that connects to Mozambique and Maputo to the East. This rich agricultural soil yields bountiful crops of citrus, bananas avocados and sugar cane. Golden Frontier Citrus exports 3.2 million cartons of citrus annually from 1 700 ha of citrus. Throughout the year they employ 280 permanent workers and during the harvest, packing and pruning season, this number swells to 2200.

Golden Frontier Citrus Offices



Ivy Lubisi
Receptionist and
PA to Production
Manager at GFC

Ivy Lubisi is the receptionist and thus the first person you meet when you arrive at the Golden Frontier Citrus offices. She is friendly, chic and confident and it is clear to see why GFC has chosen to place this modern, young Swazi woman at the front desk.

Yet, she didn't start here - Ivy has worked her way up to this position through hard work and commitment. "I started at GFC as a cleaner in 2000 and then in 2001 they needed a receptionist and as I had already been doing this, I was appointed to this post. My boss Mr Greyling enrolled me at the Boston Business College in Nelspruit as a part-time student and after three years of studying, I now have a Diploma in Switchboard and Reception.

Ivy completed her matric in Nelspruit and as her father had been working at TSB/GFC for 35 years, he was the one who heard about

the position for a cleaner at the administration offices. "I am very grateful to my parents for their constant encouragement. Even though I had a matric, I struggled to find a job and my parents encouraged me to apply for the job as a cleaner as they knew it might provide a stepping stone and lead further. My parents are very proud of me and are surprised at how well I've done - I'm 30 years old and last year I was able to buy myself a car." Ivy lives with her parents at Block D Trust at Komatipoort and commutes the 30 km to work every day.

"I would like to encourage potential entrants to the citrus industry as working in this industry is always a stimulating challenge and one is learning all the time. A good example of that at the moment is that we have just changed to the clock card system and I am now also monitoring the clock card machine. This is a great industry to be in, but as with any kind of job, there is no substitute for hard work. This is generally what is recognised and rewarded, as it has been in my case.

"I must also thank my boss Mr Greyling for giving me the opportunity to study further and to improve my skills. It has really meant a great deal to me."

"Ivy's career is certainly on the fast track - as she has now been promoted to Admin clerk for production. Ivy is an extremely important link between myself and our employee force and has proved herself to be a record keeper of note," said Mr Greyling.



Julia Magagula – Grading Supervisor at GFC



Julia Magagula is a grading supervisor at Golden Frontier Citrus packhouse. When we met at the administration building, she was hesitant to talk about herself and we needed a translator, but despite these barriers, Julia's strong spirit of determination and commitment were still clearly evident.

Julia is a permanent employee at Golden Frontier Citrus and has worked in citrus packhouses for 32 years. She hails from the Wild Frontiers area of Mpumalanga and reports to Jan Cloete who is the manager of the Hectorspruit packhouse of GFC. As this packhouse has a daily average throughput of 8 000 export cartons one can calculate that Julia is responsible for making sure that 450 000 pieces of fruit per day find their way in perfect condition to GFC's export markets. She achieves this through her excellent interaction with 36 graders and 50 packers.

"I am 58 years old and I started to working for TSB/GFC at Komatidraai in 1976 and later at Hectorspruit as a grader for first grade fruit," says Julia. "I worked hard and put everything into my work and in 1978 my commitment was recognised by my employers. I was promoted to grading supervisor and have done this job ever since then.

"One of the most important things I learned early on is that time is money and so I always encourage the people I work with to be as productive and as punctual as possible. During the off season, I am responsible for keeping the packhouse clean and tidy. I have been here for a very long time and although this is all I know, I know it very well and I do my job to the best of my ability. My neighbours and fellow workers know that I am dedicated and good at what I do.

"I am very grateful to be a permanent employee as the temporary employees only work from April to September. I enjoy working here as this provides a good and stable income and I am able to provide for my children. I did not attend school and as this job was the only opportunity for me and is all I know, I was determined that my children should be educated. Right now I am currently putting my two children through tertiary studies with the University of Limpopo and UNISA and I'm paying for this myself."

Lindiwe Masina – Citrus Academy student at GFC



Lindiwe is clearly a very determined woman. She is 39 years old, a wife and a mother of four and when I met her she had just completed the third year (internship at Golden Frontier Citrus) of a three-year degree in Plant Production at the Lowveld Agricultural College, an institution 110 km from where her husband and family live. The hard work she has put in at TSB has borne fruit as she has been offered a permanent post as a trainee section leader. It is also obvious to see why Lindiwe was one of the first recipients of a Citrus Academy bursary.

She is originally from Swaziland and moved to South Africa after completing her O Levels (matric) in 1987 and a Higher Certificate in Food and Beverage from the Swaziland College of Technology. Lindiwe is married to a South African who is a pastor and their family home is in Carolina. Prior to starting her agricultural studies, Lindiwe worked in the catering field. "This was not satisfactory as I needed to travel very far from home in order to get a decent job in this sector, and this is what prompted me to become involved in agriculture," she explained.

"I have grown to love the citrus industry well. These studies have been a great inspiration and our lecturers have told us that women really can be farmers as well. This is revolutionary and I am looking forward to getting involved. I now know how to plan a citrus farm – from planning, planting, spray programmes, controlling weeds to production and preparing fruit for export."

Lindiwe's decision to further her studies was not taken lightly and has involved some sacrifices. "Without the support of my wonderful husband I could not have done this. He has been a great help with our children and when I left to go to college in Nelspruit, our youngest child was 15 months old, yet he has coped admirably and they are all doing well. One of my children is currently studying at the University of Johannesburg and has received a bursary to complete a Higher Diploma in Education.

"For women it remains a big challenge to be promoted to the higher positions on the farm and this will only be achieved by very thorough and hard work. In this job you cannot watch the clock and you often have to work late or put in extra time. You need to plan your household by cooking extra in the morning if you might be held up at work. As a farm manager, you need to be flexible and know about all the aspects of production and packaging.

"There are no shortcuts and you need to learn much of this from grass roots level from people who are working in the field. I have had to be humble and learn everything from scratch and I believe that my maturity has been a great help in this process as I was patient enough to learn from others.

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Sarie Venter – Administration Clerk at GFC and Waitrose Foundation Representative

Even before I met Sarie Venter, I was indebted to her as she had organised all the interviews at Golden Frontier Citrus like clockwork for me and also given me detailed directions on how to get to the GFC offices – successfully! When I did meet her, she was every bit as warm and welcoming as she had sounded.

Sarie is an administration clerk and has worked for GFC for 15 years. “I can really say that I love my job. I like to get up in the mornings and come to work because I work in a stimulating environment and I am always learning something new. During the time I have been with GFC, there have been many organisational changes and I have got to know the administrative side of all the facets of GFC’s operations. GFC is a progressive company that stays ahead with technology and as we have good computer programmes that meet our needs, this has made the job easier over the years.”

She has also studied part-time and achieved qualifications in Administration and Occupational Psychology, which she has found helpful in the human resources aspect of her job. Her involvement with GFC came about after her husband Bertie started working for the company as a farm manager in the 1990’s. Previously the Venters had farmed with maize in the Free State, but when things got tough, they sold up and moved to Nelspruit in 1989.

Sarie was also recently appointed as GFC’s representative for the Waitrose Foundation. “We have just started to develop a relationship with the Waitrose Foundation and the future prospects of working more closely with them look very promising. Training and mentorship of all employees is high on the agenda for GFC and Sarie is responsible for the development of and deliverance to a comprehensive workplace skills plan. She also reported that GFC currently has a very successful ABET (Adult Basic Education Training) programme and with assistance from the Waitrose Foundation, we hope to extend our Corporate Social Responsibility activities.”

“The citrus industry is indeed a stimulating industry to be involved with as it is far more diverse and interesting than other agricultural industries. Every year differs from the previous as each season brings with it new ideas and challenges.

“I would like to thank Zi De Bruin for her mentorship as she is very competent and also Dr Hoppie Nel, the managing director of GFC for his help and inspiration in my job.

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Zi de Bruin – Administration/Logistics Manager at GFC

Zi De Bruin is a confident, friendly brunette and on the day we met, she was wearing a beautifully colourful skirt, but beware the man who mistakes her femininity for weakness as this feisty Latin is certainly no pushover!

Zi started working in the sugar division of TSB in 1994 and after that TSB bought citrus farms and GFC was established. “There was a vacancy at GFC and I was asked by Dr Hoppie Nel, managing director of GFC to apply for the job. The year I started, the citrus unit exported 300 000 cartons of fruit. GFC then built 3 new pack houses and within the next 5 seasons, the packhouses were packing around 2 million cartons of fruit. I was made responsible for the administration of in-bound logistics and later on dispatch as well. At that stage we did not have any computer systems in place and we did all of this on excel spread sheets. We worked closely with the IT specialists in identifying our needs and developing our own computer systems.

“Initially it was tough to do this as I was the first woman in the company’s middle management and it was a challenge to get men to accept me in this position, but over time as our systems have become more streamlined, I have also become more confident in my post. In order to gain respect in a situation like this, it is important to be assertive without losing your femininity,” she stressed.

Zi was born in Angola and schooled in Klerksdorp. Her husband Kobus is a production manager who also works for GFC. Before working at GFC, Zi also spent some time working for the army at Phalaborwa. “This certainly was a good schooling on how to get on with men,” she laughed. “I was not a secretary, yet in meetings, men would look at me and expect me to take minutes. I just refused!

“I really enjoy my job at GFC and the one thing that I have come to realise is that the fruit industry changes every year. In the beginning I investigated every facet of the packing process to familiarise myself with the components. I stood in the packing line

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Lindiwe Masina
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"I am sincerely thankful to the Citrus Academy for my bursary. This has not just been a bursary, but the Citrus Academy has also provided me with extra support with social issues, which has been a great help. They truly care for us, calling regularly to hear how things are going and even remember our birthdays! My college lecturers have also been a great inspiration. Dr Reid, our Water Management lecturer taught me the phrase I will never forget: 'You can't be a farmer if you don't know how to manage your water!'

The farm manager at GFC is well pleased with her performance and as a section leader Lindiwe will be responsible for the orchard management of several orchard blocks. "Lindiwe is a somewhat unique woman as she has chosen to further her career in the production side of the operation whereas many women of her peer group prefer the "softer" conditions of office work," commented Operational Manager Kobus De Bruin.

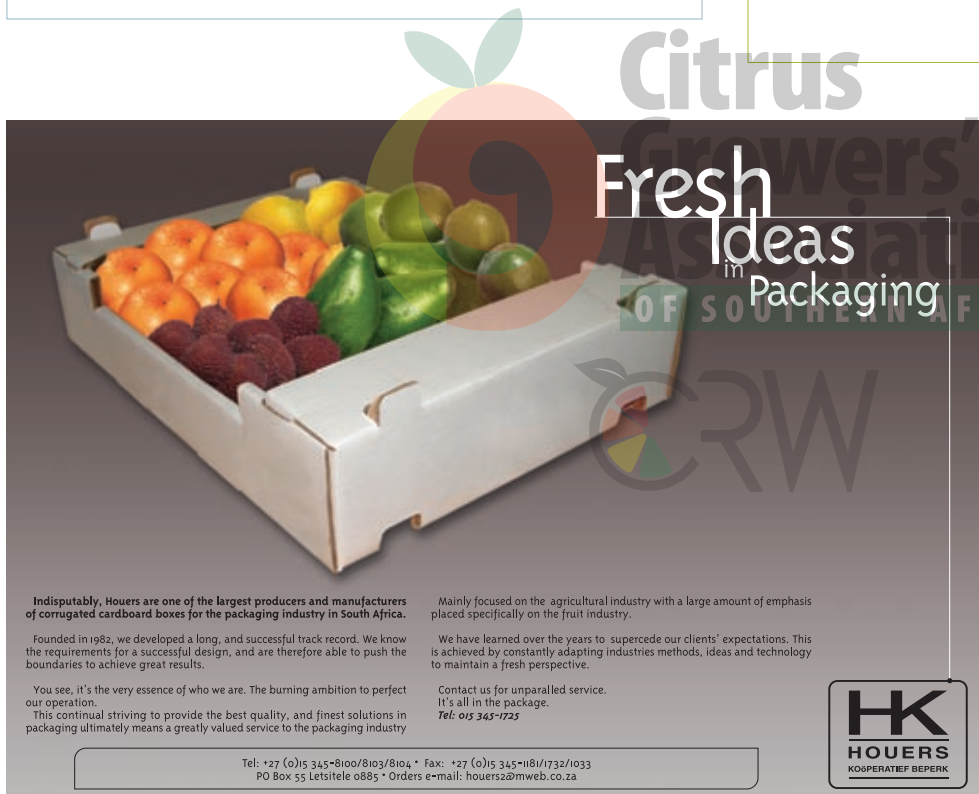
"As a born again Christian, I know that I have not been able to achieve this alone. God has helped me all the way."

Zi de Bruin
continued from page 31

and climbed on top of pallets of boxes to make sure I knew all there was to know about the packaging. A logistics manager has to be able to think on his or her feet. Very often this is about problem solving and thus it is important to be flexible and versatile. In my case the job has evolved way beyond the initial job description and my experience has been that self-training on the job is often more rewarding than pure academic training.

"It really is up to women to push the boundaries. In this business many trips are about the administration and logistics side of the operation and these are generally focused on men while women are often excluded. The powers that be in the industry should not assume that women do not want to progress. I would like to thank Dr Nel for his support, acceptance and encouragement."

"One of the greatest moments of satisfaction in life occurs when one realises an investment has added exponential value – this is happening much more often in the case of human capital investment than with financial investments," says Dr Hoppie Nel, managing director of GFC. "I have no hesitation to say that Zi de Bruin was one of the most outstanding investments that GFC has ever made."



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Sarie Venter
continued from page 31

"GFC is totally reliant on the loyalty, commitment and dedication of its employees and people like Sarie are an exemplary example of applying these characteristics and therefore being a leader in her own right," said Dr Hoppie Nel, managing director of GFC.



Bronwyn Palmer

CEO of Agri-IQ

Bronwyn Palmer is the CEO of AGRI-IQ, a transformation and management company which addresses the human development, training and management needs of agricultural based organisations in southern Africa. AGRI-IQ is based in KwaZulu-Natal and has satellite bases in Mpumalanga, Free State, Western Cape and in Beira, Mozambique.

"AGRI-IQ started from a modest farm "adult literacy school" based operation and has evolved to the point where we are working in different provinces and also in other countries in southern Africa, says Bronwyn. "Although I'm the CEO of AGRI-IQ, I am also fortunate that within the company I have the assistance of three dynamic men – my husband Roy and Bryan and Tim Chennells."

Bronwyn and Roy Palmer have lived and worked for a number of years on Neos Estate, a large production unit near Malalane that produces citrus and sugar cane. They have recently moved to KwaZulu-Natal. During the time spent in Mpumalanga, Bronwyn worked extensively in development and education of local communities. "There was a huge need for basic life skills in the local communities in the area. In response to this, Neos built a training facility that is a separate entity to the estate. In this training centre, AGRI-IQ offers ABET (Adult Basic Education Training), Life Skills training as well as Corporate Governance training for restitution and this has been incredibly successful," says Bronwyn. "The progress over the last ten years has seen many women take over leadership positions within the life skills training situation and this has brought about social empowerment in many of the local communities. I was once told that small opportunities are often the beginning of great enterprises. All we wish for is to give people a chance to better themselves," she stresses.

"The huge impact that HIV/AIDS has had on the Malalane area is frightening and the statistics are both staggering and disturbing. As part of the Fresh Produce Exporters' Forum's Top of the Class Programme, we had a lot of contact with citrus farm packhouses. Here we saw first-hand how women are bearing the brunt of this disease and this is where we are seeing the fallout effect of the disease. It is especially sad when farmers have been proactive at skills development with their labour force and these people still become casualties. I believe that life skills training should always include health awareness training. This should really be the point of departure in training and not an optional add-on. As AGRI-IQ we are very aware of the cultural dynamics around the disease, and realise that in many cases, the training material also needs to be accompanied by a social facilitation function. Agriculture is one of the founding industries of our nation and even though we are living in uncertain times we should really be positive and proactive about transformation.

"On a positive note it is great to see the potential for development within the human spirit. In 2006 Stanley Mathsalu was the citrus chemical store man at Neos Estate but he has since been promoted -he is now the junior manager at Neos Estate and has just successfully completed his first harvest as citrus manager. The winner of the Mpumalanga 2007 "FPEF Top of the Class" Isaac Nthuli from Golden Frontier Citrus, has also been recognised by TSB for his Top of the Class achievement and will now head up his own farm at Roosmaryn, (which is part of the South African land redistribution policy) in the Komatipoort area (under the management of TSB citrus). This is a great achievement for the citrus industry to have this calibre of person rising up through the ranks."



Living and working on a farm has its funny moments as Bronwyn explained. "A few years ago we had a visit from the Department of Labour on Neos Estates. One of our oldest staff members was Jesaya, who we kept on as a petrol attendant and workshop helper. He was over 70 and although he was a Swazi, he could not draw a Swazi pension as he had worked in SA all his life. During the meeting with the representatives of the Department of Labour, Jesaya burst into the meeting, payslip in hand, gesticulating madly. He was totally inaudible and had tears sparkling in his eyes. I was embarrassed as firstly we would be seen as an employer that has really old employees and secondly they might conclude that we did not pay Jesaya. He was pointing to some writing on his payslip and after a pregnant silence and some nervous giggles, we established with help from the Department of Labour personnel that the commotion was because he had been able to sign his payslip for the first time in his life! It was about 3 months after Neos Estate had instituted the Adult Literacy Programme and I can't tell you how proud I was of Jesaya's achievement and relieved under the circumstances!"

On a personal level, the commitment to development does cut in on family time. "I think that my family is tired of hearing me say I'm busy and I will help them later," laughs Bronwyn. "As a woman within the sphere of training and development, the development of the Citrus Academy is a very positive step on behalf of the industry. I certainly feel that I'm in good company with Jacomien de Klerk and Desiree Schonken in their respective roles within the Citrus Academy.

"There are new and exciting opportunities for all South Africans in citrus. If we combine intellectual and creative forces within agriculture we can only go from strength to strength. Although there have been emotional moments, I feel enormously privileged to have been able to play a small role. As a parting gamut, I also believe that one should not take oneself too seriously!"



Portia Mhlongo

Citrus Academy Student

When we met at Neos Estate near Malalane, Portia Mhlongo was in her final internship year of a degree in Plant Production at the Lowveld College of Agriculture at Nelspruit and she was doing her internship at Neos Estate. Initially Portia was shy and somewhat reluctant to talk about herself, but once she got started, her sheer gutsy determination illustrated why she was the top student in the 2006 second year class.

Portia is from near Malelane and attended Manhushe Agricultural High School. "My grandfather is a sugar cane farmer near Komatipoort. When I was younger he encouraged me to go to the fields with him every day. It was as a result of his motivation that I became involved in agriculture, but I chose to go in the direction of citrus production as it is generally more lucrative than sugar cane."

During her internship period at Neos, Portia also attended the Top of the Class training programme offered on the estate by FPEF (Fresh Produce Exporters' Forum). "The Top of the Class training was very informative and also a lot of fun. It provided us with a good practical background to the industry we are involved in and for me it inspired me to become a proper farmer. We had the opportunity to visit the port and it gave us an understanding of the supply chain. On a personal level, for some of us this visit to the coast was the first time that we had seen the sea and we even had our first swim in the ocean!"

Neos Estate is a large estate of roughly 450 hectares with 66 hectares of citrus orchards. The time that Portia has spent at Neos has provided her with the opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge of scouting for pests and pest control, application of fertilisers and irrigation. "I am very grateful to the Citrus Academy for their help. I really would not have believed that I could achieve what I have in such a short time and this has been largely due to their guidance. My family is also very proud of my progress. In the future I would like to be an extension officer for citrus farmers and to train people in the management of citrus production."



Julia Mabunda

Training facilitator at Neos Estate

Julia is slight and has a warm smile and her patient manner surely inspires confidence in those she trains. Yet she shoulders a large responsibility as both the facilitator and logistical organiser of all training at Neos Estate, including ABET (Adult Basic Education Training) and HIV/AIDS training.

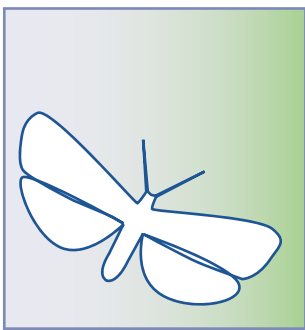
Julia is from near Komatipoort and attended Lambalati High School. She started working at Neofresh packhouse as a packer in 2001 and in 2003 she was promoted to quality controller. "After that I was sent to Johannesburg to be trained as a facilitator for ABET training. This was quite something for me as I had never sat in front of a computer before, but they taught me everything from scratch," she laughed. Since then Julia has certainly not looked back. In 2005 she attended a course of HIV/AIDS counselling and training offered in South Africa by the American government (The American President's Emergency Programme for AIDS Relief – PEPFAR) and once the organisation had trained Julia as a facilitator in this field, they used her to train municipal workers in Witbank and Polokwane. Julia has also received hospice training.

Due to her perseverance with ABET training at Neos, Julia has succeeded in teaching people who were illiterate to read and write. She is responsible for the logistics involved with the presentation of the FPEF Top of the Class course which has run at Neos for industry participants from the surrounding area for two years and is likely to be offered again in 2008. She has also facilitated packhouse and hygiene training courses offered at Neos for workers from Neos Estate and other neighbouring farms and packhouses.

"I have achieved a lot since I've become involved in this industry. Health care and treating people who are infected with HIV is one of our biggest priorities as in order to be successful as an industry, we need a healthy workforce. The HIV issue is huge in our area and cannot be ignored.

"In the future I want to become a computer programmer for the citrus industry and I would like to continue to train people as this provides me with incredible satisfaction.

"My biggest thanks must go to Bronwyn Palmer, who has given me the opportunities for computer training, including ABET facilitation training and assisting me to attend Damelin College and to achieve a qualification in basic computer skills. She has inspired me and motivated me every step of the way. I am also very grateful to my mother for her support and for her patience with me."



Kim Stoltz

Entomological Technician at Citrus
Research International, Nelspruit



Kim was somewhat hesitant to be interviewed and when we met at the CRI after some cajoling and insistence, the large blue eyes and evident determination revealed a deep passion for her job.

"I got to this point by the grace of God," says Kim, who is originally from Bloemfontein and moved to Nelspruit in 1992. "In 1998, I started here as a data processor but after 3 months, the post was made redundant. Fortunately the management needed someone to work in the laboratory and Dr John Bower asked me to stay on to do this. Since then, I have been working on trials in the laboratory and have grown to truly love my job."

Kim started off working on creasing prediction as part of a 2-year trial that Citrus Research International conducted on behalf of the University of California. Subsequently she also worked on citrus creasing trials as well as chemical analysis on avocados for Phosyn UK, an international fertiliser company.

"After that Dr John Bower moved to the University of KwaZulu-Natal and I started working with Dr Andy Krajewski on horticultural research. I also started some entomological research with one of the main focus areas being the testing of the effects that pesticide residues have on non-target and beneficial insects. This is something I feel very strongly about as in the past pesticides have often decimated the populations of non-target insects along with those that they are intended to control."

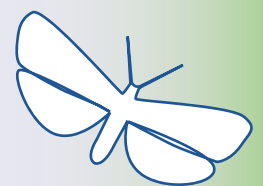
Following that Dr Krajewski emigrated and since then Kim has worked with Dr Tim Grout. "Dr Grout is a world-renowned entomologist and we

have a good working relationship. Over the past few years we have worked on the temperature requirements for the development of fruit fly, biological control of citrus thrips and control of ants.

"I love my job. At times it is very challenging as often one is working with the unknown, but one thing is certain and that is that there is always something new and we never get to repeat the same job. This is what motivates me to work hard and put in overtime when necessary. I would like to give thanks to Dr Tim Grout, my boss for encouraging me to grow and achieve more than I would on my own. It has also been a privilege to work with people that are the best in their field and to have the likes of Bruce Tate and Peter Stephen as my mentors. The people who work here work with pride and are very efficient. I am the youngest person on the staff and although I started here when I was 19, I really would like to remain here for the rest of my working career.

"CRI is vitally important to the success of the citrus industry as we are often working flat out to resolve issues that are both critical and urgent. The knowledge that flows from this process is often what empowers the citrus industry to move forward. We always bear in mind that we are doing this on behalf of the producers and that they are all our bosses because we are largely dependent on the research levy that they pay on export citrus."

Kim has also completed a Degree of Baccalaureus Technologiae in Horticulture with Distinction through the University of South Africa.





Gloria Weare

Personal Assistant to Justin Chadwick, CEO of CGA

"Citrus Growers", says the cheerful voice at the other end of the telephone. Gloria is usually the first person one speaks to when phoning the Citrus Growers' Association, and not only does she manage to sound upbeat every time, she is also very courteous and helpful.

Gloria is from an English background - her parents were both teachers in the United Kingdom and immigrated to South Africa. She has spent most of her life in the Durban area and after matriculating she completed secretarial training and qualified as a personal assistant. "Ten years ago I knew absolutely nothing about citrus," she laughs. "I had been farming with broiler chickens and running a small dairy but after about ten years of this my circumstances changed and it was no longer viable. In 1999 a friend of mine told me that Justin Chadwick and the newly formed Citrus Growers' Association needed an assistant with secretarial skills. I applied for the job, got the job and I'm still here, eight years and a myriad changes later," says Gloria with a smile.

She started with CGA in January 2000 and to begin with she and Justin shared one office one desk and one telephone between them. They worked in rented space in the Hillcrest CBD. "Justin virtually started this company from scratch - he spoke to government departments, the CGA directors, export agents and growers while I was involved with the administration and finances. One of my first jobs was to sort out and update the old existing databases of citrus growers and this was when I first started to make contact with growers," explained Gloria. The high rentals in downtown Hillcrest prompted CGA to move their operations to a residential house in Hillcrest. Initially the levies funding CGA were voluntary but later became mandatory and since then CGA has grown from strength to strength. Over the years the operation has grown and there are currently 8 people working at the CGA offices.

"In 2001 we started the CGA website and I'm now wholly responsible for this. I also design the Annual Report, arrange the board meetings, venues, accommodation etc. as

well as taking the minutes. I deal with a wide array of telephone and e-mail queries on a daily basis. I have had some weird and funny questions asked but usually manage to find answers that satisfy the caller! A large part of my time is spent making travel arrangements for staff and board members. I have to say that organising trips, sometimes for overseas visitors, arranging meetings, roadshows etc. is a favourite part of my job. I also administer the maintenance and running of the CGA offices.

"Working here has been an exponential learning curve for me and this is by no means over as my job here has always been exciting and challenging. At the "roadshows" the CGA hosts in various citrus production areas, we have received good feedback from our growers about our activities and successes. Due to a lot of hard work and input, we have met most of our goals and CGA has grown into a company that we can be proud of. It has been very rewarding to see our growth keeping pace with the remarkable growth within the citrus industry during the same period." Gloria explained that some of the new challenges facing CGA were transformation, training and keeping up with requirements in the overseas market. With the establishment of the Citrus Academy, and mentorship programmes being developed, some progress is now becoming apparent in the first two fields. Growers are now also realising that the CGA has to get involved in other areas apart from the research, market access and transformation that was originally its mandate and it is fascinating to follow the steps being taken to bring even more benefits to the growers.

"To begin with, as a single mum, it was not easy to go away on business, and leave my children when they were small - I had to make arrangements for them to get to school and back home, lunches, dinners, feeding the animals, and still arrange the meetings I was attending! . It was quite stressful at times but it was worth it. My children survived my being away and this job provided me with good job security which has really been a great help to us as a family. I believe that if you are going to do a job, you should do it to the best of your abilities, be loyal and have a sense of humour! This is a unique environment and I enjoy the interaction with the various role players and growers together with the varied aspects of the job. Around here, there is truly never a dull moment!" she concluded.

Over the years CGA has grown from one office with five phone calls a week to eight offices and three phone lines that are continuously busy. Growers expect a lot of CGA, and it is often Gloria who has to deal with queries and get them sorted out, or point the caller in the right direction. This she does with great diplomacy and efficiency. She is probably one of the most recognised voices in citrus, and growers have formed a bond of trust in her abilities.



Citrus Academy General Manager

Jacomien de Klerk is the dynamic general manager of the Citrus Academy, which was established at the beginning of 2005 as a division of CGA to create an enabling environment for skills development in the citrus industry. In April 2007 the Academy was established as a separate Section 21 company.

"I got involved in the citrus industry quite by chance," says Jacomien. "I grew up in Johannesburg, and we moved to Tzaneen when I was still at school. In my twenties I moved back to Johannesburg where I had my own computer company, providing training and support for Pastel accounting software. After my son was born, I sold the company and moved back to Tzaneen to be closer to my family. After three years in Tzaneen, Abraham van Rooyen of Du Roi Nursery offered me a job for six months to help with system development for the Du Roi Group."

"The first day I started at Du Roi, Abraham asked me to help out at Precision Farming, which was an offshoot of Du Roi. Precision Farming assisted emergent farmers with the management of their farms. At the time there was only one person working for Precision Farming and he asked me to help him with projections and spreadsheets. Within the first week of my arrival he resigned, and I was asked to work for Precision Farming. Six months ended two and a half years later," she explained.

"I continued to work for Precision Farming, doing budgets and cash flows as well as sourcing funding for the operation. In the process I learned a lot about citrus farming and the government systems around emerging farming operations. From the beginning, developing the skills and capacity of the farmers was a priority for us, and I became more involved in this over time. We implemented literacy and numeracy programmes and production skills programmes. As I saw the positive impact this was having on the farmers, this became a special interest of mine. In the process I learned a lot about skills development and transfer and about where to source funding for training."

In 2004 Jacomien decided that she would like to move to Durban for personal reasons. The timing was auspicious, because at the same time CGA had decided to allocate a part of their levies towards skills development within the industry and they were looking for someone to head up the Citrus Academy. "Justin Chadwick got to hear about me through Abraham van Rooyen. I was invited to apply for the

job and after an interview with Justin I was given the opportunity to start the Citrus Academy."

The broad strokes were set in place and it was left to Jacomien to set an agenda for skills development and achievable goals for the Academy. Part of the brief was to provide the tools for skills development and to take over the administration of the Citrus Industry Trust bursaries. She set out to develop a strategic plan for approval by the CGA board.

The citrus industry faces a number of challenges that Citrus Academy is working to address. The industry is hampered by low skills levels within the industry, from production all the way throughout the value chain, and this in turn affects the ability of the industry to implement employment equity successfully as it is difficult to source people who have the necessary skills. New farmers need skills development for the successful transition of production. For a successful continuation of research and development within the citrus industry, it is crucial to attract young people to the sciences as these skills are currently listed as "scarce and critical".

The two main components put in place to address these issues are the Citrus Academy Bursary Fund and the development of quality learning systems. "The Bursary Fund has grown exponentially," says Jacomien. "In 2005 we were providing bursaries for 10 students and in 2008 we are providing bursaries for 45 students. During this time funding, which is still provided by the Citrus Industry Trust, has increased three-fold, from R250 000 to R750 000. The Bursary Fund is taking big strides in addressing both the scarcity of certain skills and the challenge of employment equity. Desiree Schonken is the Bursary Fund manager and she is doing a great job."

The development of quality learning systems is focused on producing skills development tools such as an extensive range of citrus specific learning material and visual presentations for facilitation which will be translated into the various languages spoken in the areas of use. The Citrus Academy also assists with skills development planning and hosts capacity building workshops aimed at training facilitators.

"The Citrus Academy is not a delivery mechanism, meaning that we don't go to farms to facilitate training," stressed Jacomien. "We host and arrange capacity building workshops for facilitators and provide producers with information on accredited service providers who are able to assist them with their skills development."

"On a personal note, this is so much more than a job, it is a personal commitment. This is not where I saw my life, but it has been a wonderful journey. My private life? I make very little distinction between my job and my private life as there are so many facets that are integrated – being successful at my job is being successful at life. I have to travel a lot for work and I am very lucky to have strong support to help me with my son."

"Looking back, we have certainly achieved a great deal, but there is of course still so much more to do. When we started the Academy the skills shortage was seen as a threat to the citrus industry, whereas people are not beginning to see our approach as an industry strength. If we can continue to strengthen the industry in this way and if we can continue to provide youngsters with the opportunity to learn and advance, all the effort and investment is certainly worth it."

"It has been a privilege to be involved in the citrus industry. It is a forward-thinking, innovative and well structured industry, and it would certainly have been more difficult to achieve what we have in any other industry."

Desiree Schonken

Citrus Academy

Bursary Fund Manager

"Hello our lovely mother. On behalf of my fellow students I would like to thank you very much for what you are doing for our future life. Having you with us is a gift from God. May the Almighty bless you and see you through." This is an SMS message that Desiree received from Velly Ngobeni, a young man currently studying with the assistance of a Citrus Academy bursary and this certainly speaks volumes about Desiree's commitment to the Citrus Academy bursary students.

"The Citrus Academy has been more successful than most people could have imagined and the ripples of what has been achieved are now moving out into the industry and making a difference out there," says Desiree. She speaks about her job with deep empathy and passion. "On a personal level, this job has been life-changing and has given purpose to my life," she says quite emphatically.

Desiree grew up in Pietersburg (Polokwane) and after school she went to Germany for a year as a Rotary exchange student. When she returned, she completed a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Sciences at the University of Pretoria. "I did various jobs before I started working for a recruitment company where one of my projects was skills development. Once I had started with this, I realised I had found my niche as I enjoy this line of work immensely. In 2006 I was recruited by Jacomien de Klerk for the Citrus Academy and I have not looked back since."

Desiree's main responsibility is managing the Citrus Academy bursary fund. "We are currently able to provide bursaries for 45 to 50 students with our existing sponsorships and the day-to-day management of these students is a full-time job. The Academy keeps track of their performance and intervenes if there are academic problems. Quite often our support goes beyond the financial and extends to personal support of individuals as well. We also arrange vocational training for students where appropriate.

"The Academy approaches organisations within the citrus industry to host students for vacation work and internships, thus assisting learners to gain work experience within the industry. This, in turn, enables the candidate to find permanent employment in the citrus industry on completion of his/her studies. During the past year we managed to place 8 students in internships, 2 on workplace experience grants and 3 in permanent positions. Although there have been some hiccups this process has been very successful in general."

The Academy also co-operates with the Department of Agriculture's mentorship programme, and two former



bursary students are currently beneficiaries of the Agricultural Industry Development Programme (AIDP). This is a mentorship programme offered to recent graduates and entrepreneurs, and is designed to develop business and leadership skills.

"Patience and communication across cultural lines is something that I have had to learn. Dealing with certain individuals who are resistant to the concept of transformation can be challenging, but these are more the exception to the rule. The efforts towards transformation within the agricultural sector have created a groundswell of change and adding our efforts to this is helping to bring people around. Ultimately, this is our goal."

The successes of the Citrus Academy Bursary Fund were evident at the recent graduation ceremony of Lowveld College of Agriculture, where five Citrus Academy students were awarded their National Diploma in Agriculture, and seven received their Higher Certificate. Citrus Academy bursary students also walked away with the top honours in every class and a long list of academic prizes. "To see these youngsters succeed at their studies makes us proud, just as seeing somebody squander their opportunities is heartbreaking," she stressed.

"Jacomien de Klerk has been a great support. Without her I would not succeed at this fulfilling but demanding job. I would also like to thank CGA for their support and the growers, packhouses and fruit terminals who have taken in our students and given them work experience and exposure to the industry.

"Agriculture is different to any other sector and from a holistic perspective it is probably the most important sector to people as everything we eat has its origin on a farm somewhere. When we see what has happened to farms and food production in some of our neighbouring countries, it is clearly vital that we provide the skills and opportunities for success and growth in our sector. My message to producers is to embrace empowerment. It is not going to go away - on the contrary - it is the most important ingredient for future successes in agriculture. My message to students and new entrants into the industry is embrace your opportunities and don't squander your talents."





Brenda Wafer

Citrus Producer, Nkwalini

Tim and Brenda Wafer's home is perched atop a small hill in the Nkwalini valley and is surrounded by beautiful, rolling fields of green sugar cane. As Brenda and I sit down to chat, Tim comments from his adjoining office: "If you were to write about everything that Brenda does, you would have to fill a whole book!" - This is certainly borne out in the course of the interview.

"Farming with citrus is not for sissies," says Brenda, whose slim frame and youthful air belie the fact that she and Tim have been farming together for over 40 years. Brenda is originally from Northern Natal and has been involved with farming since she married Tim, a second generation farmer. "When we arrived here, we were the youngsters as all the farmers in the area were much older than us. Tim started on the farm working for his father as a mechanic, but when his dad died suddenly in 1971, we just had to learn to cope and we have been farming since then."

The Wafers have two farms and farm with sugar cane and citrus. The total size of the properties is around 450 ha and of that 200 ha are under citrus production. "Our operations are small in comparison to some of our neighbours," explains Brenda. "Previously we used to have a communal citrus packhouse for producers in the area that Tim and I managed and since 1973 I have worked in the packhouse for 16 to 18 hours per day during the citrus season. Later it made financial and logical sense for us to establish our own packhouse and now I work in our packhouse throughout the season. We also had a dairy for 7 years but when it became too much for us to cope with we sold off the cattle."

Brenda speaks Zulu and is responsible for the wages, the bookkeeping and all the labour issues on the farm. There are 120 permanent employees on the farm and during a season, the farm employs a few seasonal workers.

"This has been a very interesting business to be involved in and I have certainly learned a lot over the years. You never reach a point when you can say you know it all as there is always something new to learn. It is also a constant struggle and in order to hold your own as a woman you have to be quite tough as this really is a man's world. I have had to be particularly tough with the Zulu men, who do not like to take orders from a woman.

"We have had to learn a great deal since deregulation of our industry. Previously we were told exactly what to do but in the last 10 years we have had to learn fast and at our own expense. Compliance to the various international accreditations is both expensive and time consuming and all these extra issues have made it increasingly difficult to focus on production. As we supply Japanese markets with our fruit, producers for this market have to adhere to the phytosanitary requirements stipulated by this (and other) markets and we have received quite a number of visits from Japanese delegations. The South African Department of Agriculture also regularly checks on orchards in the area."

Living on the farm in a remote area also meant that Brenda and Tim had to send their 4 children to boarding school, but despite this separation from farm life, both of their sons decided to go into horticulture and both attended the Weston Agricultural College in Mooi River. "Michael is involved on the citrus side of the farm while Richard is on the sugar cane side and our son-in-law Andrew is also involved in the farm's citrus operation," explains Brenda. "It certainly is great to have most of our family close by. One of our daughters was hijacked and stabbed in Durban a few years ago and it has taken her a long time to get over this, but it has been good that we have been close to her through this time."

Over the years the incidence of petty crime has been escalating in the area and cable theft and damage to electrical equipment are regular frustrations. As a result the Wafers have security guards on the property, which also adds a further cost to production. "Although AIDS has been topical for many years now, only in the last two years, a number of our workers have passed away due to complications from AIDS. This is clearly becoming quite an issue in our area."

Given the tough realities of citrus production, the tenacity of the Wafers to cope with these challenges and still to succeed clearly has a lot to do with the working relationship of this husband and wife team. Seeing Tim and Brenda joke with each other while we take the photographs also shows that the hard work and commitment is balanced with a wicked sense of humour!



Citrus orchards, Nkwalini



Valerie Stander

Packhouse Manager at Rhino Packhouse, Nkwalini

Valerie Stander met me at the Rhino fruit Packhouse in Nkwalini when late afternoon shadows were stealing across the waving green sugar cane and the air in the packhouse was redolent with the glorious scent of citrus oil. Valerie is the pack house manager at Rhino Citrus packhouse, the co-operative pack house for Bhekishowe Farms. She has been working at Rhino Packhouse for 12 years and has been working in various citrus packhouses for in the Nkwalini Valley for 30 years.

Bhekishowe Farms is a citrus farm that has successfully been claimed by land claimants and has been managed by Bester Snyman since 2006. This is a production unit of approximately 190 ha of citrus and the packhouse packs around 250 000 cartons annually. During the season, the packhouse employs 40 to 50 workers.

Warm and vivacious, Valerie reflects; "I have done so many things in my life and if I could have it all over, I would do the same – marry a citrus farmer and spend my life involved in the citrus industry. I was 17 when I got married and have not regretted my life for a day. We have two children, both in their thirties, and they have moved on to careers outside of agriculture, but citrus farming is our life. My husband Adam and I love the production and being out in the citrus orchards. When we started working in the citrus industry, we still packed the fruit in wooden crates and exported the fruit through Lourenco Marques (Maputo) in sealed train trucks to prevent theft along the way. During the time that we have been involved with the citrus industry there has certainly been a lot of progress and we have also moved along with the times."

Valerie and her husband are originally from Mpumalanga. "I grew up in Malelane and after matric I went on holiday to Hoedspruit where I met my future husband, a manager on a citrus and tobacco farm. After we got married, we lived in Hoedspruit for 10 years until the farm we were on was sold in 1978 and we moved to Nkwalini. Once we arrived here, I also became involved in the industry, and although I was initially involved in office administration, before long I was working in the packhouse and have been doing this ever since.

"As far as the citrus industry goes, I think that some citrus has been overplanted. Last year we (this farm) had no market for our Star Ruby grapefruit. The market for our fruit was so bad that it did not even warrant us packing some of the fruit and we literally drove over the fruit on the ground between the trees. In

the times before deregulation we had access to the comprehensive tree census and could see what the trends are, but during the past few years, we have not been able to see these trends."

Over the years in the various packhouses, Valerie has learned to speak Zulu and uses this every day. At present the Standers live and work on Bhekishowe Farms. The entire claim process took 4 years to complete and this was a very stressful time for them as the financial position of the farm had been quite tenuous during this time. "What is encouraging to know is that despite the tensions caused by this process, there is a strong sense of respect between us and the farm's new owners. Our home is situated next to the village where some of the claimants live and when we were attacked in our home by criminals two years ago, our neighbours were the first people to come and help us. We would not like to leave here as besides this unfortunate incident, things are generally peaceful."

Star Ruby Harvest, Nkwalini





Elrina Venter

Packhouse Manager at Carisbrooke Valley Citrus Packhouse, Ixopo

Ixopo - for many South Africans the first association with this unusual place name is from the poignant opening lines of the novel by Alan Paton "Ah, but your Land is Beautiful". And yes, it certainly is beautiful, set amongst the rolling, hilly landscape in Southern KwaZulu-Natal. Carisbrooke Valley Citrus Packhouse was experiencing electrical load-shedding when I arrived and they were taking delivery of a large electricity generator to power the office during the forthcoming citrus season, very clearly illustrating the challenges of our country's energy crisis.

Elrina's office is adjacent to the packhouse, built from sturdy, rough-hewn timber, one of the other products of the region. Carisbrooke Valley Citrus Packhouse has nine shareholders, eight of whom are citrus producers in the area. Between them they have 280 to 300 hectares of citrus orchards. CGA Director Mike Woodburn is one of the shareholders. Carisbrooke packhouse was completed in 2003 and packs some 8 000 tons of citrus annually. The season runs from April and November, producing some of the latest fruit in KZN and employs 130 seasonal workers during that period. The largest markets for Carisbrooke's fruit are Japan and the Middle East and they are currently exporting post-harvest chemical free fruit to Japan and some of their other markets. Elrina is responsible for the administration, marketing, invoicing and some of the financial planning. She is also responsible for loading the fruit onto trucks. "I load the fruit myself to make sure that the loading is done properly. To do this I have learned to drive a forklift and during the harvest season I work long hours," explains Elrina.

"I love working here and during the season, this office becomes home from home. If somebody had told me ten years ago that I would be managing a citrus packhouse, I would have laughed. I am originally from Frankfort in the Free State and my husband Nartjie and I were working for Clover at Heilbron in the Free State when he was transferred to Clover's Ixopo facility in 1999. I was very sad to leave the Free State. Our home language is Afrikaans and moving to this predominantly English-speaking community was quite a culture shock! This was around the time my son Pieter was born and I decided to stay at home with him. After four months of this I was climbing the walls and started working as a secretary at the local pre-school. In 2003 I was approached by Jenny Woodburn who told me that there would be a management post at the new citrus packhouse and she suggested that I should apply for the job. Initially I was hesitant because I knew nothing about this line of work. I visited Mike Woodburn who showed me the packhouse under construction and we drove around the farm. As I was leaving, I asked when I should come for the interview and he said that it was not necessary. "We have just had the interview and you have the job!"

When she started in March 2003, her desk was a pallet resting on building blocks. Elrina explained that there really was no job description and that they had to figure things out as they went along. Carisbrooke soon installed a Fruitrack fruit tracking software system and Elrina had to get to know her way around the system. "Getting to know how things need to work has been a huge learning curve and I have had various mentors in this process. Pete Button, one of the Carisbrooke shareholders and directors, has taught

me a great deal about the physiology of the fruit as well as a wealth of marketing information. Craig Erichsen from Goldland in Durban has also been a great help as he is pretty much a walking encyclopaedia for citrus! Dawie van Niekerk from PPECB has taught me a great deal, as he always took the trouble to explain why fruit has been rejected on the odd occasion that this happened. He and the other guys from PPECB have taught me a lot over the years.

"Then there has been the learning provided by experience. In 2006 we had a visit from our Japanese receivers and I presented them with two perfect cartons of size 64 Navels for inspection. As they do not recognise a size count 64, one of the visitors picked up that my sizing was out according to their standards. As we supply a class 1 fruit to Japan, this taught me that as our customers pay very fine attention to detail, we need to make sure that they get what they want. The customer is, after all, always right!"

During the harvest season Elrina works long hours and says that she has a large debt of gratitude to her husband, who still works for Clover, and her domestic worker for keeping things running smoothly at home during this time. "I also need to say special thanks to the Carisbrooke growers. Over the years I have become fond of them and their families and when tensions run a little high, a woman's touch seems to work at smoothing the frayed nerves!"

"One of the biggest challenges in our area is transport for our workforce. Many of the workers have to walk up to 5 km to get to a taxi stop. Just getting to work on time is a huge challenge and when it is rainy the taxis refuse to drive on muddy roads. Working overtime is also difficult as the taxis leave at 5pm sharp, so if you miss the taxi, you have to walk." Elrina added that at times it was difficult to work within the Zulu culture which is quite chauvinistic and generally people expect to have a man as a boss. "In the beginning the Zulu men shook their heads when they saw me get onto the forklift but now they are used to this. We have got to know each other and there is a mutual respect," explains Elrina.

Citrus orchards, Ixopo



Viloshni Rugubeer

Port Operations Controller for Capespan in the Port of Durban

Visiting the Capespan port office in the Fresh Produce Terminal building was quite an adventure. Finding parking near the building that day involved dodging fast-moving, huge fruit transport trucks and strolling, well-heeled passengers just disembarking from the massive cruise liner docked at the next quay. Also in the melee were taxi drivers frantically offering their services to these pedestrians. The adventure does not end there as anyone who has visited the FTP offices in Durban will know that you get to “walk the plank”, the very long raised boardwalk above the operations area.

Viloshni's initial hesitation to chat to me disappeared when she started talking about her job and very soon her passion for her job and her can-do attitude were clearly evident. “There is no substitute for hard work and many obstacles can be overcome by having the right attitude to your job,” she says. Viloshni is a port operations controller for Capespan Exports in Durban. She is responsible for fruit management from intake to shipment and this involves intake, stock and namely container load outs. Between March and October last year Durban handled approximately 170 000 pallets of fruit for Capespan. “During the season it is full steam ahead here. Every day is exciting and challenging and often the job involves crisis management and immediate responses as there are large cost implications involved. This requires us to work long hours as well as on weekends and public holidays and during this time I am on call 24 hours. Fortunately we do have a quiet time between November and February.”

Viloshni is from Durban and once she finished matric, she started working as a packer in a packing depot 20 years ago in 1988 and has remained in the fruit industry ever since. “I started right at the bottom and then progressed



to doing clerical work, receiving and dispatching. After that I moved on to doing data capturing for the company. During this whole process I learned quite a bit about quality and quality control and in 1998 I was asked to do quality monitoring for Outspan on a contractual basis. I did this for two years and in 2000, there was a vacancy as the quality auditor here in the port was transferred to Nelspruit and so I was appointed as a permanent employee for Capespan. This was a big step and a vote of confidence for me as until then I had worked on contract. In 2003, my job function changed from quality to operations and this is what I still do here today.”

“I would like to thank my previous managers who taught me patiently to do many tasks, including how to use a computer. I also want to thank my current manager for his support. At times it is very difficult to cope with such a demanding job, so I am incredibly grateful to my family and to my mother in particular for helping me to raise my daughter who is 18 and matriculated last year. I would not have managed without my mom as I was seldom at home and it was certainly a sobering moment when my daughter told me that one of her teachers had asked her if she had a mother. I also have a 3-year-old son and I am also very grateful to my husband for his support with him. He also works in the industry and during the citrus season he also works long hours but he always manages to calm me down when I am really stressed out.

“I like to be good at what I do and my attitude is simply that anything you can do, I can do better,” says Viloshni, commenting on holding her own in this male dominated field. “One should simply not feel inferior. Show your worth and show people around you that you are capable, no matter whether you are male or female. I believe that one should never lose hope and one should never let challenges get you down.” Viloshni illustrated this with a story from her first job in the packing depot. “The manager of the depot did not like me and gave me the most difficult jobs to do. I was small built and straight out of school and he made me unpack pallets. This was tough, but I decided that I would show him that he could not get me down. Well, he left after the first year, but that was a good lesson for me and I learned to hold my own in the workplace.”

Although Viloshni has the most wonderful view of the port from her work station, with her workload, responsibility and level of commitment, you can be sure she is not hanging around looking at the view. She is definitely a graduate from the University of Life with a can-do attitude and Capespan's port operations certainly seem to be in good hands.



The Port of Durban



Greta Dahl

Area Supply
Planner for
Capespan,
KwaZulu-Natal

Greta works in the airy Capespan offices located north of Durban at Umhlanga, the popular beach and shopping resort and the offices are a stone's throw from the massive Gateway Mall. As much of the citrus produced in KwaZulu-Natal is grown in the Nkwalini Valley about 1 hour north of Durban, Umhlanga is a convenient location between the Port of Durban and the production region.

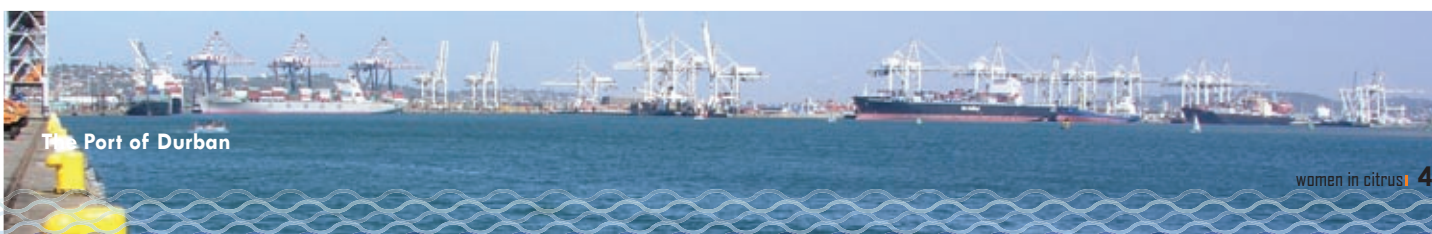
Greta is responsible for planning and monitoring the timing of the fruit supply from producers. "I am in contact with producers on a daily basis, and many of them I have known for years," says Greta. "When our producers travel down to Durban, they pop in at the office for a chat and developing good working relationships with producers simply makes it much easier to be successful in this job," she explained. Greta's warm, friendly demeanour would certainly be a great asset in this process.

Interestingly, the vagaries of fate have brought Greta to Capespan twice during her career. "We were farming with timber in the Eshowe district but towards the end of the 1990's we moved into Eshowe town. Here our neighbours were Shaun and Melanie Brown and at that stage Shaun was KZN Area Manager with Capespan. As things developed, Shaun needed someone to work as a secretary and I ended up working for Shaun. Six months later in 1999 the Capespan offices moved into the Port of Durban and things just took off from there."

This was soon after the deregulation and the fruit industry was evolving rapidly and Greta was in the thick of things during these big changes. "I was appointed as a secretary, but the job expanded fast and before long I was involved with the preparation of weekly product estimates as well as business plans. This was a high pressure job and looking back at that time I realise it represented a steep learning curve, getting to know growers, carton specs, fruit specs and also market specs. As our offices were in the Port of Durban, we were right in the engine room of the fruit industry. Although I was learning a lot about the technical side of the fruit, it was almost three years before I visited a farm and got a glimpse of the production part of the supply chain."

In 2001 Greta left Capespan for personal reasons and moved away and into another industry. "In 2003 I was approached by Capespan to come back to the company as the lady who had replaced me had left. I then went to my boss at the time and discussed this with him, but he wanted me to stay. That is not where the story ends because a year later Craig Erichsen from Capespan approached me again to come and work for them. I agreed under the condition that I wanted a job that would grow and that's how things panned out. So, I've been back with Capespan for nearly three years now and things have been great. I enjoy my colleagues and I enjoy working with mostly men because things generally remain uncomplicated and there is not a lot of office politics to deal with. I would especially like to thank Shaun Brown and Craig Erichsen for their help and mentorship over the years.

"As an observation on the industry I can say that over the past decade the industry does seem to have become more complex and cut-throat but although citrus farming certainly has its risks, there are still good rewards in this business for those who farm correctly."



The Port of Durban

As the offices of GoReefers are set on the slopes of the Tygerberg Hills in a quiet street surrounded by suburbia, one would never guess that this is the headquarters for the largest fruit logistics company in South Africa, but unassuming and close to home is just how Delena Engelbrecht, CEO of GoReefers likes it. "GoReefers is the travel agent for fruit," says Delena. "You pick, pack and sell and we do the rest," she laughs.

"During the citrus season we have 90 people working for us mostly in the ports and in the grape season we have approximately 60 people as part of our operation and we move people to Komsberg and Aussenkehr in Namibia. In 2003 we built a cold store in the Port of Durban in conjunction with our partners in this project. This was an ambitious undertaking at the time. The entire store was completed within five months and gave us grey hairs as we did this without any formal financing at the time, yet it proved to be a very good move and today we have one of the best cold storage facilities in Durban."

Delena is originally from the Northern Cape and has been in the fruit industry for many years and prior to the deregulation of the industry she worked for Unifruco. "When deregulation happened I received job offers from a few fruit shippers, but I wanted to work for Dole as they were closely involved in the shipping side of the fruit. I took this job the minute it was offered and spent two great years working for the logistical division of Dole South Africa." GoReefers was founded in Europe in 2000 by Peter Palmgren and three other Europeans and he wanted to start a South African division as well. "One day I was travelling with a number of my Dole colleagues in the car with me when Peter Palmgren called me on my mobile and suggested that I should start a South African division of GoReefers," says Delena. "It was an awkward situation to say the least, but I was interested. Some of the best decisions I've ever made have been gut decisions and this was to be one of those. I started GoReefers in South Africa in 2001 and left Dole on amicable terms, to the point that I was working for both companies for the first few months."

Things have not been easy and the company certainly has had its ups and downs, especially in those early days. "When we started there were three of us in the company and we did absolutely everything ourselves. By the end of 2001 the number had grown to 12 people. My knowledge of the industry was vital for success and the timing was good as there was a gap in the market that we served. Some of our first clients are still with us, entities like SAFE and grower exporters like Deona. Our motto is to reduce costs by innovation. A good example of this is that we were the first fruit movers to ship citrus and avocados from Letsitele to Cape Town by train as this shortens the transit time and thus also the cost. This was unheard of in those days. Back then we transported them in the now disused porthole containers and although that has changed, we still ship oranges and avocados from Letsitele to Cape Town by train."

GoReefers has grown steadily over the years and today they move a total of 350 000 deciduous and citrus pallets. "Initially we found that there were many groups were threatened by us and we received a lot of opposition but I'm motivated by a challenge. People in the industry did not expect us to last and many companies have folded as this is a tough business. None of the competition in this field that existed at the time GoReefers started is still in business. We restrict our focus to fruit as this is a unique product. We really care about the fruit and we know that we must make it viable for the producer and that this is no get-rich-quick scheme. Our motto is to "Milk the cow just a little but do it many times". Fruit is a year-round business as the last of the citrus ends just as the first grape production is starting.



**Delena
Engelbrecht**

CEO of GoReefers

"This industry is indeed a man's world but I have never really dwelt on this or let it get me down. Part of my job involves walking onto ships at all hours of the night to check how the loading of ships is progressing. If I had stopped to ponder whether this was safe, I would not be efficient in my job. During my working career women have also come a long way. I recall back in the days that I was working for Unifruco that married women were taxed more than men, simply because they provided a family's second income.

"I suppose that on a subconscious level I've always known that as a woman I need to work harder. When GoReefers started I used to get up at 3 a.m. to plan the loading and journey of the ships so that when I got to office at the start of day, I was up to speed and knew what was happening in the business. This early start also allowed me to get back home to my children by 6 p.m. Part of balancing business with my private life is that I need to live close to work so that it is a quick trip between the two. This has always been a prerequisite for me, even in the days that I worked for Dole. My children are both in their teens and my husband and I have taught them to be independent and responsible. I'm grateful to say that they are both balanced youngsters and coping well with life. My children realise that I have a responsible job and on the occasions when business makes inroads on personal time, they understand this. I recently took my teenage son to London with me for a business trip and this was a good learning opportunity for him.

"My husband has his own business and is always a great support to me as he gives me my own space and he accepts that I am an independent person. He allows me to make my own decisions and respects them and I value his opinion and often use this as a sounding board.

"To be successful one needs to be genuine and work hard as only hard work brings results. If your heart is in the right place, you will succeed. In my experience in industry meetings often politics and ego's get in the way of success. We need to get past this in order to work together as an industry."



Theda Doman

Communications Manager for Dole South Africa

If you contact Theda at Dole South Africa's head office in Cape Town, you will invariably find that she is in the thick of things, making an arrangement or having a discussion with someone. She seems to be the ultimate multi-tasker, yet she always manages to be gracious and friendly with a sense of humour while keeping all those balls in the air.

"My involvement with Dole South Africa started in 1998 when the company was only 3 months old," says Theda. "I was looking for a change of direction and a personal challenge at the time. We were only a handful of staff members then, but today, 10 years later, the company employs about 80 people. During the first months with Dole we were all on a steep learning curve as we all had to know every aspect of the business. All the functions, especially payments to growers, were conducted manually. It was therefore very important to show an interest and willingness in the company and this has helped me along the way."

Prior to joining Dole, Theda had quite a diverse career. "I see Dole as the third stage of my working career. My first was in the print media and my first job was as the secretary to the editor of the Cape Herald newspaper. As time passed I moved on to promotions for the newspaper and then later became the editor of the women's page. The editor of the Cape Herald Ted Doman was my mentor in those early years and quite by chance he later became my father-in-law! The second stage – in 1984 - was with the Urban Foundation and Independent Development Trust, a Non-Government Organisation tasked with alleviating poverty in the areas of housing, education and health and welfare. After 13 years as executive assistant, I began looking for another challenge and this is how I landed at Dole and have not looked back."

Theda is the Communications Manager and assistant to the Managing Director, but this does not fully describe her function in the company. "I do a bit of everything," she laughs. Along with these two official titles, she also manages the international travel portfolio for the company and the daily running of the office building. Theda is also responsible for the Corporate Social Responsibility portfolio and serves on the Marketing Committee responsible for developing and establishing the Dole brand in South Africa into the future. "Dole's success over the last ten years has come from hard work and over time I have developed an understanding and a passion for the business. I believe that to be successful in a large

company like this you cannot simply focus on your function, as you need to understand the business in its entirety. You need to be versatile and sell your range of services to your company as an entity. Dole South Africa's first MD, Benoit Galland was my mentor in my early years at Dole. He had an incredible knack for recognising the ability of his staff while still pushing them to achieve more, by giving them the space in which to perform at the same time. I'm also very grateful to the subsequent MD Robert-Louis Kuhn for the different focus he brought to the company. No one day was ever the same with Robert-Louis around. As Dole South Africa is affiliated to Dole Europe and the head office is in Paris, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to spend the first quarter of 2005 helping to restructure a department at the Dole Europe head office in Paris.

"Although, in the early days, the fruit industry was predominantly a male one, it has never been a problem for me. My parents were strict and had good, old-fashioned values and I was raised to believe that you are a person in your own right and therefore need to be comfortable with who you are and what you can achieve. My dad was a school principal with an incredible strength of character who led his family and school by example. My mom, also a teacher, was always there for us kids. The empowerment of women has come a long way, but the only way that this succeeds is for the individual woman to take up the challenge. One of life's lessons that I have instilled in my daughter is that if you want to get anywhere in life you have to work damn hard to get there and you have to make sacrifices. It simply boils down to what you put in is what you get out."

Theda is clearly driven, both in her career and her personal life. "Yes, I admit that I'm a bit of a workaholic, but I'm in the fortunate position that I have a hugely understanding husband, Anthony, and my daughter Toni is 25, so my job does not have a big impact on my family life. We are all very busy and take time out to have our quiet moments on a regular basis." Aside from work, running is Theda's exercise and passion. "I love to run and running in the mornings before work starts the day well for me. I have recently returned from running the London Marathon and have also run the Paris Marathon." This would clearly account for the reed-slim frame. When asked whether her husband Anthony is also a runner, Theda demurs and replies with a smile that he's a cyclist who runs with his wife!

Nicci van Niekerk

Group Customer Relations Manager
for Fresh Produce Terminals

Nicci van Niekerk is the group customer relations manager for Fresh Produce Terminals (FPT) and their Cape Town offices are in a solid old building right on the water's edge of the Port of Cape Town's Duncan Dock. Although seagulls have always wheeled and squawked here, these days it's no longer just the gulls roosting here as the FPT building is now surrounded by high stacks of containers. This is clearly a sign of the times and also makes getting to the entrance of the building quite an adventure. Security issues visitors with a dayglo vest and it is in your best interests to stick to the well-defined pedestrian path across the yard or run the gauntlet dodging trucks, forklifts and the gargantuan mobile container cranes.

This building has been associated with the fruit export industry in its various phases for decades and is imbued with a strong sense of history. FPT has retained the black and white photographs of port activities from yesteryear in the passages and these complement their strikingly modern monochrome advertisements with the 'people you can depend on' theme that reinforce the group's corporate identity. "Media relations for the group is my responsibility," says Nicci, who motivated this gritty advertisement campaign. "We have a well developed brand and proactively stick to our brand identity within the media," she added. Media relations are just one facet of Nicci's job. "I am responsible for maintaining contracts as well as rate negotiation with FPT's customers, for example the export companies that use our services and the shipping companies that ship the products. We also provide marketing information and statistics to CGA and PPECB as part of the industry's information gathering process. FPT has three other terminals in southern Africa, namely Durban, Port Elizabeth and Maputo, and liaising with them is also part of my responsibility. Although I work directly with our customers, I also work as the personal assistant to our Managing Director Danie Maartens."

FPT has traditionally moved fruit in conventional break-bulk vessels and the strong trend towards containerisation of fruit has seen a large percentage of the fruit business move across the harbour to the container terminal. FPT's market share has decreased in the process. "In the past we moved fruit almost exclusively but changes in the past few years have led to us broadening our customer base to serve other industries," Nicci explained.

Nicci grew up in Hout Bay and studied at the Cape Town Technicon before spending an extended period working in the UK. "I was planning to settle there but came back briefly for a visit in 1998. While I was here, I registered with an employment agency hoping to get a temporary job while I was here. Soon after that I received a call from FPT to say that the person who was supposed to come to them from the agency had not arrived and they asked if I would be interested in working for them. I agreed and started working here and ended up staying for a year."

She then resigned in 1999 with the idea of going back to the UK but soon after this she had a change of heart. As so often is the case with life, good timing saw something open up in FPT's planning department. Nicci heard about this, applied and got the job, and thus was back at FPT within a short space of time. "This was quite amusing as I had



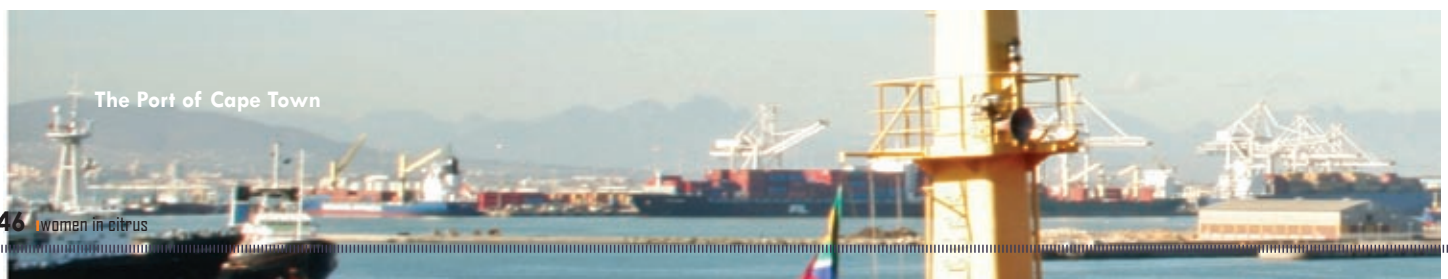
had quite a send off when I left, ostensibly to emigrate, and the next thing I was back at work with my colleagues in another capacity! This job involved maintaining the job card system and when the position in customer relations came up in 2002, I moved into this position and I've been here ever since.

"This is a wonderful job and as it is very diverse. In the time I've been here I've met many people from various industries and this helps with the working relationships needed in the course of getting the job done. As service providers we work with a diverse group. I have a toddler and between my husband, who is a freelance journalist and my fantastic nanny, they provide the perfect support team to take care of things when I'm not at home. We have a great working environment and very supportive colleagues.

"The maritime nature of this job and the sanctuary that a harbour represents for mariners are concepts that are very dear to me and this has its roots in fond childhood memories of visits to the harbour in Hout Bay with my dad. My day starts with the drive to work along the coastal road and every day I'm inspired by the sea as it has its own moods and differs from day to day." Clearly this inspiration continues through the day as the view from Nicci's office of the harbour and Table Mountain past the cranes and loading ships is quite awesome.

"There have been significant changes in the shipping industry over the past ten years and most of them have been positive. Today there is far more equality between all the role players in the port and the old "us-and-them" attitude is a thing of the past. There is also a far greater extent of co-operation between export companies than before. Another big change has been the attitude towards women. A decade ago there were really only women in the field of administration but today there are women throughout all the fields of operation within the industry.

"I am very grateful to my colleagues at FPT for their support and to all the people here and that have since left who have been teachers and mentors to me. I can honestly say that people here have been very helpful in that respect."



The Port of Cape Town



Selma Schwartz - Clausen

Selma Schwartz-Clausen

Transnet Marketing Manager for the Port of Cape Town

At the far end of the Port of Cape Town's South Arm stands the Transnet National Ports Authority's tall building, which is topped by the control tower for the port. Nothing beats this for the ultimate wrap-around views of Cape Town's breathtaking port. This is also home ground for the port traffic controllers, whose task often gets rather taxing when the Cape of Storms lives up to its name with howling winds and mountainous seas. This is also where I met Selma Schwartz-Clausen, Transnet Marketing Manager for the Port of Cape Town.

"Marketing a port is rather different from your traditional type of marketing," explains Selma. "It is incumbent upon ports to improve efficiencies consistently and invest ahead of demand. This happens as market conditions tighten and competition increases. The ever increasing pressure for better and cheaper services from our customers is ever greater. As such our value proposition seeks to enable our customers to compete in their respective markets. Their winnings become our winnings."

Selma joined the company on the 5th of June 1989. Positions previously held include Manager Public Relations and Business Strategy respectively. Before joining the Transnet National Ports Authority division, she worked as a Quality Assurance Manager within the Container Terminal. Her current responsibilities include marketing the port of Cape Town and its basket of services as well as new business development, customer relationship management and cluster strategy implementation. Managing the port revenue budget, research and market intelligence is equally central to her output. This is done with the support of a small marketing team.

"The biggest facet of my job is relationship marketing as we enable and facilitate trade from a port's perspective. Supply chain collaboration is premised on the willingness to find common ground and look for innovative solutions. As such, good working relationships are truly the key to success.

"We work proactively to position our port and to facilitate trade," says Selma. An example of this is the new enabling tool, Ports Online, launched last year by Transnet National Ports Authority. Ports On Line links the port community electronically, enable customers to make their bookings online and submit their documentation electronically, amongst others.

Upon arriving at reception at the entrance to the building in the sober morning light I was somewhat surprised that part of the security check to enter the building was a mandatory breathalyser test! Safety in a port environment is a non negotiable.

"I love what I do. I believe that one should continuously nurture your passion and grow. It is quite inspiring to see how we have evolved as a maritime industry and how the mentality in the industry has changed over the past decade. The culture has changed and today we have a different mindset and approach to managing change and challenges."

Selma has two children, aged 10 and 6. "Managing my career and the needs of my family requires a good support structure. My husband is rather supportive and willing to share responsibilities. Although I make sure that I spend uninterrupted time with my children, like most working moms, occasionally guilt does gnaw at me! Finding me-time brings clarity and renewed energy.

"I feel strongly that more people locally need to be made aware of the importance of supply chain links connecting our hinterland produce to its markets and in particular the strategic importance of our ports to the region, as we are in essence a maritime nation. There are numerous career opportunities that are available to be explored within the broader maritime industry."



Fruit loading, Port of Cape Town



The Port of Cape Town



South African representative for Star Reefers Shipping

When one hears of cold sterilisation protocol citrus shipments to Japan and the USA, the first thing that comes to mind is not a vivacious, blonde ex-drama student, with a bubbly personality, who works from home with big, fluffy cats sleeping in her office. Well, the truth is certainly stranger than fiction. Heidi Rousseau meets me at the door in her beautiful home in suburban Durbanville in Cape Town and takes me to her office where I'm introduced to her two beautiful large cats. This might look like an ordinary sunny home office, but from here Heidi runs the proverbial tight ship.

"In a nutshell I am responsible for marketing, the loading and temperature regime maintenance according to strict protocols of citrus on the Star Reefers vessels in South African ports, as well as maintaining the temperature in the decks at optimum levels throughout the journey to the point of arrival and discharge at the port of destination", explains Heidi. Star Reefers is a Norwegian shipping line that own only Specialised Reefer ships. It is also the first company that have ordered new ship builds (12 in all) in the past 6 years. "At the moment I only work with citrus and this will be the 11th year that I'm shipping citrus to Japan. This is a Cold Steri shipment due to FCM (False Codling Moth) and fruit fly we have in SA and these countries do not have. The protocol is very strict and the fruit has to be at exactly $-0,6^{\circ}\text{C}$ or colder for a certain amount of days. This is to ensure, that should there be eggs or larvae inside the fruit it will die if these temperatures are maintained for a certain amount of time. As you can imagine, I have certainly learned a great deal about all the technical and engineering aspects of shipping and spend days in the engine room where the control room is."

Before Heidi got into shipping, her career took her along a few other paths in the fruit industry. She grew up in Durbanville and her father was a history lecturer at the University of the Western Cape and her mother owned a boutique. After school she started her first year of a law degree at Stellenbosch but felt it was not what she would like to take up as a career. Her parents agreed to allow her to change direction after she had completed her first year. "It is interesting that, today, that first year of law still helps me in my line of work," says Heidi.

After university, she decided that acting was not a stable career in South Africa, so she started working as a secretary for a fertilizer company in 1986. "The owner was my mentor in the business world and he taught me about the two most important things in business, service and loyalty and that you always have to have a good back-up system. My mother taught me that honesty will get you anywhere. Then in 1989 there was a Public Relations position available at Unifruco. This was my dream job and I think I got the job because of my persistence! The job was as enjoyable as it was tough and stressful."

As this was during the times of sanctions against South African fruit, the industry worked very hard at counteracting the negative perceptions through a massive positive publicity drive. Much of this consisted of lobbying and hosting foreign buyers, retailers and parliamentarians in South Africa and portraying both the country and the fruit industry in a positive light. "In those days Unifruco's entertainment bill was massive but this was what it took to get South African fruit sold then, and we did! Showing them all the aspects of industry and entertaining the guests was one of my responsibilities and I loved this as I acted as both host and tour guide. I met some wonderful people and had many hysterical and memorable experiences. I learnt to think on my feet and deal with crises, like the day the Portuguese and Spanish guests on the same tour nearly came to blows as the one lot wanted to see the Diaz beacon and the others wanted to siesta, and the morning the marquee tent erected

at Fleurbaix for a big producer day had all but blown away in the night. Believe me, there were some wild times!"

Although there were wonderful aspects to this job, the job was all-consuming. Many days she needed to get to work by 5:00 to do her office work before the start of day when she would collect guests from the hotel to take them on outings to the fruit growing regions. "I had been burning the candle at both ends and I became ill as a result. My energy levels dropped to zero and this was not me as I am usually full of energy. Doctors recommended some time off and after a short time of recuperation I joined the technical department on returning to Unifruco. This was really not up my alley but I learned a great deal and this has also helped me get to where I am today. I later moved to Personnel where I did interviews and placements for growers in the industry. In this instance having good people skills and the ability to judge character stood me in good stead as I'm pleased to say that many of the appointments were successful and some of the people I placed are still leaders in the industry today."

In 1996 Heidi joined IHS (International Harbour Services) a subsidiary company of the then Unifruco as Marketing and PR Manager. This gave her the opportunity to get to know the harbour and the shipping function well. At that time there were many changes happening in the wake of deregulation and there were also significant structural changes in the harbour and this also happened within IHS, which later became Fresh Produce Terminals. "Despite all these changes, I enjoyed this job very much and spent around 4 years with them. If people wanted to point fingers, they would always say it is in the harbour where things go wrong. We opened the gates to the growers and farm workers and invited them to the port to show them how the fruit was handled and loaded onto the vessels. This was very successful and it was also an education process showing farm workers the next step in the supply chain and clarified why certain procedures had to be followed during the packing process in order to facilitate handling in the port.

"When deregulation happened I realised that the valuable knowledge of the industry and huge base of contacts that I had acquired over the years put me in a position to start my own business. Many people used to contact me, asking me for my expertise and I was simply giving this away over the telephone. I was about to start a Public Relations company when I received a call from Star Reefers in London. They were looking for a representative in South Africa and initially this would just be to keep them informed of what was happening in the fruit industry in South Africa as it changed constantly. Well, pretty soon I was the technical person, the marketer, the IT geek, the operations official, the logistics division and the tea girl! Star Reefers' main office is in London and there they have a staff of about 25 people. They also have four representatives in the other fruit

continued on page 49



Ohna
Loftus

Operational Manager for CitroGold

The CitroGold offices are at Fleurbaix, the magnificent Cape Dutch farmstead complex on the outskirts of Stellenbosch and the last of the autumn leaves were clinging to the ancient oaks amongst the thatch and old gables on the day of my visit.

"What I do today is not what I'm qualified to do," laughs Ohna. "I'm a librarian and qualified at the University of Stellenbosch. After my studies I started working at a development consultant and the brief was to establish a resource library consisting of project reports, plans, maps, office correspondence etc. I also worked on a contract at Intec College to do database programming for their Student Library. In 1999 I got married and as my husband was a forester we moved to the country." Ohna's initial contact with agriculture was with the wine industry as she was contracted to set up a record keeping database for a wine farmer, as well as IPW record keeping system. "This was the initiative for me to develop my own record keeping software and I established my own business

called JPL Information Consulting. The software that I developed was my own intellectual property and I later sold this to a computer company." In 2001 she was approached by the Hex and Berg River Table Grape Associations to do information management for the table grape industry. As deregulation had brought an end to collective information gathering per industry, there was a similar need in the citrus industry and at the end of the grape season she started as the information manager for Citrus SA. Things were still changing rapidly and in 2003 she joined CitroGold as the operations manager.

"Since I've been here I have certainly learned a lot of business skills and life skills along the way as well. During 2005 I studied part-time and achieved a diploma in Business Management. This has been a steep learning curve and my function here is really as a "Jill-of-all-trades". CitroGold's main function is to manage the intellectual property of breeders within horticulture," says Ohna. The bulk of CitroGold's products are speciality citrus varieties and they also have some exotics such as pomegranates and figs as well as subtropical fruit like mangoes and macadamia nuts.. "Within this milieu, it is my responsibility to initiate and maintain contracts for this purpose with exporters and importers of our products. I also coordinate and process the orders for plant material and these orders are then filled by nurseries that are registered to propagate our plant material. I was also responsible for the development and maintenance of our database and I co-ordinate the activities of the grower groups that are associated with the products that are managed by CitroGold. Ad hoc projects such as the Gesvatec labelling system implemented for the first time in South Africa in 2008 also falls within my range of "trades".

Ohna explained that CitroGold continuously sources new plant material internationally in their quest for innovation. "We organise and co-ordinate the controlled grower groups associated with our products and part of this function is to provide feedback to the breeders of these products," she added. Some of the citrus varieties that are controlled by CitroGold are the late mandarin group such as Nadorcott, "Clemengold", Mor, Orri, Eureka seedless lemons, Flamingo grapefruit and Valley Gold, a soft citrus variety. BioGold is the holding company for CitroGold and BioGold is currently setting up offices in various market arenas, so this is likely to further extend CitroGold's international networking.

"I really enjoy my job as it is versatile and never boring. There are always a lot of projects and new things on the go. Yes, it is true that women do have to work harder to be taken seriously and be respected in a man's world, but that is just the way it is and I don't let that get in the way of doing my job. What is more insidious is the way that I often allow my job to intrude on my private life - I'm something of a workaholic and I often find myself working long hours and over weekends. While it is commendable to want to go the extra mile for your job, before you know it you find that you have gone many extra miles and have very little in your life besides work. This is a trap that women seem particularly susceptible to and sometimes you must force yourself to simply leave work at work. I am grateful to God for leading me to this position and for the business and life experience built up over the past 5 years."

Heidi Rousseau continued from page 48

producing countries in the Southern Hemisphere, but I am the only one-woman operation."

"I have never put myself in the 'woman in business' category. I have the knowledge and can do the job. My line of work involves harbour visits at all hours and I have never allowed the possible danger of night-time visits to the port stop me from doing my job. I think my approach to logic is sometimes different to that of the guys and this is often helpful in making the logistics work out. In my line of work I travel a lot and I make things work due to careful forward planning. I have to live a very organised and disciplined life.

"Working from home makes my job easier because when the ships are on the water with the fruit on board I have to be available around the clock, the office is a few paces away from

the bed. It is business as usual to receive a call from a ship's captain at 02h30 and when you consider the value of the cargo, you understand the kind of pressure and urgency involved. My friends and family have come to understand this and my husband has his own business too, and he is very supportive of what I do.

"I also have another business called Charming Ideas which produces and distributes wine glass charms. I thought of a way in which one could distinguish your own glass from those of others in a social situation and in 2001 I developed this concept. This has been a great success and the business provides sheltered employment for disabled people (Down's Syndrome, autism, etc) at the Alta du Toit Aftercare Centre. These people are often forgotten by the rest of the world, and I feel privileged to be part of their lives and to know them and make a difference to their lives. They keep me humble. My motto in life is an old Japanese saying: - if I can no longer - on I can still go."

Susanne de Waal

Quality Assurance Manager for Afrifresh

In the leafy heart of Cape Town's Southern Suburbs is Primrose Avenue, the address for Afrifresh's elegant new offices and builders and carpenters were busy with the finishing touches to the restoration of this beautiful old building on the day I met Susanne de Waal.

Susanne is the quality assurance manager for Afrifresh fruit exporters and although she is petite, this lady is clearly no pushover. "I'm responsible for quality assurance for both the citrus and grapes handled by Afrifresh, which means that I'm always on the phone during the fruit seasons," she explained. "We provide practical grower support as well as fruit inspection for our product and a large part of the job is to visit farms and to liaise with our clients and to match the product to their needs."

Susanne is a trained food scientist and has worked for various companies throughout South Africa. "I'm originally from Port Elizabeth and grew up in the Western Cape. I studied at Stellenbosch University and then completed my postgraduate studies in Pretoria. After I finished my studies, I spent 7 years working in Johannesburg and then also some years in KwaZulu Natal. I've worked for Coca-Cola for 5 years also spent 3 to 5 years with Unilever. I have also worked in the meat industry and spent some time working for a company producing extensively for Woolworths. My husband's company moved us over to Holland where we lived from 2000 to 2004." After the spell in Holland, the family returned to South Africa and relocated to Cape Town for personal reasons.

"I have been in this job for three years and this is the first time I've been involved in the fruit industry. As an outsider my first impression of the fruit industry was that the industry is disorganised but this has improved over time. By comparison fruit is quite a complex arena to work in as one needs to keep a tight hold on everything and work very closely with both the producer and the client."

Susanne had done fieldwork in previous jobs, so travelling out to farms was not a new concept for her. "In this situation one has to have good people skills and know how to work with people. Quality control always involves conflict as one always has to achieve the outcome that the sales people need. One needs to approach people with negative issues in a positive way and in handling this situation as a woman the woman's touch often does help. People are sometimes surprised at how thorough and persistent women can be but in positions like mine attention to detail is vital for success. I am trying to get people to work together in order to be productive and fix problems. Afrifresh has existed for 11 years and the same energies, skills and enthusiasm that have made this company successful is the basis of what my endeavours are built on."

She described an incident that happened to a colleague of hers that illustrates how often in life one simply has to be prepared for the unexpected and to know how to help yourself out of tricky situations. "My colleague had flown to Port Elizabeth on business and had an hour to kill before her flight home. She decided to put in a last inspection of fruit in cold storage at the port. This was on a Friday afternoon and while she was in the cold storage facility, the staff locked the cold room and switched off all the lights! She realised that she was in big trouble as there was no cell phone reception in the place either. She managed to keep a level head and after quite some effort, she managed to alert someone to let her out."



"Over the years we have established strong work related bonds with our growers," says Susanne. "I recall a day that I went to visit one of our growers and that morning the area had received a severe frost which had decimated his fruit crop. It was terrible to see how easily a grower's entire harvest can be ruined. On another occasion I was visiting a citrus grower and during the inspection of the fruit in the orchard, he discovered that his crop had a serious quality problem. I really have sympathy with producers because their enterprise is so vulnerable to the elements and to pests."

"I've also grown into this job and I'm getting to know the important people in the industry and I have the confidence to approach them. One of the positive things about getting older is that I don't stand back or take no for an answer. I do get frustrated when problems affecting the entire industry are not solved, but I suppose at times you know that some things just won't change. I thrive on problem solving and when everything is plain sailing then things can get a bit boring."

When it comes to separating work and family life, Susanne admits that it takes some discipline to separate the two. "With a 7-year-old son at home travelling is a bit tricky at times, but I'm fortunate to have family support to help me with this," says Susanne.

"My perception of the citrus industry is that they are very organised. CGA is doing a great job and they are pulling together and getting things done. They are good at planning and tackle issues head on. As the industry becomes more organised, one can see improvements at a grass roots level, as knowing people and understanding their culture certainly helps."

Michelle Kruger

Project Manager for the Fresh Produce Exporters' Forum

Michelle Kruger is the Project Manager at the Fresh Produce Exporters' Forum and forms an important part of the dynamic FPEF team. Passion for her job and an ever-present sense of humour are two of the things you notice about her immediately and these traits have served her well in many situations locally and internationally.

"When it comes to my job, this is more like a vocation than just work," says Michelle. "People are very often surprised when they ask me what I do and I sound so enthusiastic," she muses. "The most visible part of my job is the organisation of all the international trade shows and the publication of almost all the Fresh Produce Exporter's Forum (FPEF) publications. I run these projects from conceptualisation to the final product."

One of Michelle's biggest ongoing projects within South Africa is managing the "Top of the Class" (TOC) programme. This training initiative forms part of the FPEF's drive to empower PDI's in the fruit export sector. "I am responsible for all the arrangements surrounding the programme. We have service providers who offer the training and I give presentations and talks to the students during their training and I am closely involved with the life-skills aspect of the training. We believe that for training to be authentic and sustainable, it must address as many aspects of the individual's life as possible. We have therefore incorporated a very powerful life skills module to complement the nine Trade Chain Manuals which are used for the work-skills training. Managing TOC has brought me into contact with the most incredible people. People living difficult lives and still so open to the future and all the wonders that it holds. It has been an immensely humbling and positive experience watching students taking back their power and integrating it into all aspects of their lives."

For the rest, Michelle is responsible for various functions which arise as needed such as organising international trade missions, representing the FPEF at government and industry initiatives and fundraising for projects. "Working for a NGO is very hands-on and you must be prepared to be challenged and get



the job done," adds Michelle. "I've had quite a diverse career and have subsequently acquired various skills. I also try to be observant, I'm not afraid to ask, I listen and I read – education is an ongoing thing. One should also not be afraid to walk on the edge sometimes."

As Michelle often works in the international sphere, this has made for some challenging and amusing situations. "Well, there was a night during an industry trade mission to Vietnam that I supposedly went 'missing in action'. The rest of my party waved me off as I swung into the night on a motorbike taxi with a driver wearing fake gold Gucci glasses. This, just before they are told by the restaurant owner that blonde women have been known to get abducted in Saigon. By the time I realised that the taxi driver had no idea where he was going, I checked my phone to call my colleagues and to let them know I'm safe. Lo and behold, I had 12 missed calls and 9 sms's! Some members of the party had even started calling embassies in case we needed diplomatic intervention of some sort. By the time I reached the hotel, my fellow delegates were pacing up and down in the foyer waiting anxiously for me to arrive. I do not think anyone has ever been so happy to see me in my whole life! I had to buy them all a stiff drink but we did have a good laugh after the nerves had settled!"

Michelle added that although travelling for business was certainly interesting, she said that the downside of this is that it is difficult to eat well, sleep well and exercise when one is constantly on the move. "I've had to learn to be more self-disciplined and fortunately this is a life lesson that has turned out well! I have a wonderful teenage son and we manage our way through the travels with a lot of love and respect and as a family we believe that each member must do what makes them happy while operating within these parameters."

"The citrus industry is still very much a man's world, but that has not stopped women from being influential in it. There are many women who have been instrumental in changing the face of the industry and aligning it on all levels to globally acceptable socio-economical practices."

"We have a dynamic industry filled with good people. Fruit is a positive and nurturing element in everyone's life and if we can take its characteristics and metaphorically apply it to our industry, there is only one way to go. As an industry there are many issues that we can address as a whole and in turn it will sharpen our competitive edge. Many big organisations have gone back to the drawing board looking for the values and ethics which will empower the organisation, the people and the environment. In the words of the Gestalt Theory – 'The whole is bigger than the sum of its pieces'. In short, my message is: we must look after our people and our environment and breed values that will make the industry sustainable on all levels."



Martli Slabber

Citrus producer, Citrusdal

From the town of Citrusdal there is a road that leads northward to Algeria in the Cedarberg Mountains. Some kilometres along this increasingly remote gravel road the traveller rounds a corner to be surprised and delighted by the lush citrus orchards and the beautiful settlement of Hexrivier, where old farm gates, tall garden trees and a solid farm school speak of decades of establishment. This is Hexrivier where Martli Slabber and her cousin, Dirk Visser, manage the Hexrivier Citrus group farms.

"I love to farm because to put it quite simply I love the soil and working the dirt for the rewards it brings," says Martli. "I enjoy working with people and striving to realise their potential and make their dreams come true," she added.

"I came to farming by accident. I grew up here as one of five daughters and although all of us love the farm there was no expectation from ourselves or our parents that any of us would come farming. At the end of the 1980's I was developing a career as an Afrikaans literature academic and in 1989 I was feeling somewhat uninspired and returned to the farm for a sabbatical with the idea of spending some time here to become computer literate. At the time my father was deeply involved with the proposal for the Rosendal Dam, and roped me in with farm management. After my stay on the farm, I was travelling in Europe when I realised - I had enjoyed the production and management aspects of farming so much that this was what I

wanted to do with my life." After her travels she returned to the farm and she has been farming at Hexrivier ever since. The farm is run as a company and Martli and Dirk are the two executive directors. "We work well together as a team and have split the responsibilities into different areas of focus to suit each of us," Martli explained.

Her husband Reinhardt runs a backpackers lodge on the farm and is not involved in the farming operation at all. This is a good arrangement as it allows each of them to have their own space (independence being one of the side-effects of incipient spinsterhood). "I met Reinhardt at the ripe old age of 31 when I was already considered an honorary bachelor. Living where we do, it is always amusing that when people meet us as a couple, they immediately assume that he is the farmer and launch into farming conversation with him," she laughed.

"To some extent being a female farmer in a very male dominated environment, I allowed myself to be stripped of my prerogative as a woman. Going through an introspective stage at the age of forty, I believe I threw away a lot of power and pleasure trying to beat men at their game, rather than defining my own parameters. It is true that in our community I have had a tougher time as a result of other women's perceptions and judgement of me than that of men. I think it is inevitable - challenging gender roles and trying to define oneself in such a role is contentious and controversial. One tends to overcompensate for being a woman in a man's world by being too assertive, and my sense of alienation from traditional roles did not help. The biggest wake-up call for me was when I had to reconcile my role as a mother with that of a farmer. Sometimes as a farmer I have to strut to get things done and at times I have to check myself from taking this behaviour into our home.

"I've met a number of important men in the citrus industry who have been quite comfortable to interact with me on an equal basis and to encourage me in my business. I have a great respect and gratitude to them. At the same time, there have been numerous occasions in meetings where the testosterone levels have simply been too high. With all the strutting and political positioning happening, no one is listening to each other and by the end of the meeting the attendants conclude on a motion that was already tabled halfway through the meeting. People that are discriminatory I treat dismissively. One can be greatly moulded by the experience and one tends to typecast oneself as the "poppie" or the "bitch" and I think it is probably significant that this farm is called Hexrivier!

"If women were not considered as PDI's (previously disadvantaged individuals), we would not have made the progress we have in recent years. Take away that status, and check how white women will get sidelined. The emancipation of women is as fragile as a young girl walking on her own at night through a township. We have thousands of years of misogyny, clitorectomies and witch hunts to deal with. The last few decades are simply a fingernail on the body of human behaviour!

"We really need to establish a flourishing commercial agricultural sector with a strong black component as fast as possible. The lack of support for commercial agriculture and the stress coping with demands put on farmers at present is undermining farming as a whole and especially, the ability of agriculture to realign itself. A big criticism that I have of the current land reform process is that there is no support to new farmers with regard to their urgent need for working capital. It takes up to 6 years for a citrus orchard to reach the financial "break-even" point and in order to continue for this length of time, it is vital that farmers have access to working capital, even if they acquire an established farm. In the current high debt environment, it is highly irresponsible to buy a farm and try to establish it without sufficient working capital.

"At Hexrivier we believe strongly in the importance of human resource development and are proactive in this field. Our focus is the training of our own staff to address our future needs, and therefore, in addition to technical training, we have been doing ABET (Adult Basic Education Training) on the farm for some time now. This has already reached 100 local workers. We also provide crèche and after school care facilities for the children of our farm workers. It is vital to provide people with the resources they need to empower themselves to reach their own potential."

In the Western Cape, the traditional region for citrus production is the Olifants River Valley, situated between the Atlantic coast and the mighty Cedarberg Mountain Range. The N7 highway runs through the valley, passing the towns of Citrusdal and Clanwilliam and is the conduit for citrus produced in the region to the Port of Cape Town from where it is exported to various international destinations. Everseason is a company that exports citrus from the area. It was started by a group of producers who decided to export their own fruit. Their offices are in Citrusdal and this is where Ada-Maré Mouton works.

Warm and friendly, Ada-Maré welcomes me into the offices. Although she is initially a little hesitant to be interviewed, she is soon chatting quite comfortably. "I'm originally from George in the Southern Cape and after school I attended Stellenbosch University and studied a B. Com degree," she says. "It was while I was studying that I met my husband who was a farmer from Citrusdal, so that is how I came to live in Citrusdal. In 2003 I started working for a fruit export company in town called Van Der Lans Capefresh. Those were turbulent times for the citrus industry after deregulation and in 2006, the producers that supplied this company decided to start their own export entity and this was how Everseason developed. Stiaan Engelbrecht was my boss in the Van Der Lans days and as he then became the MD of Everseason, I stayed on with him through this transition," she explained.

"This is the third season of Everseason's existence and my involvement with the business has grown to be a full-time job, particularly in the citrus production season between April and the end of October. After the season is over, the foreign payments and the rest of the finances need to be done. I am responsible for the administration and accounting, finalising foreign currency transactions and the payment of our 21 producers-shareholders and the further 5 producers from whom we buy fruit." Everseason has grown quite rapidly in the three years of its existence and now moves up to 1.3 million cartons of citrus annually. This is made up of navels, soft citrus, Valencias, Midnights and lemons. "We receive fruit packed in 5 different packhouses and we need to collate the information about each of the pallets received. We also need to subtract the packing costs from each of our producers and balance the payments to them accordingly. To further complicate matters payments are also split into two or more instalments, so we really need to crunch the numbers carefully," she laughs.

"I enjoy this job because I could never be a stay-at-home mom. I need stimulation and enjoy working with our producers. I am grateful to my boss, Stiaan Engelbrecht for his understanding. We work well together and he is comfortable with me occasionally taking time off work to take care of family commitments because he knows that I will still get my work done. As the volume of fruit we move has increased a lot, this has become quite a taxing job and often I have to work long hours, particularly during the citrus season. My



Ada-Maré Mouton

Accountant for Everseason

daughters are 7 and 9 and I am fortunate to have a very supportive and understanding husband. My husband no longer farms and now he has a fleet of quad bikes that are used by fruit farmers as vehicles to administer spray programmes to their fruit crops. This is proving to be increasingly popular as these vehicles are cheaper to run than tractors and as they are substantially lighter than tractors, they also do not compact the soil as much.

"At work there are three of us that work in the office and we get on so well that we are somewhat hesitant to appoint someone to assist us despite the hectic workload. I like working with men because things remain straightforward and uncomplicated. Yes, this is a male dominated environment but I will not allow myself to be intimidated by that and the guys I work with respect me for what I do."



Orange orchards near Citrusdal



Marsheille Hofmeyr

Research Technician for
Citrus Research
International in Citrusdal

The CRI office in Citrusdal is in the main street and this is the domain of husband and wife team, Hendrik and Marsheille Hofmeyr. Hendrik Hofmeyr is a senior researcher with Citrus Research International and the Hofmeyrs are originally from Nelspruit. "In the early part of his career, Hendrik was based at the headquarters of CRI (then the South African Co-operative Citrus Exchange) in Nelspruit and I was a librarian, who worked in the CSFRI library," explains Marsheille. "CRI needed research conducted on False Codling Moth (FCM) specifically in the Western Cape citrus industry and so Hendrik was transferred to Citrusdal in 1981 to commence this research. We arrived in Citrusdal in midwinter and coming from the warm Lowveld, you can imagine that this was quite a shock to the system. As there was no library post available in Citrusdal, I started helping Hendrik with fieldwork, spraying trees and conducting field studies, as well as managing the laboratory and offices."

FCM is a major pest in the citrus industry and has remained difficult to control for many years. A variety of approaches to control FCM, such as insecticides, mating disruption and biological control, have been investigated in the past with no more than temporary solutions to show for all the work. "We also worked on other related research, such as the development of a trap that contains a sexual attractant for FCM males," says Marsheille. This attractant, amusingly called the Lorelei attractant, named after the legend of the Lorelei, a beautiful maiden sitting on a rock in the Rhine River in Germany who lured ship navigators and their crews to their doom with her alluring singing. Today this device is used throughout South Africa as a management tool for the control of FCM. "What is significant about this is that Hendrik and I are the only people who make this device. It is quite a time consuming process and we make quite a few thousand each year," she explained.

Marsheille has worked with Hendrik for 25 years and she has been involved with all the processes in the research programme. Over the years they have also worked on many other pests and problems. In 2002 research started on the Sterile Insect Technique (SIT) programme for FCM control.

"In the process of setting up this project in the Western Cape, we worked with American SIT specialists. The introduction and development of the SIT project has been the highlight of my involvement with CRI as I found it very intensive and interesting. The enthusiasm and energy that our American colleagues put into their efforts reinforced the idea that we were not working in isolation and this was an inspiration to continue. This method uses gamma radiation to sterilise millions of moths every week which are then released into orchards. The sterile moths mate with wild, fertile moths and as this produces no offspring, the breeding pattern is interrupted. The FCM population is reduced and this results in decreased crop damage. In doing all of this, I certainly learned a great deal about radiation and entomology," says Marsheille.

This was the first time the SI technique had been applied to False Codling Moth and to learn more about how this technique worked in practice, the Hofmeyrs travelled to Canada to see how it was utilised to control Codling Moth in stone fruit and top fruit orchards.

"In 2005 we embarked on a year long pilot project to test the effectiveness of the SIT project in 35 ha of citrus orchards. This involved many hours in the sun as Hendrik and I would travel through the orchards together on a quad bike with him driving and me releasing countless numbers of irradiated moths. This was a time of intensive input and throughout that summer we got burned to a frazzle!"

The positive results shown by this pilot project motivated the industry to commercialise the SIT. An insectary for the mass rearing of FCM was built and the first moths were released in November 2007.

"Marsheille's experience enabled her to provide valuable input for the design of the facility," says Hendrik. "In the facility we will be able to produce up to 15 million moths per week, and sterilise them before release on the farms. The facility was funded by CRI and a partner, Plantbio, and now belongs to the operating company Xsit (Pty) Ltd. A certain percentage of our research time is seconded to Xsit," he explained.

"When Hendrik and I first arrived in Citrusdal, I only assisted him in the mornings as I spent the afternoons at home with my children. The initial adjustment of moving here was quite an experience and had some amusing consequences. Our home language is Afrikaans and as there is quite a difference in accent between the Western Cape and Mpumalanga, it was quite funny to hear our kids speaking to their friends with the local accent at school, but reverting back to their old accent at home! Growing up in this rural environment was good for our children. They often helped us with aspects of our work and saw their parents working together as a team towards providing solutions to problems facing an entire industry. Today they are all university graduates and have their own careers.

"I can truly say that I have enjoyed this work – not only have I learned a great deal, but it has been fantastic to work with my husband during this time. This became my career due to circumstances and I have not felt that I lost out because I did not follow the career that I was trained for. The citrus industry has given me the opportunity to work with farmers and I would rather do this than work with any other group of people."

"Well, there is another group of people that Marsheille works with and does much for," says Hendrik. "She is also a dedicated aerobics instructor and has offered this service to many in Citrusdal over the years." Hendrik is clearly proud of his wife and rightly so. From their devotion to each other and dedication to their cause, it is quite apparent that CRI have a huge asset in this dedicated husband and wife team.



Margaret McGregor

Citrus Producer,

Citrusdal

Mention a name like Margaret McGregor and the picture that comes to mind is of a bonny lass from the Highlands of Scotland, but aside from the porcelain skin and strawberry blonde hair, that is where any similarity ends. Margaret is a citrus producer in the Citrusdal region who has carved a niche for herself in the farming community despite many challenges. Her farm is called Bergsoom and on the verandah of her home on the mountain slope, with sweeping views over the Olifants River Valley and the towering Cederberg beyond, Margaret told me about her life.

"I was born and bred in this valley and although I left here for Cape Town when I had grown up, somehow I always had a feeling that I would return, although this was quite unlikely at the time," says Margaret. "After studies in Cape Town and travels in Europe I joined Old Mutual in Cape Town and worked for them for a number of years. During this time I got married and had a daughter and although I have a gorgeous grown daughter today, the marriage was disastrous and we split up when my daughter was still very young."

Margaret is one of five children- two girls and three boys. Her oldest brother was already farming and as her two younger brothers were not keen to farm, what would become of the rest of the property once her father retired was unclear for a long time. "By the early 1990's my father was in his seventies and although he was still farming, he was no longer able to manage the increasing demands of the farm, especially the admin side of the operation. There was some strain between my father and my oldest brother and my dad was quite distraught about what should happen to his farm once he retired. He came to visit me in Cape Town to discuss the situation and asked me if I would come to the farm and help them to set up and run the computerised administration systems. Well, as this was a heartfelt request from my father, I gave up my job and moved to the farm. I soon got to know the workings of the farm through the administration side.

"When I returned to the farm to help my parents, I was not sure of how long this would be and my partner Giancarlo had stayed on in Cape Town and we would commute to see each other. Over time it became clear that I would be on the farm permanently and in 1997 he joined me in Citrusdal. We are now married and our son Alex attends school in Rondebosch."

"This was also the period when the Rural Development Corporation was very active. Social worker Louise Terblanche, who married a local farmer, started implementing rural development on farms in the valley. I signed up our farm without hesitation. More farms joined the organisation that would eventually become known as the G.O.V. (Gemeenskap Ontwikkelingsvereniging). I became involved in the community development and it was wonderful to see the incredible results this brought to the farms in our area. With this kind of farming we are highly dependent on labour and this process went a long way towards getting rid of the distrust that had developed during the Apartheid era.

"It is so sad to see that in many cases women are still rated lower than men in our rural areas. I marched in here in 1993 and thought that women were equal to men but soon found that this area was still quite chauvinist. Many of the people in the community did not take me seriously, thinking that my presence here would just be temporary and there was not much neighbourly advice forthcoming. As I was becoming increasingly involved in the production side of the farm, I really needed guidance in this field so I started a study group in 1994 in conjunction with the technical field officer of Goedehoop packhouse. We called this McGregor's study group and the group met once a month and we invited speakers to address the group on various relevant topics. This proved to be the ice-breaker in the community as most of the farmers in the valley decided to join the study group and attend the meetings. This created a forum to share farming issues and since then the growers in the area started to share advice with each other as well as with me.

"In 1995 I attended a two week short course in citrus production in Port Elizabeth. This was a wonderful opportunity for me as I got to know a great deal more about the production side of farming. This made me feel more confident as a result. I have a great debt of gratitude to Ballie Wahl (who worked for Capespan at that time) for his patient help and guidance in teaching me about citrus farming.

Bergsoom Farm has 50 hectares and since she arrived in 1993, Margaret has worked at improving the property and in 1997 they planted 12 ha of Clementines, Navel and Morris and also built a new dam. Bergsoom has 22 permanent workers and Margaret believes that goodwill is all important for the success of the operation. Margaret's father passed away two years ago and some of the property that she has developed will revert to her oldest brother in November. This has left her concerned about the future. "I'm worried that when I lose this land the portion that I'm left with might not be economically viable. Farming is my passion and it would be great to be able to sustain this and create a peace of mind for the future of our workers." In order to provide an additional income for the Bergsoom workers outside of the citrus season, Margaret and Giancarlo also grow sweet basil on the property and manufacture organic pesto sauce for sale at speciality food outlets.

"I have a wonderful relationship with my workers and still enjoy getting to know the local idioms that at times it is quite hilarious. One of the funnier and most poignant moments happened some years ago at the local co-operative packhouse when our driver arrived with some of our fruit for packing. The worker receiving the fruit needed to know which farm's fruit this was and he was joking around with the driver, asking: "So who is your boss?". Well, Peeres turned and pointed at me and said "There is my boss – he is a woman!"

"Returning to Citrusdal has been great as here we live in harmony with God and nature. I believe that to live in tune with the seasons as we do and to witness Nature's beauty every day is a huge privilege. It is however quite distressing to witness the self-interest of important industry role players and how this is threatening the survival of the traditional family farm. The overbearing mantra is volumes or nothing and in the face of this, small family farms will go the way of the dodo because volumes are the most important part of the equation.

"My earnest hope is that the "soul" and integrity of the small farmer will return to farming and that they will be able to integrate this "soul" with the financial demands of agribusiness. I also dearly hope that young women will enter agriculture since they are the ones responsible for forming the new, integrated generation that must ensure food security in this country and they are also responsible for establishing value systems on farms."



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Author's Note

"Go and find women involved in the citrus industry and hear what they have to say," was the brief from Citrus Growers' Association for this publication. This assignment gave me the opportunity to meet the remarkable women who have shared their stories in South African citrus production regions as diverse as Letsitele, Fort Beaufort, Nkwadini, Citrusdal and Ixopo. For many of these women, involvement in the citrus industry has been due more to fate than planning, yet their commitment and passion for the industry is truly commendable. Meeting these women and writing their stories has inspired me on a personal level and I would like to sincerely thank CGA for entrusting me with this remarkable assignment.

Louise Brodie

Louise Brodie is a freelance journalist and photographer who reports on the South African fresh produce sector for South African and international publications. She lives in the Hex River Valley in the Western Cape with her husband and two children.



