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Foreword



South Africa is a country blessed with some of the greatest natural and human resources in the world. The challenge comes in harnessing these natural and human resources in a manner that ensures sustainability and growth. The agricultural sector has a distinct challenge in both natural resource utilisation and protection and human resource development and motivation. For some reason agriculture is often not seen as a career of choice for the youth - this publication should be motivation enough for getting more youngsters interested in agriculture in general and in the citrus industry in particular.

The South African citrus industry is a global heavyweight. Despite its location in the south of Africa, some distance from lucrative markets, the South African citrus industry is the second largest citrus exporter in the world. This position is in no small way due to the passion and commitment of the people who serve the industry - people make things happen. This publication illustrates that the industry is

being stocked with a number of new, dynamic, young and innovative people who are becoming as passionate about the industry as those who have taken the industry to its present heights.

The citrus industry must be applauded for showcasing the endeavours of these youngsters, as they did for new growers and women in earlier publications. It is through these publications that we highlight transformation of agriculture in a bid to better reflect the demographics of our wonderful country. As government we are committed to work with commodities in job creation, youth development and empowerment of women, grower development and transformation.

May these youngsters, and all others currently in the citrus industry and those planning to join, take the citrus industry into the future with confidence and enthusiasm.

Minister Tina Joemat-Pettersson

South African Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

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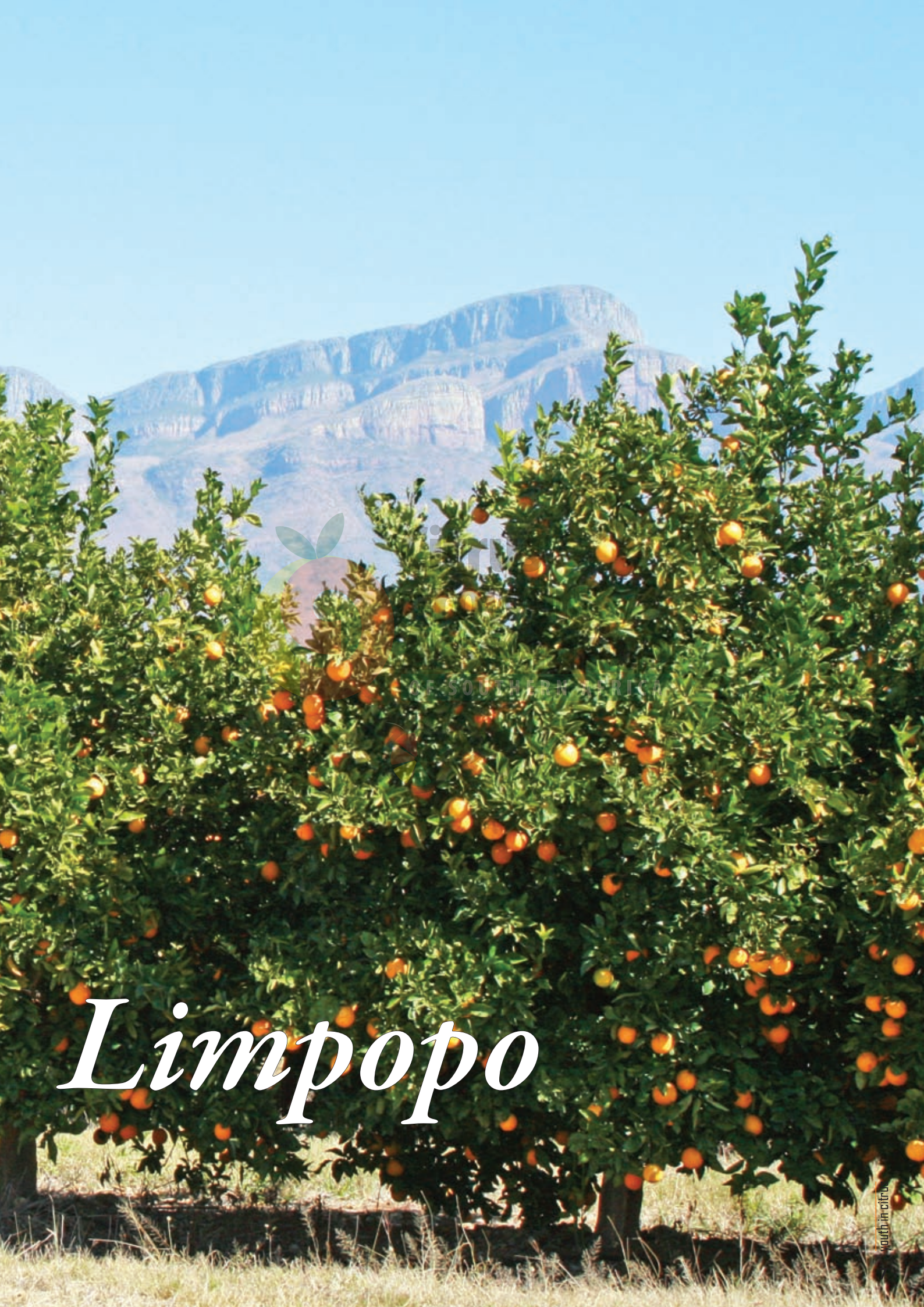
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A vibrant orange orchard in the foreground, with lush green trees heavily laden with ripe, bright orange fruit. In the background, a range of rugged, flat-topped mountains stretches across the horizon under a clear, pale blue sky. The scene is bathed in bright, natural light, suggesting a sunny day.

Mpumalanga and



OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

Limpopo

Neos Estate near Hectorspruit has 336ha under cultivation and produces citrus, sugar cane, litchis and mangos. The estate has approximately 60 permanent workers and during the high season a further 80 seasonal workers are employed to bring in the harvest.

Stanley Mtshali **Production manager at Neos Estate, Hectorspruit** **25**



“It became clear to me that I wanted to know more as I was interested in how things worked.”

Stanley is local and grew up on the trust lands close to Hectorspruit. He attended Lovunywa High School and matriculated in 2003. After school finding a job was not easy and he ended up working for a paper mill 90km west of Hectorspruit where his job was to repair the railway lines. This was hard manual labour and travelling between there and his home was difficult, so in 2005 he decided to resign from this job and return home.

In 2006 Neos was looking for a storeman and a pesticide administrator. “I heard about the job and my application was successful so I was thrilled to start working here. In my view this was a good starting point as the job also had opportunities for advancement. The job was responsible and I thrived in this position but it became clear to me that I wanted to know more as I was interested in how things worked beyond my personal field of responsibility.

“The management noticed my interest and ambitions and started sending me on training courses. I attended the Top of the Class course that was offered at Neofresh in 2006. It was good to learn about the supply chain beyond the production level where we are involved and going to the port was very informative. Other courses that I have completed in the last few years have been on cane husbandry and senior supervisor health and safety. These have all been good to broaden my mind about the work environment.

“In March 2007 I was promoted to supervisor of all the departments on Neos and the management started training me as an assistant production manager. I was promoted to production manager of all the divisions before the citrus harvest in 2008 and in the beginning it was very difficult for a young man like me to give instructions to people who are older than myself and had been doing this job for many years. The attitude was “who does he think he is” and I had to work hard at earning respect. This is now my second season and things are better. With the different crops we produce the seasons are spread throughout the year so we are always busy. When I was appointed as production manager, the previous production manager moved up to the position of general manager so it is good that my mentor is still around to help me from time to time.

“My road to agriculture was more about opportunity than choice. My father was a teacher and although he passed away some time ago, he always encouraged me. My mom is a domestic worker and is very proud of my successes. When I first became involved in agriculture my friends laughed at my choice of direction but now that I am making progress, they are sitting up and taking note. They joke that I always liked heavy, all-weather shoes as a kid and that perhaps this was an omen of things to come!

“I love working with people and helping them with their problems. Our motto on Neos is “motivation first and then productivity” which works well. Working with the production of organic things such as fruit is very enjoyable as there is fulfilment in planting something and watching it grow. My job has made it possible for me to provide well for my partner and my little daughter as well as my mother. Living on the farm provides a safe environment in which to raise children and also allows me to keep an eye on everything even after hours. I really enjoy this and have made up my mind to stay in agriculture.

“The land claim that is currently registered against Neos is creating uncertainty for all of us. As our future is unsure due to this process, this is making many of the people who work here nervous. Ultimately it does not matter who owns the farm as long as it is run by skilled people as the process of farming needs to be continued in the optimal way in order to ensure food security and job security. If the claimants do not ensure that the farm is run properly, the farm will fold like some of our neighbouring farms already have.”





Julia Mabunda

Outreach officer for Agri-IQ at Neos Estate, Hectorspruit

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“Helping people is very rewarding.”

guide their hands! Learning to use the computer mouse and keyboard was also quite an adventure and but her pupils made good progress to varying levels of competency.

“After my training I worked at Neos as an ABET facilitator for two years and in 2006 I was offered a job at Neos Estate as a literacy and numeracy facilitator so I moved to the estate. I attended the Top of the Class course offered at the Neos Estate which is incredible as it gives one a good perspective of the entire supply chain. We also had the opportunity to visit the harbour and were even able to board the ship and see the fruit being loaded.”

Julia is an outreach officer for Agri-IQ and is based at Neos Estate. She is from the Nkomasi area, attended school at Lambati High School and matriculated in 1999. “My dream was to become a computer programmer but this was not possible because of financial constraints,” explains Julia.

“After matric I worked at the Neofresh Packhouse near Hectorspruit as a citrus packer and a year later I was promoted to quality controller. At this stage Neofresh was planning to offer the government sponsored adult basic education training (ABET) courses at the packhouse and they needed someone to be trained as a literacy facilitator. I was interested and was sent to Johannesburg to study to become a literacy facilitator.

“This was my first opportunity to work a computer and on the first day I was so nervous and excited I was shaking! Today I look back after 5 years and laugh,” says Julia. ABET training is presented in English which is the workers’ third language after their home language and Afrikaans, which is widely spoken in the area. Thus the job required a great deal of patience and at times simply teaching people how to hold a pencil required her to use “presstick” gum as a mould to

In March 2009 Julia was appointed as the outreach officer for a wellness programme for Agri- IQ. Her current involvement with Agri-IQ stems from working with Bronwyn Palmer, the CEO of Agri-IQ who was previously involved in training and development at Neofresh and Neos. Agri-IQ was started in the area and although they recently moved their headquarters to Durban, Julia is one of Agri-IQ’s area officers, operating from Neos Estate. “I met Bronwyn back in 2003 when Neofresh was looking for employees who wanted to further their studies or become literate. I have worked with her since then and she has been my mentor in business and life,” says Julia.

“I am working on a wellness and health project for farm workers and migrant labourers educating people in this sector about HIV/AIDS. The project is called Khanyisa, which means ‘to light up’. We have been running peer education training for farm workers in the area including Neos and are preparing for the project to be implemented on the farms by peer workers. The initiative has been well received.”

Julia has certainly had her fair share of hardship as well. At the end of 2006 her boyfriend and the father of her son died suddenly of breathing complications at the age of 32 and after his death she discovered that he had had a relationship with another woman. At the same time she contracted Tuberculosis and was also hugely relieved that an HIV test was negative and she recovered after treatment. “This was a terrible time but I am now much better and today I can tell people that TB is curable,” she explained. “My son is also doing well as he is now four years old and will start pre-school soon.”

Julia explained that in the local community the perception of agriculture was that it was an employment sector for old and disadvantaged people. “Socially farm workers are not held in high regard and as a result youngsters prefer to do indoor jobs or even sit at home rather than work on farms. Agriculture provides a good working experience for the youth and recent changes in the agricultural sector have made it possible for people to work hard towards improving their situations through promotion. It is not impossible for ambitious youngsters to aim at owning their own farms in the future.”

Neos has been subject to a land claim and after negotiations started at the end of 2007, the Government asked the management to continue in their positions for a further three years. “Our attitude is that we are continuing with business as usual while the Department of Land Affairs works out the issues between the current owners and the land claimants.

“I really enjoy working in an office and operating a computer as part of my daily activities. Helping people is very rewarding. I enjoy working for Agri-IQ and in the future I will continue to do this line of work, helping people in the community with health awareness as well as for my church. Through this I hope to make a better life for my children and myself.”



Moloko Semenya

Intern at Neos Estate, Hectorspruit

Citrus Academy Bursary Fund beneficiary

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Moloko is from Polokwane in Limpopo and matriculated from Khwinana High School in Polokwane in 2006. "I always wanted to go into agriculture although my parents thought this was a bad idea," explains

Moloko.

"I grew up in a rural area outside of the city where my parents grew maize and vegetables at home so I would help them every morning. I enjoyed this and found it interesting which is what inspired me to study agriculture. I have two older brothers who are both electricians so my parents were expecting me to follow in their footsteps."

"My father works for the Pretoria Municipality and my mom is a home executive who also grows vegetables. People think that agriculture is for people who are not educated. After matriculating, I insisted on studying agriculture despite my parents disapproval and I enrolled at the college at the very last minute.

"I am studying at the Lowveld College of Agriculture in Nelspruit and although my home is quite far from Nelspruit, I decided to study here because my oldest brother works in Nelspruit. My parents were grateful that he was close by and could look out for me. Initially he thought that agriculture was boring but now that I have been studying in this direction he is proud of me.

"The course has been very beneficial and coming to do my practical year at Neos has been very good and I have been well accepted. I do whatever work is required on a given day and although I am here to work mainly on citrus production, in between I am also learning about the other crops produced on the estate. Practical involvement on the farm has shown me how rapidly plants grow if they are properly nurtured and also how fast pests can develop.

"My home language is Sepedi and although the local language is Seswati we somehow manage to communicate. Sometimes I am expected to work as a supervisor and it can be difficult for me to tell older people, especially men, what to do. The responses I have had are "Who do you think you are?" or "Call the person who sent you to come and tell us!" Slowly they have become more accepting of my position and we get the job done.

"When I was at school nobody mentioned agriculture as a career opportunity and choosing this direction was simply my choice. My school friends think that agriculture is old fashioned and tease me, saying that I am not studying but simply working on the farm. Even older people cannot believe that I have chosen agriculture and travel so far to study in this field. As I travel to work in the morning people often joke with me about my blue overalls. I enjoy working outdoors and observing the dynamic nature of the farming process as the seasons change remains an inspiration. The peaceful atmosphere of living in a rural area is a pleasure as I find township living both noisy and dangerous.

"Down the line I would like to be my own boss and own a farm. I do not want to work for somebody else long-term and want to be in charge of making things happen. To be involved in agriculture you need to be well motivated and to remain dedicated enough to stay around and see the production process with all its demands through to the end."

"Down the line I would like to be my own boss and own a farm."



The town of Malelane is situated 30 kilometres east of Nelspruit along the N4 Highway in Mpumalanga and is home to the head office Malelane Citrus Koöperasie. This falls in the Nkomasi Region of the Lowveld and, with the Kruger National Park to the north and Swaziland to the south, the region is both a strategic corridor of South African soil that connects to Mozambique and Maputo in the east and a rich agricultural region with bountiful crops of citrus, bananas, avocados and sugar cane.



“It has been exciting as we have implemented improvements.”

Leander Meyer

Packhouse manager at Malelane Citrus Co-operative, Malelane 25

This is where I met Leander Meyer, the manager of one of Malelane Citrus Koöperasie packhouses. The co-operative has four packhouses which are spread along the corridor from Malelane eastwards to Komatipoort adjacent to the border with Mozambique and packs in excess of 1.5 million cartons of citrus annually.

Leander is from Malelane and attended high school in Nelspruit, matriculating at the end of 2001. “I went to the open days of a number of universities but none of the courses on offer had any particular appeal for me,” says Leander. “At school I was quite academic but did not want to rush into anything because I truly did not know what I wanted to do.” He added that agriculture was never mentioned at school as a career opportunity and although he had grown up in the area, his involvement with agriculture evolved purely by chance.

After school Leander did what many young South Africans are opting to do and that is to go and spend some time working in the UK. “I suppose this is our generation’s replacement for military service as most of my school friends have spent time working in the UK,” he mused. Leander applied for work through an agency in South Africa. His first job was working for a packing facility that packaged berries for UK supermarkets where he worked as a packline manager for strawberries. “This job was what got me interested in fruit but unfortunately they lost their contract and I had to move on. My next job was also with fresh produce at the pre-packaging plant for Mack Multiples in Kent that packages all their fruit and vegetables for delivery to the retail sector. This was a fantastic job and I stayed with them for almost two years, working on their grape and melon lines. The fruit I worked with came from all over the world and the experience I had with Mack Multiples was invaluable. They were very good to me as well and wanted me to stay permanently, even calling me to return once I had left.” Leander explained that when December was approaching and his work permit was coming to an end, his parents wanted to know whether he would be joining them for their annual holidays in Mozambique. “It was a great job but after two years in England the sun and home were calling me, loud and clear!”

At the start of 2003 he started studying Economic Management through UNISA (a correspondence course) from his parent’s home in Malelane and found it difficult to study part time. His sister told him that Malelane Citrus was looking for an assistant packhouse manager and two days after sending in his CV, he was called in for an interview. “This was days before the start of the citrus season and I was quite nervous. I got the job and was asked to start the next day, despite not knowing much about citrus at all! It was great to find a job so close to home and I was told that for the first season I needed to observe, ask questions and get to know the system. That season was a steep learning curve and I was only 20 years old at the time. I learned a great deal from Hennie Mienie, the packhouse manager who has been with Malelane Citrus for 25 years, who showed me the ropes. Hennie Botes, one of our shareholders, also taught me the importance of having up to date and relevant information at your fingertips.”

He stayed with Malelane Citrus until after the season in 2008, when he was offered a job with Colors Fruit in Nelspruit. “There was not much opportunity for advancement at Malelane Citrus and as Colors is one of Malelane Citrus’s exporters, I had worked closely with them at the packhouse. They made me a very tempting job offer as a technical manager and I started with them in October 2008. Early in 2009 the Malelane Citrus packhouse manager emigrated and I decided to return if they would have me. During the time I spent with Colors I learned a great deal about postharvest issues and the marketing side of the industry. They were a great company to work with, but I felt that my first loyalty lay with Malelane Citrus in a time of need so returned here as the packhouse manager!

“Our packing season is from April to August and this season has gone well in the packhouse

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Quality Assured

Malelane Citrus

We specialise in the packaging and
global marketing of quality citrus
for our discerning customers



Citrus
Growers'
Association
OF SOUTHERN AFRICA



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I work closely with my colleague Michelle Engelbrecht who has been a great help and has been with Malelane Citrus for many years. It has been exciting as we have been able to implement a number of innovations and system improvements.

“Although the packing season is only for five months we are busy all year round with maintenance as well as compliance with the various accreditations we require for our customers. We aim to make the packhouse more proactive at

preparing for these audits independently. We have also started marketing some of our own fruit directly. In the future I would like to stay with this company. I find the commercial side of the industry very interesting and would like to get to know it better.

“Before I became involved in agriculture I did not realise that there were so many opportunities in this sector. The fruit industry is dynamic and changing rapidly. Young people are often more open to change and personally I find working in the fruit industry very exciting.”



Gugu Mlangeni

Human resources personnel officer at Golden Frontier Citrus, Hectorspruit

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“Growing up we were always told that agriculture is the backbone of the economy so I thought that choosing a career in this direction should be a safe choice. I was the first person from my family to have tertiary education so this was quite something for us,” says Gugu.

“Part of our studies required us to do a year of practical training, and I did this at the Agricultural Research Council’s Plant Production Research Institute in 2001. I did research on the Diamond Back Moth, which is a pest on cabbages and we were trying to create a biological control measure for this pest. I finished my diploma in 2002 and returned home but had a difficult time finding employment. Finally in 2004 I found a job as an admin officer at Nkomazi Management Services and I was with them until 2007 when I started at Golden Frontier Citrus. When I started here I worked as a receptionist for the first three months and then I started with the human resources and admin side of the operations. This involves doing the wages for approximately 350 permanent employees and in the harvest season this increases to around 600 people so this is a huge responsibility. I am also responsible for the employment contracts with the workers and pre-employment clinic evaluations to see if prospective employees are fit for the job. This process applies to both permanent and seasonal employees.

“Although I studied agriculture I am now in the office environment and over the years I have gained a lot of experience in this field that I think is more suited to my character. I don’t think that I would like to return to the production side of agriculture now. When I do visit the farms, however, I make a point of visiting the operations side of the processes where I deal with the administration as it is important to understand what you are dealing with.

“In 2008 I decided to do a degree in Human Resources through the University of South Africa (UNISA) part time. I registered for 5 modules last year and passed all of them including one pass with distinction. I am currently busy with my second year which is also five modules and this year I aim to achieve two distinctions. This higher qualification will give me more scope and the opportunity for advancement.

“My daughter is two years old so studying and working with such a young child is tough at times. I try to make the most of weekends and at times my Mom takes care of her so that I can get some studying done. I am a single child and was raised by a single mom.

Elegant, sophisticated and warm, Gugu is the human resources personnel officer at Golden Frontier Citrus. She hails from near the Swaziland border and matriculated from Mjokwane Secondary School near Komatipoort in 1997. After matric she went to the Pretoria Technicon to study agriculture.

“Agriculture offers many opportunities for employment.”

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My mother is a general worker at the local clinic and she is very proud of my achievements. I am so grateful to her for all her encouragement and help through some very tough times and today I am able to help her. Her wish is to have a comfortable house and helping her to achieve that is one of my first priorities in life.

“Over time agriculture has become more sophisticated and as a result we need many more educated people in the sector who are able to implement the new technologies and guide agricultural development. Today agriculture offers many opportunities for employment as well as for entrepreneurs who want to run their own farming or marketing businesses. One can also supplement one’s income through agriculture. If you have the space and water at home and perhaps the help of some willing hands, you can grow food for your family and sell the surplus.”



Nhlanhla Nkuna

Overall process and quality controller at Golden Frontier Citrus, Hectorspruit

Citrus Academy Bursary Fund beneficiary
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“After matric I could not find employment so I worked as a volunteer teacher at my high school for five years, teaching maths, physics, biology and agriculture. This was a tough time as I worked without payment but as I had proven myself, in 2004 I started receiving compensation for my dedication.

“I had always been interested in agriculture so I registered to study at the Lowveld College of Agriculture to do the National Diploma in Agriculture (Plant Production) but only had enough funds to pay the registration fee, not for the studies. I went to the college administration, explained my position and appealed to them for assistance. They told me that they might be able to assist me but that depended largely on my performance. In the middle of the year I applied for a Citrus Academy bursary and was very grateful to hear that my application was successful so from my second year my studies were covered by the Citrus Academy bursary. When I graduated I was the top student at the college and the Citrus Academy presented me with a laptop computer. This was a wonderful surprise and I was quite speechless when I was presented with it!

“My practical year was spent at Golden Frontier Citrus and this was a very valuable experience. As my achievements here were commended, a permanent post of stock controller was created which I filled after graduation early in 2008. Since then I have worked diligently which has been recognised as I have been promoted to the very responsible position of overall Quality Controller.

“I have always wanted to be involved in agriculture to have the chance to contribute directly to growing the country’s economy. Agriculture creates jobs and is very important to all of us. My particular field of interest has always been plant production and I saw it as a challenge to myself and my former students at the high school where I used to teach. They always considered animal production to be easy by comparison and I wanted to prove that plant production could be done as easily. This has also allowed me to help the small scale farmers in the community where I’m from. These farmers sell their produce to Spar and to the Kruger National Park and today I am able to advise them and visit them from time to time.

“Young people seem to think that agriculture is for old, unsophisticated people. When I was at school we had an agricultural teacher (Steenkamp Mashego) who encouraged us to think of agriculture as a career option. I believe that if you do something with your heart, you can face the challenges this brings including the quiet rural environment away from excitement. I spend a lot of wonderful working hours outdoors. There are people who have years of experience in production who have a lot to teach novices. One should respect this and be prepared to learn from them.



Nhlanhla is the process and quality controller at all the Golden Frontiers Citrus production units. He is responsible for quality control not only on citrus but also for the litchis and bananas produced by GFC. “I am from Hazyview (Mkhuhlu) and matriculated from Chayaza High School in 1997.

“My opinion on the land claim process is that the government should get experienced commercial farmers to run these farms on behalf of the new land owners as this will protect food security as well as the jobs of the farm workers. On some local claimed farms the new owners do not have the necessary skills required to manage the production and finances and quite a number of them have failed.

“My parents are pensioners and are very proud of my achievements. When they heard that I was the top student at my graduation they were quite overcome by emotion! I am grateful to God for the opportunities He has given me and to my parents for their

support and encouragement. I must also thank Desiree at the Citrus Academy for her encouragement, motivation and support. I am sure she must encourage other students as she encouraged me.

“In the future I would like to own my own farm, preferably farming citrus or subtropical fruit. I am also interested in the economics of agriculture. I have a son and daughters who I would someday like to motivate to do something practical to make a positive contribution to our economy. My children live with me while my extended family is still based in Hazyview.”

Nhlanhla's clear motivation and his community spirit under difficult circumstances are certainly to be commended.

“If you do something with your heart, you can face the challenges this brings.”



Sibisiso Ntsangwane

Assistant packhouse manager at Golden Frontier Citrus packhouse, Hectorspruit
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“I grew up at Naas near Komatipoort and matriculated from Khula High School in 1998. After school I wanted to be a professional soccer player and I spent a season in Nelspruit following that dream. Unfortunately I suffered an injury that put an end to that but during this time I also played for the TSB (Transvaal Suiker Beperk, sister company to Golden Frontier Citrus) team. In the process I heard that the company was building a new packhouse and a fellow soccer player suggested that I should apply.

“The post was for an assistant in the maintenance department and my idea was to try to get this job as a stopgap while I considered my further options. My application was successful and I started in November 1999 at the Vergenoeg packhouse. Very soon I fell in love with the industry! At school agriculture was never mentioned as a career opportunity and as children we never thought that it was possible to make a career out of farming as we believed that farm work was for disadvantaged people. It was only as time passed that I realised that this was an interesting and dynamic sector to work in.

“After a year I was promoted to maintenance worker and was interested in other aspects of the operation as well as becoming a fitter. The packhouse manager at Vergenoeg knew that I wanted this but called me in and asked me what I thought of becoming a foreman or perhaps a packhouse manager instead. I gave this some thought and decided that this was a good option. I was made foreman and after three years of doing this, I realised that I was no longer doing this as a stopgap on the way to something else and threw myself into the job with renewed vigour.

“In 2007 I attended the Top of the Class course and I found this very informative. It broadened my mind and showed me all the possibilities of the agricultural sector and its supply chain. I realised that this is one of the country's biggest industries and that I could really make a good future for myself within agriculture. At that time I was being trained to be an assistant packhouse manager and in 2008 I was promoted to this position.

Sibisiso is known as SJ to his friends and although his path to agriculture had more to do with fate than choice, he has found his sector of choice and has no plans to move.

“Very soon I fell in love with the industry!”

continued from page 15

"I manage a team of 120 people, 115 seasonal workers and 5 permanent workers. My relative youth in this position is a challenge at times. As a young man I work mainly with women, many of whom are also young so things can be a bit tricky. I make sure that I show the workers respect and as a result I receive the same respect in return. The workers have to be motivated and appreciated for them to be optimally productive. People need to know that without them the company would not be successful. Within the company there are also opportunities for growth and advancement and the motivation of being promoted.

"Balancing the quality requirements with those of standards and volume throughput is challenging but I thrive on the challenge. I have to be on the spot every day and I truly love going to work because it is stimulating as there is really something new every day. In the future I would like to stay with Golden Frontier Citrus and work my way up in the company, maybe to packaging manager.

"Agriculture is one of the country's biggest industries and has huge employment potential. Sometimes the college students don't like starting from the bottom but this is necessary for one to understand the entire operation. This kind of experience is vital for one to get ahead and there really are no shortcuts in this process. It would of course be a great help if government could subsidise agriculture as is the case in other countries. We would then be able to compete internationally on an even footing and we would also create more jobs in this sector. Education and skills development would unlock further potential in agriculture."



William Ntimane

Intern at Golden Frontier Citrus, Hectorspruit

Citrus Academy Bursary Fund beneficiary

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William is tall and lanky and deeply passionate about agriculture. He is from Bushbuckridge near the Kruger National Park's Skukuza gate but was born in Mozambique. "My father worked at a mine near Witbank in South Africa when I was young and when I was nine years old, my mother and my siblings moved to South Africa to join him," says William.

"I started school for the first time at the age of nine which meant that I was a few years older than my classmates throughout school. I matriculated from ML Nkuna High School in 2001 and throughout my school career I did not have any ambition to do anything else other than follow in my father's footsteps and become a miner. After I matriculated I worked in a supermarket in the fresh produce section for a while before going to Witbank to see if I could find a job on the mines. I tried for two years at various mines in the area but was unsuccessful so I returned home. From 2003 to 2006 I was unemployed and stayed at home.

"During this time I thought long and hard about what I was good at and what I could do from home. I remembered that my grandparents in Mozambique had been farmers and I decided to start vegetable farming. I found that I really enjoyed this and as I learned by trial and error, my project grew into quite a large operation over time. We had access to plenty of water and I expanded this into a big business, even working at night with spotlights.

"My younger brother was quite bright and he received a bursary to study at university. This was an inspiration to me as I had always wanted to study. I returned to working in the supermarket at Bushbuckridge for a year and during that time I was able to save R5, 000.00. I applied to the Lowveld Agricultural College in Nelspruit to do a National Diploma in Agriculture (Plant Production). The fees were high but I was able to pay my registration fee and started studying without knowing how I would afford to continue. After six months my younger brother was able to secure a job and he then helped me to pay my fees for the first year. For my second year I applied for a Citrus Academy bursary and I was accepted. I was so thankful that I still thank God to this day for this providence. I found my studies very interesting, particularly because I had already had some experience which made what I was learning all the more relevant.

"I am now busy with the third year of the diploma course which is the practical year and the Citrus Academy helped me to secure this place at Golden Frontiers Citrus. For



me working in agriculture is more like a vocation than a job. Every day that I spend here I am learning something new. At the moment I am involved in moving the fruit through the packhouse and learning about the quality control, logistics and export aspects of the business has been very enlightening. At present I am living on the farm with the farm workers and this is a new and enriching experience for me. I have learned that by working together and honouring and valuing them, they have accepted me and taught me a great deal.

"In the future I want to continue in the agricultural sector and would like to become an entrepreneur. The time I spent with my vegetable project remains an inspiration for me and in the future I will have better skills and resources to be able to follow this dream. I am interested in agronomy and would like to have my own farms one day. It is interesting that my father who grew up on a farm and spent much of his life mining has relocated back to Mozambique and is now farming!

"I have a great debt of thanks to Mrs Sprinkhuizen, the head of Academics at the Lowveld College of Agriculture and also to the Citrus Academy for all their help. The person to whom I owe the greatest thanks though is to my younger brother Lawrence for his inspiration and help. "You're the Man, Lawrence!"

"I still thank God to this day for His providence."



Johannes Vuma

Admin clerk at Golden Frontier Citrus, Hectorspruit

Citrus Academy Bursary Fund beneficiary

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"I enjoy agriculture immensely"

a possibility that we could get our land back. Nobody in the family has any agricultural knowledge so I thought it was a good opportunity to study so that if the land was ever returned at least we would have one trained farmer in our family. My father has since passed away and our family is looking for someone to stand in his place.

Johannes is a young and enthusiastic recent graduate from the Lowveld College of Agriculture. He completed his practical year at Golden Frontiers Citrus last year along with four other student interns and was the only one from this group chosen for a permanent appointment.

"I grew up in a rural area at Schoemansdal close to Malelane and I matriculated from Njeyeza Senior Secondary in 2005. My involvement in agriculture developed through my family as my father was involved in a land claim and was the lead representative for his group. His family had been removed from a rural area near Komatipoort years ago and afterwards the land was converted to farm lands. He told us that there was

"In 2006 I enrolled at the Lowveld Agricultural College to do the National Diploma in Agriculture (Plant Production) and did my two years of theory before spending my practical year here at Golden Frontier Citrus during 2008. I graduated last year and was lucky enough to land a job here in the administration department which is something new for me. I enjoy the production side of the farming operation and during my internship year I worked in the packhouse. This was enjoyable but I have now been placed in the admin side as there are no vacancies in production. Management told me that they would consider moving me back to production if a position becomes available. In the meantime I am enjoying working in administration and would consider becoming more qualified in this direction if I stayed in this part of the business.

"Although agriculture was never mentioned as a career option at school, I have found that I enjoy it immensely. It is an interesting sector to be involved in and because I am from a rural area I find it easy to relate to. A farming operation is a business like any other and it needs to be managed properly. Quite simply agriculture is the source of life and it is of vital importance both to feed people and to employ them.

"I see good opportunities in this sector for myself and I would like to stay with GFC and work my way up in the ranks in the future. I would not have been here if it was not for the help and support of my family. They really struggle to make ends meet but they always encouraged me. A lady from our community also provided me with both emotional and financial support during my studies and I also had a very supportive teacher at school. The Citrus Academy bursary made it possible for me to complete my studies and I must thank them and GFC for helping me reach this point. Also, after all I thank God for life and all my successes; it wouldn't be possible to be where I am without his love, grace and protection."



Andeon Visagie

Production manager at Neroli, White River

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The LA Visagie & Seun (Pty) farming operation Neroli is near White River in Mpumalanga and Andeon and his older brother Luan are the third generation on the property, established by their grandfather in the 1960's.

"We value the people that make the farming happen and have always been proactive about social upliftment."

Andeon matriculated from Rob Ferreira High School in White River in 1998 and as the family has considerable interests both in agriculture and the construction industry he attended the University of Pretoria and completed a BSc Construction Management and B Sc (Hons) Construction Management degree. "I also studied BComm (Hons) Agricultural Economics and although I did not complete this degree, it certainly taught me a great deal about the industry," says Andeon.

Andeon returned to the farm in 2004 and soon became involved in the farming operation. He explained that his father had passed away in 1998 when he had just completed matric and that his mother Elise and a committed management team had taken control of operations since then. "As you can imagine, this was not easy for my mother and it was welcomed when my brother and I were able to return to the family business. She is still involved and as this is a family business, it is great that we all get on and work well together. My brother and I have split the responsibilities for the two branches of the business between us as he is responsible for our construction division and my responsibility lies with the farming division, yet we both have inputs in each business. In both divisions we are very fortunate to have good managers in place and their valued input makes a considerable contribution to the success of our business. Spook Sauer is our citrus manager and I have certainly learned a great deal from him during the past few years."

In 2008 the farm exported 350 000 cartons of citrus and has 130ha of citrus as well as cucumbers, gherkins and Rosa and Cherry type tomatoes grown in tunnels for delivery to top end domestic supermarkets. Aside from plant production the farming business also incorporates a 1,000ha game farm. "At LA Visagie & Seun we value the people that make the farming happen and we have always been proactive about the social upliftment of our labour force and their families. We have focussed on this strongly over the years and we continue with this on an ongoing basis," explains Andeon.

"Our local co-operative Karino Citrus is very efficient as their results show that they have some of the lowest packaging costs in the industry. It currently has 23 members and exports around 1.6 million cartons annually, of which approximately 40% is marketed directly by Karino Citrus Co-operative. I am currently on the board of directors and Andrew Muller, the manager of Karino Citrus Co-operative, does a great job of both the packing and marketing."

Along the shelves in the boardroom there are a number of trophies and when I ask about these, it becomes clear that the dedication and hard work on the farm have clearly been recognised by others. In the last five years the farm has received either the Karino Co-operative Chairman's trophy or the Farmer of the Year trophy.

"Agriculture has many challenges and while the government has not really made agriculture a priority in the last few years, this looks set to be changing. I am passionate about our area and there are definitely opportunities for committed young people in agriculture around here. In the past our area did have problems with greening but this is now under control and the remarkable fertility of the area delivers consistent good citrus yields.

"I hope to remain in our farming business for many years to come, God willing, and I am very grateful to my family for their support. My wife and I enjoy the rural lifestyle but we are lucky to be close enough to Nelspruit to enjoy the vibrant and rapidly expanding city."



Wilma Bester is the manager of the Diagnostic Centre at Citrus Research International's headquarters in balmy Nelspruit. She grew up in Belville and after matriculating from DF Malan High School in 1999 she enrolled at the University of Stellenbosch and completed a BSc Agriculture degree followed by an MSc in Plant Pathology.

Wilma Bester

Manager of the Diagnostic Centre at Citrus Research International (CRI), Nelspruit

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"In 2006, I started working at the university's Department of Plant Pathology's Disease Clinic as a consultant," explains Wilma. "The clinic receives diseased plants mainly from producers and small scale farmers, although quite a few home-owners sent in their diseased house plants! We would then analyse the plants to determine the cause of the disease symptoms. My professor used to say that plant pathologists were just like plant doctors. In 2008, I landed a job at the Weeds Division at the Agricultural Research Council in Stellenbosch as a researcher. We looked at the biological control of weeds using fungi, in particular rust fungi. I then moved here to Nelspruit at the beginning of 2009 where I now work for CRI in the diagnostic centre.

"I grew up in the city but really enjoyed going on hikes with my family on Table Mountain and in Jonkershoek and I love being outdoors. I've always loved plants and was fascinated with small things. As youngsters we used to squish ants and look at them under the microscope and I always dreamed of doing experiments in a laboratory somewhere! So, when aptitude tests at school recommended a career involving plants, these influences determined my career path.

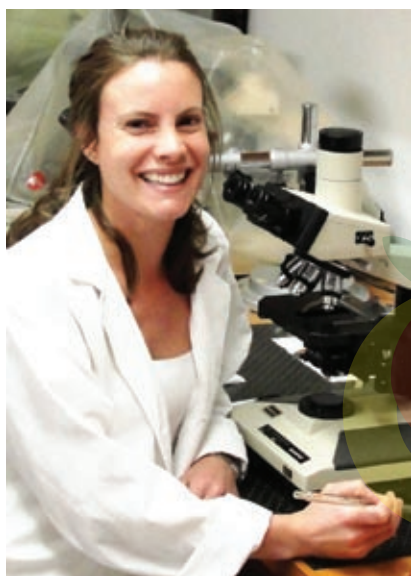
"At the Diagnostics Centre we receive the samples brought or sent in for analysis. These are mainly from citrus nurseries and commercial citrus growers but we do occasionally receive other crops such as avocados, macadamias and bananas for analysis. We (I have a technician who helps with the processing of the samples) then do various tests including testing the samples for the presence of pathogenic (disease-causing) fungi and plant parasitic nematodes as these organisms can cause major crop losses due to their presence on or in the plants. Once the process is complete I send out a report of the results. I run the administrative side of the diagnostic centre and apart from samples from growers I also analyse samples for the researchers at CRI. Thus I do spend a lot of time in the laboratory although I also visit farms from time to time. My colleagues are very nice to work with and the job has been everything I expected it to be.

"Apart from my love for plants and the environment, I also like to help people. As I have great respect for farmers I am always happy if I am able to assist them if they have a problem with a diseased crop. As producers are the people feeding our nation I think the producers should receive more support from the government.

"I would certainly encourage youngsters to enter the agricultural sector as people will always need food so there will always be career opportunities in agriculture. Agriculture is also important to our economy since we export a great deal of our produce, especially citrus. It is also a good environment for people who enjoy laboratory work, as there is so much that we still do not understand about plants and their interaction with fungi, nematodes, insects, etc. Agriculture is such a universal subject that it is also easy to collaborate with people in other countries and interact with people from different scientific backgrounds.

"My mother was an art teacher and my father an electrical engineer but they have since both retired. They are very supportive of what I do and my choice of career. I have an older brother and sister. My sister worked as an office assistant but is a full-time mother of two girls now. My brother is still studying at Stellenbosch and hopes to finish his PhD degree (Wine Biotechnology) this year. They are both very supportive and my sister even asks me for advice when she has a problem with her garden plants.

"I am grateful to my family and friends for their encouragement and especially my lecturers at the university for keeping me interested in the world of agricultural sciences. Finally I would also like to thank God for his good grace and guidance."



"I have great respect for farmers and am always happy if I am able to assist them."





Takgoa is from near Polokwane and grew up in a rural area, matriculating from Moloisi High School in 2006.

“It became clear to me how important agriculture is.”

Takgoa Phalakatsabela

Intern at Soleil Citrus, Hoedspruit

Citrus Academy Bursary Fund beneficiary

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“I decided to study agriculture after a school field trip to the Lowveld Agricultural College in Nelspruit. At the college we attended some lectures and it became clear to me how important agriculture was. Although this is far from home, I was determined to study at Nelspruit. I enrolled to do a National Diploma in Agriculture (Plant Production) in 2007.

“My parents helped me to pay for my studies but this was difficult as I have three younger siblings. I heard about the Citrus Academy bursaries but we were told that we needed good marks to apply. Fortunately I enjoyed the citrus part of our course and I was achieving high marks. I remember the day during the December holidays that I received the call to confirm that my application was successful. I was truly overjoyed and this motivated me to achieve even better marks and not disappoint the Citrus Academy.

“In 2008 the Academy helped me to find a holiday job at the Blyde Citrus Group. This was a good practical experience both in the packhouse and in the orchards. The Citrus Academy was also helping me to look for a placement for my year’s internship and as the manager of the Blyde Citrus Packhouse, Gerrie Kruger had worked with me during my holiday job, after he moved to the Soleil Citrus operation he was happy to allow me to do my practical year at Soleil Citrus.

“I am running the packhouse machinery and this requires me to work closely with the technicians and the supervisor so good ongoing communication is vital. This is a challenging job because during the season from April to September we all work 15 hours per day but I really do enjoy working here. As I have to be here at 06h00 to start up the machines, this has also taught me responsibility and punctuality. The pace is fast and we have to follow a set work schedule, getting the job done correctly and on time.

“Soleil Citrus has 9 farmers that supply the packhouse and this is the first season of operations since the packing facilities have been expanded considerably. At peak production there are around 200 seasonal workers in the packhouse and 8 permanent employees and during this season Soleil is expecting to pack a total of approximately 800 000 cartons.

“My father is a policeman and my mother is a nurse and they are happy for me to have chosen agriculture as my career. They are a great emotional support to me and are always very encouraging when I call them. My high school friends were very surprised at my decision and are mostly interested in other careers such as tourism, engineering or law. Living in the rural environment is quiet and during the season we have little time for socialising but when we do, we are able to get together with the other people we work

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with. This year of practical experience is very good preparation for the next step into the job market.

"I want to continue in the citrus field and would like to further my studies

once I have graduated. Once I start working, I would like to work for a company that produces and sells citrus and work my way up into a management position over time. I would also like to support training initiatives and motivate other young people to become involved in agriculture. There are opportunities for new entrants in agriculture as this sector will always need to expand to create food security and in doing so will also create job opportunities."



Jan is very friendly and clearly passionate about agriculture. He hails from Mariveni near Letsitele in Limpopo and matriculated from Shipungu High School in 1996. "When I was at school I wanted to become a policeman as I wanted to help people by protecting them from criminals," says Jan.

"Everything we eat and much of what we wear comes directly from this sector."

Jan Nkwashu

Intern at Bavaria Citrus, Hoedspruit

Citrus Academy Bursary Fund beneficiary

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"After school I went to the Gauteng Technicon (now Tswane University of Technology) and started a degree in Public Administration. I was at tech for two years from 1997 to 1999 but unfortunately I could not afford to finish my course and I returned home. In 2000 I was unemployed for a year and during that time I established a soccer team at Mariveni. After a year of not finding any work I went to Johannesburg and found a job with a courier company and worked as a checker for them for four years. In 2005 my father, who is a farmer at Mariveni, told me about the opportunities to study and qualify within the citrus industry. I was very excited to hear about this possibility as it could provide job security for me. Once I confirmed that this was indeed true, I resigned from my job and started the National Diploma in Agriculture at the Lowveld Agricultural College in Nelspruit in 2006.

"This is the practical year of my course and I am enjoying working at Bavaria Estates. I am learning the foundation of what I need for the future. The management is very helpful and patient and they allow me the time to finish my academic assignments during work hours and assist me with the information I require. As Bavaria has citrus and mangos, I am getting experience in a variety of aspects relating to these two crops as I am assigned to work wherever I am needed each day.

"Agriculture has always interested me and as my father is a farmer I was exposed to this when I was growing up. This interest did not come from school and our teachers did not encourage us to go into agriculture. There is a perception that working in agriculture is dirty and farm workers are looked down on. This negative connotation discourages youngsters from taking an interest in agriculture.

"The agricultural sector is a good choice because everything we eat and much of what we wear comes directly from this sector and as such, it is an industry that will always have a future. After graduation I would like to find a permanent job either in another part of the citrus supply chain away from production or in production in another part of the country. I say this as I would like the opportunity to learn more about the rest of the industry. In the long term I would like to be a citrus farmer and own my own farm and provide work for many people. I would also like to help young people to become involved in agriculture which will also help boost numbers at my college and other academic institutions.

"I would really like to thank Desireé Schonken of the Citrus Academy for her incredible support and faith in me. When I wanted to quit my studies the Academy encouraged me and persuaded me to continue and today I am very grateful for this."





Marinus Neethling

Production manager at Bosveld Sitrus, Letsitele

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**Bosveld Group of Companies
has 1500 hectares of citrus
on properties at Letsitele,
Hoedspruit, Malelane and also
has interests in Mozambique.
Bosveld also produces lichis,
mangos and avocados, bananas
and sugar cane.**

The company started in 1954 when TM Thalwitzer (senior) bought the farm Die Vlake in the Letsitele area and started farming citrus. His son TM Thalwitzer later joined forces with his father and since 1997, three sons-in-law, Piet Smit, Cornel van der Merwe and Marinus Neethling have joined the operation and over the years the business has grown from strength to strength.

Marinus is originally from the Eastern Free State and matriculated from Hoërskool Vrede in 1994. "Growing up I always wanted to farm and where we came from it was the practice to study something else before you went farming as it provided young farmers with skills other than farming as a back-up in case things did not go well with the farm. I attended Pretoria Technicon and enrolled to do a Diploma in Construction and once I had completed the theory part, I returned to the Free State and went farming on our property there. When my father saw that I was keen on farming, we bought a few other farms."

Memel in the Free State for a few months when my father-in-law suggested that we move to Letsitele and that I become involved with Bosveld, their family businesses. This was a tough decision because although it presented me with a great opportunity, I also had the responsibilities on my father's properties to consider. My father made this decision easier for me when a good friend of mine was able to take over these responsibilities. We moved here in 2004 and my friend has been running our family's farms very successfully since then."

When he first started with Bosveld Marinus was involved in the banana and avocado divisions of the operation for the first two years. "As citrus represents our largest crop I took an interest in getting to know about citrus production as well. In 2006 our overall citrus production manager resigned and we set up interviews to appoint a replacement. In the process of doing this I realised that I had learned enough about citrus production to be able to take on this responsibility myself. This would provide continuity in the company and my in-laws who are involved in the family business said that they would help me. This is the fourth season that I have been the overall production manager. We have 6 amazing section managers as well as the support of brilliant citrus consultants who all play a big part in the success of our citrus production.

"The building industry is very susceptible to changes in the economy and although there are many challenges in the agricultural sector, it is somewhat more stable and certainly offers many opportunities. My position requires me to have a grasp of the many aspects that affect production as well as to stay in touch and on the ball with the production process at all times. Within the citrus industry there are specialists in the various aspects of production that growers can consult and the knowledge that these people contribute can be very helpful indeed.

"The government's attitude to agriculture largely defines how young entrants to the industry see it and they make decisions accordingly. The old perception of a farmer has often led to all farmers being judged according to this negative image. Many farmers are very progressive on the skills development side and Bosveld provides the opportunity for students from the Lowveld College of Agriculture in Nelspruit to do their year of practical experience on our production units and during the past few years we have subsequently appointed three of these youngsters. We start them working from the bottom and allow them the opportunity to work their way upwards. Things are changing so rapidly within agriculture that the older generation of farm workers often find themselves in the strange situation where they have these educated youngsters telling them what to do!"

Bosveld has 600 permanent workers and up to 1,000 seasonal workers. The company also has a BEE project called Mabete Citrus. This is a BEE company with 42% black ownership of which Bosveld Sitrus workers hold 20% of the shares. The project was initiated in 2004 and was the first of its kind in Limpopo.

"I am certainly not a city person and I enjoy living a rural lifestyle. My wife and I are both from farming backgrounds and we have two young daughters. The rural living that we are able to give our girls is idyllic compared to raising children in the city. We would not swap this for anything," says Marinus.

***"We give new appointees the
opportunity to work their way up."***

The logo of the considerable Mahela Boerdery estate is a picture of an elephant which serves as a reminder that the huge farming operations in this area, where the land has been tamed and ordered, are often adjacent to untamed bushveld where the big five roam. Mahela was established in the early 1940's when the farm was bought by the late Ben Vorster who started farming with vegetables. The first citrus was planted in 1950. The farm is currently run by the third generation of Vorsters, brothers Barend, Pieter, Eddie and Francois with input from their father Edward.



“In this industry both the process and the product put food on the table.”

Eddie Vorster

Production manager at Mahela Boerdery, Letsitele

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The farm exports a total of 1.6 million cartons of citrus annually and is South Africa's largest producer of Star Ruby grapefruit. The operation also includes Letsitele Nursery, an accredited citrus nursery. Mahela also produces considerable volumes of other fruit such as bananas, avocados, macadamia nuts, litchis and mangos, and the farm also has cattle (Bonsmara) and game breeding projects.

The packhouse and admin block was a hive of activity when I arrived to see Eddie Vorster as it was at the height of the harvest. There was a bowl of the most impressive Star Ruby grapefruit on the counter at reception and the glorious scent of grapefruit oil hung in the air. Eddie Vorster is the citrus production manager at Mahela and, although he was clearly pretty busy, he took the time to chat to me.

Eddie attended Ben Vorster High School (named after his grandfather) in Tzaneen and after school did a BA in Political Studies at University of Pretoria. “This might seem to be poles apart from agriculture, but it is quite remarkable that I regularly find elements of this knowledge helpful in relations with people on the farm. I graduated at the end of 1995 and started working on the farm directly after graduation. As I grew up on the farm and worked on the property during school holidays, I had some idea of what I was coming back to and this made the decision to come farming quite easy. Farming is really a great business to be involved in and I really enjoy the outdoor involvement and the varied working environment. This is a family business and the company is successful because one is always the best custodian of one's own business. There are four brothers in the family and we are all involved in the farming operation but we all have our own area of responsibility. As brothers we have the normal issues but the farm generally runs smoothly because we get on and work well together.

“In farming there are always challenges - there is the usual challenge of wanting to improve on the previous year's production and then every year the challenges presented by the environment or market are different. The myriad factors influencing the production process mean that every season we need to expect the unexpected and be prepared to respond to these unfolding challenges as soon as they emerge. Although all sectors of the economy are affected by economic downturns, agriculture will always fare better than a sector such as manufacturing, because people will always need food.

“At school agriculture was never mentioned as a possible career path and was certainly not encouraged. Our government needs to realise that they cannot continuously push agriculture onto the backburner. This is the industry where both the process and the product put food on the table by creating job and food security simultaneously. It seems that this message has started getting through to government. In political circles there seems to be a perception that agriculture is the black sheep of the labour market. In any industry there are those individuals that cause problems and the authorities should make examples of them, without extending this attitude to the rest of the industry stakeholders.” Mahela has around 500 permanent workers and in season employs over 1,100 seasonal workers. Workers receive ongoing training, including computer training at the training centre on the farm.”



Zanele is slight and highly articulate and with her elegant braided hair, she certainly defies the traditional image of women involved in agriculture.

Zanele is from Bushbuckridge near Hazyview and after matriculating from Mkhweyantaba High School in 2000, she enrolled at the University of Venda and started a course in Environmental Science and Management. "At that stage I had no plans to become involved in agriculture - that developed through my parents following their dream," explains Zanele.

"My father was a contractor and my mother was a teacher but my father wanted to farm. So in 2001 my parents bought a small farm with 7.3 hectares of citrus and kumquats at Tarentaal in the Tzaneen district and relocated to Tzaneen. My father was running the farm through a closed corporation. In the beginning my parents had nobody to help them with the marketing of our fruit and for the first two years we marketed our fruit locally," she added.

"I see myself as a young farmer in training."

Zanele Ngobeni

Intern at Du Roi, Letsitele

**Agri-Industry Development Programme (AIDP) participant
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"Then we met Andrew Cooper from Du Roi who helped us to find an export market through Capespan. In 2004 I dropped out of university to help my parents on the farm as they really needed some assistance and to my surprise I found that I really enjoyed this.

"In 2008 my mother and I won the (joint) national woman farmer of the year competition and it was a real honour to receive this kind of recognition. In November 2008 I saw a Department of Agriculture advertisement in the newspaper looking for young people who want to be involved in agriculture. I applied for this was thrilled to receive a call to say my application was successful. Desiree Schonken from the Citrus Academy helped me to secure this internship at Du Roi.

"I am really enjoying being at Du Roi because involvement in a big company like this is giving me a much broader exposure to the citrus industry and to general operational procedures. The AIDP programme is teaching us about a wide range of aspects important to successful farming and it is good to be able to learn this theory while involved on a practical level at the same time.

"It is an undeniable reality that agriculture makes a huge contribution to our economy. The current land claims are making white farmers nervous about agriculture and it seems that many of them are seriously considering the offer of free farming land that has been made to South African farmers by the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This will mean that we will lose more people with good agricultural skills because of political reasons and I believe that would be a step in the wrong direction.

"I see myself as a young farmer in training and as my father would like to retire some day, in time I will probably take over the family farm. Our farm has some expansion opportunities that I could develop in the future."

AIDP Programme

Kate and Zanele are both interns on the the Department of Agriculture's AIDP programme at Du Roi in 2009. "Every two months we attend classes in Pretoria which are offered by the Stellenbosch Graduate School of Business. These include General Management, Marketing, Finances, People Management, Labour Law, Human Resources and Project Management. This is a very informative programme and gives entrants into the field of agriculture a good, broad grounding in these highly relevant fields," explains Zanele.



**Right: Kate Hlongo
and Zanele Ngobeni**

Kate completed her National Diploma in Plant Production at the Lowveld College of Agriculture in Nelspruit at the end of 2008. She grew up locally at Mariveni near Letsitele and after she matriculated in 1996 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.



“Working with plants requires nurturing skills much like raising children and their strong growth is your reward.”

Kate Hlongo

Supervisor at Du Roi’s Indigo Farming, Letsitele

Agri-Industry Development Programme (AIDP) participant

Citrus Academy Bursary Fund beneficiary

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

“I have been working as a supervisor at Du Roi in the Indigo Farming division since the beginning of 2008. It has been a steep learning curve and I have realised that once you are involved and working and not just observing and studying from outside you have a far better understanding of the process. One of my responsibilities is preparing the wages for electronic capture and this is both tough and very stressful as you cannot afford to make a mistake and the workers watch you very closely. I am also responsible for supervising the application of the spray programme. This involves meticulous checking of the chemical applications throughout the production cycle as a small error can be quite disastrous.

“I really enjoy farming as I enjoy working in close touch with nature with a natural product as well as proactively striving to improve the production systems. Working with plants requires nurturing skills much like raising children and their strong growth is your reward. As a young woman it was sometimes difficult to tell older people, particularly men, with years of experience what to do. As I grew up here many of these people have known me since I was a child and this certainly makes it difficult. At Indigo we have 20 permanent employees and during the harvest we have around 200 seasonal workers.

“A very important part of the farming process is the labour and I particularly like working with the people in the process. Good communication and people skills are very important because without motivating the people you work with you will not succeed. At school we had no career information about the agricultural sector. When people hear that I am involved in agriculture they are usually very surprised and I am often teased about this strange career choice.” 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 their daughters to have these ambitions but today they are certainly proud of our achievements,” she laughed.

“In future I would like to have my own business but I will proceed with this dream gradually. I would like to be a conduit of knowledge and information between the Department of Agriculture and emerging farmers who are just starting out. I must thank Desiree Schonken from the Citrus Academy for her unfailing support, Du Roi’s general manager Bryan Offer for being an incredible boss and also Abraham Van Rooyen for the opportunities that Du Roi has given me.”

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. This coupled with her poise and patience will stand her in good stead in her willingness to teach others about agriculture and her future business plans.





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Situated in Letsitele in the Limpopo province of South Africa, Du Roi came to life in 1989 as a citrus nursery. Through focused involvement and dedicated leadership, it has matured into the Du Roi group of companies and currently includes five operational businesses, focusing on:

- Commercial production and distribution of superior disease free selections of plant material with its primary focus on citrus, banana and sugar cane plants,
- the breeding of beneficial insects for biological pest control and
- a number of support businesses to assist and develop previously disadvantaged black farming communities.

Today, Du Roi is well positioned to influence and take advantage of the latest developments in the subtropical fruit industry, while its support services have the potential to play a meaningful role in ensuring the continued global competitiveness of a number of other subtropical fruit sectors in Southern Africa.

Du Roi Nursery is currently the largest citrus nursery in Southern Africa and, is fully accredited with the SA Citrus Improvement Programme, which in turn is regulated by the Citrus Growers Association of Southern Africa. Trees are sold to farmers in the Northern parts of South Africa and also exported to numerous African countries such as Mozambique, Angola and the DRC. In addition the nursery produces quality mango and guava plants.

Du Roi Laboratory was established in 1994 and specialises in the production and distribution of disease-free, virus-indexed tissue culture banana plants. These plants are multiplied from superior selections obtained from the Du Roi Laboratory foundation block. Du Roi produces over six million banana plants annually for sale to the Southern African market as well as to private and multinational companies in West and North Africa, Middle East and South and Central America. Up to 70% of the total production is exported in either the in-vitro (2-3 cm plantlets in sterile containers) or in-vivo (5-7 cm weaned plant in seedling trays) stages.

Du Roi IPM (Integrated Pest Management) was established in 2000 and specialises in the mass rearing of beneficial insects



such as predatory ladybird beetles and parasitic wasps which are used to help control agricultural pests. These are then sold on to farmers mainly in the citrus and grape industries throughout South Africa and abroad. Du Roi IPM is ideally positioned to help farmers make the quantum leap from the use of 'harsh' and often potentially dangerous chemicals (many with long lasting residues) through to an integrated approach to pest management which incorporates the use of selected 'softer' plant protection products together with augmentative releases of host specific beneficial insects.

The Du Roi Tissue Culture Sugarcane Project commenced in 2007 and is aimed at producing commercial volumes of disease free plant material for the Southern African Sugar Industry. It is envisaged that this approach will replace the present system of plant material production which is fraught with diseased propagation material. In conjunction with the Lowveld Pest, Disease and Variety Control Committee (LPD&VCC) and the South African Sugar Research Institute (SASRI) the NovaCane® protocol has been established, and production of tissue culture sugarcane plants has commenced at the Du Roi Laboratory facilities.

ANB Investments, the holding company of the Du Roi group has also, separately invested in to citrus farming at three localities in the Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces of South Africa. Indigo Fruit Farming specialises in the production of the ClemenGold® mandarin. This patented citrus variety is regarded by citrus aficionados as one of the best soft citrus varieties in the world and is harvested from June to September in South Africa. The fruit has a bright orange skin, is easy peeling and virtually seedless. The taste is sweet and fruity with an intense and satisfying flavour.

Indigo has the marketing rights to ClemenGold® in South Africa where export quality fruit is presently supplied exclusively to the Woolworths supermarket chain. Approximately 65% of the fruit produced by the three Indigo Farms is exported to leading retailers throughout the world.





Smit le Roux

**Production manager at Du Roi Nursery, Letsitele
(since promoted to acting general manager)
Citrus Academy Bursary Fund beneficiary
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"Previously I wanted to do a BComm. in accounting but during the December holidays I changed my mind. Well, I completed my BSc Agriculture and then went on to complete an MSc Degree at the University of Stellenbosch. During my university holidays I worked at Du Roi Nursery and was thrilled to be offered a bursary from Du Roi to complete my Masters degree. I completed my studies at Stellenbosch at the end of 2006 and after graduation I returned directly to Du Roi. When I started here it was as an assistant to the production manager and in May 2007 I was promoted to production manager."

"This has been an exciting challenge," says Smit. "Every day there really is something new and I enjoy the challenges and variety that involvement in the many aspects of the nursery's operations brings. I am involved in marketing which requires visits to the clients, finances for which you need a head for figures and it is great that I also have the opportunity to use the plant pathology part of my training."

"This is not just a citrus nursery as we also produce guavas, pomegranates, mangos and sugar cane. This exposure to a broad range of products and industries affords a broader perspective on agriculture in our region. Working here has also provided the opportunity for me to learn from people who are experts in their fields and I have been able to observe the process of cultivar evaluation and the new technologies employed in this process. The nursery and research functions at Du Roi interface with many aspects of the citrus industry and in the process I have learned a remarkable amount about the citrus industry in a relatively short period."

"Part of my job description is managing the human resources side of the nursery so hiring and firing and union negotiations are part of my job. I have three people who assist me and they really are a great help, particularly in how to approach the workers on these issues. As a student here I worked as a general worker with the rest of the work force. For a manager to have that experience is invaluable because it teaches one what it truly takes to do the job. Initially the age difference between me and the older workers was a problem but this has eased as we have got to know each other."

"Working at Du Roi is enjoyable because the people here are a pleasure to work with. It is often said that the success of a company is built on its people and here the work ethic is progressive and everyone is given the opportunity to contribute. The approach is to be hard on standards but soft on people and it is very successful. I really enjoy working at Du Roi and am certainly not planning to move any time soon. I got married in April last year and am well settled in this stimulating job."

"We need to interest young people in agriculture. Often youngsters look at the material symbols of success and, as these are not the first things that come to mind in agriculture, they do not believe that there are opportunities in this sector. As agriculture is one of the top earners of foreign revenue in the country, this perception is clearly incorrect. The number of youngsters studying agriculture at university level is steadily declining and this is having a marked adverse effect on the funding and capacity of agricultural faculties at universities throughout South Africa. Although the political issues surrounding land in South Africa might make the reluctance regarding entry into the agricultural sector look like a uniquely South African problem, there is an international decline in interest in agriculture. Agricultural qualifications are sought after internationally which in turn creates opportunities for youngsters with these qualifications abroad."

Situated between Tzaneen and Letsitele, Du Roi Nursery is the largest citrus nursery in Southern Africa producing quality citrus trees as well as mango, pomegranate and guava trees. This progressive nursery is fully accredited and is a leader in the field of plant quality standards. This is where I met Smit le Roux, production manager at Du Roi Nursery.

Smit attended school in Witbank and matriculated in 1999. He went to the University of Pretoria and did a BSc Agriculture. "My father was a dental technician and decided to go into agriculture. He bought a farm near Ohrigstad in 1998 and this was what encouraged me to go into agriculture."

"We need to interest young people in agriculture."



Johann van Veijeren

Production manager at G.R. van Veijeren Boerdery, Giyani

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This farming operation includes 200ha of citrus as well as 20ha of mango production. The Van Veijeren family also farm with Bonsmara cattle as well as chickens.

I was here to meet Gustav's son Johann van Veijeren who greeted me warmly and ushered me into the packhouse office. Johann attended High School Ben Vorster where he matriculated in 2002. "When I was in matric I wanted to study agriculture at the University of Pretoria but this was the time when all the land invasion problems in Zimbabwe were very topical, and my father advised me to study something other than agriculture in case I needed other skills some day. So I decided to study film making and completed a BA in Motion Picture Medium at AFDA, the South African School of Motion Picture Medium and Live Performance. The first year of my studies was at AFDA in Johannesburg and the second and third years of the course I spent at AFDA in Cape Town where I specialised in Film Production. Although I really enjoyed studying in such an exciting medium when I finished my studies in 2005 I was ready to return to the farm. I returned happily as I had an idyllic childhood growing up here and have always wanted to farm. My father had just bought another farm and the timing was good for me to return and help him run the operation.

Travelling north from Letsitele on the Giyani road, the scenery varies between unspoilt Bushveld and manicured citrus orchards.

Some 45 kilometres along the road in the district called Constantia is G.R. van Veijeren Boerdery owned by Gustav van Veijeren.

"Farming really is in my blood as our family has been actively involved in citrus production in this region for generations. My great grandfather Gustav van Veijeren was one of the chairmen of the Citrus Exchange in its early years and he also helped to establish the Brazilian citrus industry. My grandfather Johannes (Viegs) van Veijeren discovered a promising new Valencia type cultivar called Gusocora, which was registered last year and is gaining in popularity.

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"This is the fourth season that I have been on the farm and I am responsible for the production on one of our two farms as well as for the packhouse and marketing. Getting to know the production process is a huge field and I am continuously learning. Farming is great because it is not just a job but also encompasses a wonderful lifestyle. It certainly is hard work but when one sees beautiful fruit of the labour arriving in the packhouse it is indeed a rewarding experience. As a farmer one's position in the company is solitary and sometimes it can be lonely. I work closely with my father and I have a large debt of gratitude to him for his open minded attitude to let me do my own thing at times. We have started exporting some of our own fruit this year and as the venture into direct exports was my idea I am waiting anxiously to see how it will turn out!

"I am a proud South African and would not easily leave to exchange what I have for another life. Agriculture plays a huge role in the economy and the broader application of agriculture offers many opportunities and although I am personally positive about the

long-term future of agriculture, the reality is that the sector is currently going through an unsure time and right now is not a positive climate for new young entrants into the sector. The forced BEE and the increased minimum wage are making it increasingly challenging to be profitable in the farming sector. As South Africans are learning to work together we have the potential to make the future great. I do however think that it is prudent for any prospective entrant into the agricultural sector, particularly in production, to obtain a degree that could provide a backup in terms of skills in the event that things do not go well for them as agriculture does have cyclical ups and downs.

"Forcing the BEE issue incorrectly will be detrimental to food production in the long run and the body of knowledge that currently exists in the agricultural sector will be lost. It would make sense to try to keep the current education and knowledge in place. We need to educate the broader public about the time and effort it takes to produce the food that is often taken for granted. We have a great relationship with our older workers but in general the youngsters are a lot less keen to start from the bottom and work their way up. As there is a lot of unemployment around here and many immigrants move through our area theft is a huge problem here and when one apprehends the thieves the justice system does not do much to these people.

"I don't have a family of my own and at the moment this makes life less complicated as I am still learning the ropes. I realise that I am still young and very new at this business and that I have a great deal to learn but in my case I am fortunate to have good mentors in my own family. My parents are very pleased that I decided to return to the farm and it is a privilege to be part of a family with such a long and interesting history and I hope that in time I will become a farmer of the calibre of my predecessors."

"We need to educate the public about the time and effort it takes to produce the food that is often taken for granted."

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For decades corrugated carton packaging has been the most cost effective packaging alternative, and has ensured that food for products were contained and distributed effectively and safely all over the world.

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With limited capital the company was established and built in Lattitole in the Limpopo Province. The first corrugated cartons were supplied to the citrus producers in order to export their products. As a result of this achievement and subsequent success, soon followed the manufacturing and supply of corrugated cartons into other agricultural sectors, as well as commercial markets.

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Carel Minnaar

Packhouse/production manager at CP Minnaar & Seun and PA Minnaar Boerdery, Giyani

Regional Young Farmer of the Year for 2007

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"I enjoy the variety of activities required in the production process, working outdoors and directly with the soil. My engineering knowledge has been a good background in the process of production but with a large workforce it would also have been good to have a background in the people skills required for the legal and psychological side of labour relations inherent in agricultural labour law. These vital people skills are also necessary beyond the farm gate as we have to initiate and maintain relationships with service providers, suppliers and also the people who buy our products.

"Our family farming operation has almost 500 hectares of citrus. Over the past five years we have developed a packing component beyond simply packing our own fruit and this started when we built a new packhouse in 2004 and installed a state-of-the art optical sizer, one of the first of its kind in the country. At the time the packhouse was bigger than we needed so we started utilising the extra capacity by packing fruit for other growers. In 2005 we bought another citrus farm which had a packhouse which we did not need so we fixed it up and also used this as a packing facility to pack fruit for other growers. Using our spare capacity to offer this service has filled a need in the area and provided us with a welcome additional income.

"Today we pack more fruit for other producers than we produce ourselves. We pack only for Lona Trading and this is a good relationship. I am in charge of both packhouses assisted by two very capable packhouse managers. At the height of the harvest our work day is 14 hours. Our average packed volumes are around 1.1 million cartons of citrus. Approximately 500,000 of those are produced by PA Minnaar Boerdery, which should increase to more than 700,000 within the next three years. In the process we have streamlined and refined the packing process and pack for a number of UK supermarket programmes. We also package pre-packs for Tesco's Jaffa brand and as far as I know we are the only packhouse in South Africa doing that at the moment."

Another division of the business is CP Minnaar & Seun Transport. This I had guessed the previous day when two CP Minnaar & Seun trucks had passed me on the road in the Letsitele area. Carel explained that some years back his father had bought trucks initially to transport the farm's produce to the market and this had grown into a transport company with 40 trucks on the road. "Having the trucks as a resource simplifies transport as we use both our own trucks as well as those of outside contractors," explained Carel.

In 2007 Carel was the Limpopo provincial winner of the annual Agri-SA Young Farmer of the Year competition. This was really a big and unexpected accolade. "The judging process involves an in-depth look at the farming operation and this gave me a broader insight into what makes our operation different and noteworthy. The publicity associated with the competition in agricultural publications and on television also gave good exposure to the citrus industry in our area.

"Agriculture is certainly a challenging sector of the economy as its fortunes vary from year to year. It is also a dynamic sector with many challenges as well as opportunities and new technologies, yet this sector was never mentioned as a career choice at school level. One of the biggest challenges we face as exporters is that on the world market our products compete against fruit from countries where their production is subsidised. As South African agricultural products are not subsidised, this places us at an immediate disadvantage against our competitors. This is further compounded by the cost of labour as the minimum wage has had a serious impact on the profitability of farming.

On the Giyani road north east of Letsitele are the CP Minnaar & Seun and PA Minnaar Boerdery farming units. This is where I met Carel Minnaar, the son of Piet Minnaar who is the third generation on the property. "I grew up on the farm and always knew that this was the life for me," says Carel. He attended Ben Vorster High School and after he matriculated in 1994, he completed a BSc degree in Agricultural Mechanisation at the University of Pretoria. "I came back to the farm after that and I am here to stay, no matter what the future brings," says Carel emphatically. "Farming is truly in my blood and if I can't be involved in production, I'll probably do something like aerial crop spraying for a living!"

"It is also particularly challenging to work with people who are unable to read and write and after their home language and Afrikaans, English is their third language. This makes it very difficult to implement the accreditations required by our receivers in the EU and UK as our workers are not able to fill in forms in English and do not understand any of the signs. They also have no understanding of why they have to follow certain practices.

"It would be a great help if we had a presentation (dvd or video) that shows what happens to fruit from when it leaves the farm until it is bought by the consumer, presented in a way that illiterate people can understand. We find training difficult without the necessary learning aids so we have a difficult bridge to cross for people to make the transition from worker to supervisor or middle management.

"My father never pressured me to join him in farming. This was entirely my own decision and I am passionate about farming. We have very different personalities but our diverse approaches have meant that we complement each other and for us experience has shown that this is a good way of working together. I am very thankful to him because although we have sometimes had our differences he has helped me a great deal and lets me get on with the matters at hand."

Carel and his wife have a young son and daughter. "For us it is great to raise our children in the peaceful farm environment, as well as affording them a perspective of the activities of the family business from childhood," says Carel.



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"People skills are vital."



The farm the Junction near Tzaneen was established by Gerhardt's grandparents Ben and Toekie Vorster in the early 1940's. Ben was the first commercial farmer in the area and today Laeveld Sitrus is a highly successful agricultural business producing in excess of a million cartons of citrus.

Gerhardt Vorster is the third generation on the farm. He matriculated from Ben Vorster High School (named after his grandfather) in 1994 and then completed a National Diploma in Agriculture (Plant Production) at the Pretoria Technicon.

"I grew up here and becoming involved in the farming operation was the natural path to follow," says Gerhardt.



"I would encourage youngsters to become involved in agriculture."

Gerhardt Vorster

Production manager at Laeveld Sitrus, Letsitele

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"When I was younger my love for the bush and animals made me consider going in that direction but I realised that it would not be sustainable. We have 800ha of citrus and my brother and I are both involved in the farming operation. To simplify things, we split the responsibilities. I am responsible for the production side and Ben takes responsibility for marketing.

"We have our own brand, Sungold, and we export 65% of our own fruit. Laeveld Sitrus also has a long-standing relationship with Dole South Africa and they export the balance of our citrus." Laeveld Sitrus was the first packhouse to be granted the go-ahead to export citrus into China when this market opened in 2004. They have also been supplying the UK supermarket Sainsbury directly for the past five years.

"I would encourage youngsters to become involved in agriculture because this sector is now South Africa's biggest earner of foreign currency and this means that there are many career opportunities in the broader agricultural sector. In the past few years, however, young whites have lost interest in agriculture due to the lack of security in the sector while there is a growing interest in this sector from our black population.

"Establishing a successful farming enterprise is pretty difficult, but so is maintaining one. Commercial farmers sometimes cannot manage to farm profitably, so farms need to be managed optimally with sufficient running capital. My father has the expression "When a big farmer falls, he falls harder than the small guy". Today it is almost impossible for new entrants to the sector with little or no experience in production to buy ground and start from scratch. A number of local BEE projects have failed dismally and although half of our property has been gazetted in land claims, we are continuing with business as usual. We intend to oppose the claims because as farmers we are successful at producing food and in the process we create many jobs and generate foreign income for the country. Failed BEE projects do not achieve these objectives and simply undermine confidence in the sector.

"Our input costs have escalated rapidly and government has not recognised the challenges that this poses to production. The prices of some of our fertilisers have increased by 300% and the minimum wage has meant that employers have cut back on their labour forces. Previously the ratio of workers per hectare of citrus was 1 person to 2ha of citrus but today this has increased to 1 person per 4ha.

"We have really good relationships with our workers and many of the families have worked for our family for generations. Unfortunately our proximity to Mozambique means that there are many immigrants who move through the area and we have huge problems with theft of copper cables, fruit and our game. As many of these people are illegal immigrants without documentation, shortcomings in the security and justice system leave farmers in the area exposed to considerable problems with theft.

"Despite these challenges, one of the great benefits of farming is the quiet and generally safe rural environment that we live in. My wife and I have a young daughter and we believe that this is one of the better places to raise a family. I thank my parents for all they have done for me and my grandparents for their legacy. It has been a privilege to learn from my father and to be able to take over the reins of what he has built up gradually and with guidance. My brother Ben also deserves thanks for his support. He is my older brother and fortunately we get on well and work well together."



Lavhengwa Nemaorani

Production manager at Easy Farm, Thohoyandou

Citrus Academy Bursary Fund beneficiary

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“My father’s encouragement and the obvious future potential of his farming operation made me change my mind and I enrolled at the Lowveld Agricultural College to do my National Diploma in Agriculture. After the two years of theory I spent my practical year working with the Du Roi group of companies in the Nursery in Letsitele, at the Naranja Packhouse in Burgersfort as well as with Indigo Farming in Letsitele. After graduation I continued at Du Roi in 2008 for a further year while I was doing the AIDP programme internship with the Department of Agriculture. I gained a great deal of experience during this time and it has given me a good perspective and understanding of the various sectors of the industry. This broad knowledge is invaluable and I would never have had this perspective if I had gone straight back to the farm.”

Lavhengwa is the son of Israel Nemaorani, an agricultural pioneer near Thohoyandou in the Limpopo Province. Israel was from the area and saw its potential. After years in Johannesburg, he returned to pursue his dream to establish a commercial citrus and mixed farm in an area where none like it had existed before. He has built his farm up since the mid 1990’s and today his farm, Easy Farm, has 120ha of citrus. Israel is a Director of CGA (Citrus Growers’ Association of Southern Africa).

Lavhengwa matriculated in 2003 from Tshihevha Christian School near Thohoyandou. “I am involved in agriculture due to my father’s involvement. When I was at school I was not interested in agriculture, preferring something that I could do in the city,” says Lavhengwa.

In March this year Lavhengwa returned to his father’s farm, 15 minutes drive from Thohoyandou. “Easy Farm is in a traditional rural area. There are no other commercial citrus farms near us and we have to drive the 180 odd kilometres south to Letsitele and Tzaneen to get supplies. Fortunately we have fewer problems with black spot than growers in the Letsitele area.

“To be quite honest, working on the farm is tough and I am still adapting but fortunately I really do enjoy working in the outdoors. I work with older people with many years of experience and they don’t much enjoy having a young upstart giving them instructions. Sometimes I call Bryan Offer at Du Roi if I need advice and he still helps me. My girlfriend Meme and I live in Thohoyandou and we have a 4-month-old son. The lifestyle here is quiet and safe, and I am pleased that we can raise our son in this safe and wholesome environment. My father has been an inspiration to people in our community as he has built up his farm from scratch. Today he has 120 hectares of citrus as well as mangos, bananas and a flourishing pig farm. Our workers are all local and walk to work.

“At school in the city agriculture was never mentioned as a career option and the focus was generally on science. School children need to be exposed to the true nature of the agricultural sector at an early age as high school children are very easily influenced by perceptions. The old perception of agriculture as a sector dominated by whites and in which farm workers are not well treated is unfortunately still prevalent and this puts youngsters off. Many of my fellow students from college don’t really want to do work in the fields and most of them want an office job in agriculture. The Land Claims process is fraught with problems and it would help the process if government could get young black people with qualifications and experience to help the new land owners with production.

“I would like to thank my parents for their support and also the Du Roi family for their mentorship and the opportunities given to me to learn about the citrus industry first hand. At Du Roi Patrick Malaza was my supervisor and although he made me work hard and did not go easy on me, today I appreciate these lessons and I am grateful for his guidance. I’m also grateful to Meme for her support. Starting a family has made me more focused. I’ve learned that life is not about fancy cars and expensive clothes because when you are hungry these things mean nothing. Food comes from the soil and agriculture puts food on the table. In the future I would like to extend our farm to be an example to other prospective farmers from our community.”

“When you are hungry material things mean nothing.”





Hendrik Schoeman

Production manager at Schoeman Boerdery's Moosrivier Estate, Groblersdal

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After matriculating in 2002, Hendrik decided to do a Post-Matric at Michaelhouse in Howick, an older and very English environment compared to Delmas. "A really enriching experience and surely of great value to a high school kid's limited experience," says Hendrik. At the end of his year at Michaelhouse he decided to enrol for a degree in Marketing at the University of Pretoria. "I became a resident at Sonop Tehuis (one of the universities fraternities), and immediately felt at home among my year group, lovely guys. In my second year I switched to Industrial Psychology and Human Resources as I discovered that I really enjoyed this field. I completed my degree and followed it with an honours degree in Industrial Psychology. After graduation I was in no rush to join the family business because I realised that once I did so it was a permanent decision and I would be here to stay. It was not the kind of situation that I could take a break from some time later if I chose to."

He explained that he grew up in a small community where although people were very caring, this "gold fish bowl" environment allowed for no anonymity. "I needed to get away from all the expectations and have some time for anonymous introspection. At the time I was toying with doing my Masters degree in Industrial Psychology but decided I would prefer to spend some time abroad getting to know about the marketing arm of our supply chain. We discussed this with Eurodix, one of our clients in the UK and they were willing to accommodate me. I went to the UK in February 2008 and after two months of assisting the company's human resources manager I had the opportunity to get to know the core part of the business when working with the technical manager. He deals with the quality of all the fruit received by the company and has an incredible knowledge of pre-and postharvest quality issues. His job also takes him to growers who supply the company from all over the globe.

Hendrik Schoeman is the son of Kallie Schoeman, MD of one of South Africa's biggest farming operations Schoeman Boerdery, which is currently celebrating its 90th year of existence.

The Schoeman estates operation has two units, Moosrivier Citrus Estate in Groblersdal and the Highveld farms surrounding the Delmas district where the crops produced are maize, wheat and white beans. I met Hendrik at the Moosrivier Citrus Estate and spoke to him about involvement in the agricultural sector.

Moosrivier is a massive, well established citrus estate in the beautiful and fertile Groblersdal district and it is clear to see why Hendrik's great grandfather Karel, who established Schoeman Boerdery, called it "The Canaan of Our Land".

"Eurodix has two big suppliers in Uruguay and Peru and I joined the technical manager on his trip to South America. I had the good fortune to spend a month with the Masias family, who own La Calera Estates, one of Peru's largest citrus producers and owners of the biggest egg production unit in South America. The Masias family welcomed me and treated me like a son. The time that I spent with this family was an epiphany for me about what a big family business can be as they are passionate and do not live their lives according to the expectation of others. I saw that they had a robust, successful business ethic and still maintained the caring sense of family. The company's culture and compassionate people-policy was also very impressive and truly inspiring.

"My experiences prompted me to call my parents and suggest they come over for a visit to meet the Masias family and see the La Calera setup first hand. They did come over and it was a truly memorable occasion. I had initially planned to spend two years in the UK before joining Schoeman Boerdery, but the time I spent at La Calera made me change my mind. I found myself excited and impatient to join our family business after learning how special family business can be. To join a well established farming operation as fourth generation was both a privilege and a responsibility. It was wonderful and very comforting to have come to this decision on my own and I started working here at Moosrivier in August last year. My family were thrilled to have me home and I am very grateful to Eurodix for the opportunities offered to me and for their understanding.

"This is a vast and complex business so it is important that I spend time getting to know the production, packaging and marketing functions thoroughly. I am currently involved on the production side and have responsibility for a 282 hectare division of Navels and Valencia's. This involves dealing with staff issues as well as irrigation, fertilization and all

the other related horticultural practices that are implemented throughout the production cycle. I am really enjoying working here as we work outdoors with natural products that are tangible and it is great to see the results of the growing and nurturing process when the beautiful fruit is harvested.

“The interaction with the people on the farm is also very rewarding and I am continuously learning something new. In my opinion Schoeman Boerdery’s biggest asset is the people who work for the company as they do not see the company as a stepping stone to another career but work with commitment as if they are co-owners. Responsibility is shared by all, not only by the family. We start each day with a scripture reading which is not just a gesture of going through the motions but a sincere participation followed by a discussion about something relevant and applicable for the day.

“I am optimistic concerning the future of agriculture, despite economic problems in many other industries our industry produces food and that will only become more important in the future as the focus on food security increases. Citrus will always be eaten and although prices are bound to fluctuate, this is a product that will always sell. A big challenge facing the South African citrus sector is the deteriorating logistical infrastructure specifically road and rail transport. We are also losing part of our workforce because of social grants which seems to be counterproductive. I also think a little more wisdom is required concerning land reform. No quick fix has ever brought sustainable solutions and this is no exception to the rule. Another growing concern is the lack of skills in our industry, the standard of basic skills is decreasing annually and it is getting increasingly difficult to find professionally qualified people (i.e. entomologists, horticulturists and engineers). Education and skills development concerns everyone involved and therefore farmers should become part of the solution instead of complaining and waiting for initiative from government.”

“I am content to be at Moosrivier and planning to stay right here for years to come. I fully realise that I have had an idyllic and very privileged entry into agriculture and have a great deal to be grateful for. I need to thank the Masias family for their incredible friendship and insight as well as the staff at Eurodix in the UK. I am also eternally grateful to my parents for their patience with me and above all I am grateful to God because with all our wisdom our company would not exist without His grace.”

As the scion of such a prominent South African family, it was indeed a pleasure to meet someone as unaffected, sincere and devout as Hendrik and this certainly augurs well for the future of Schoeman Boerdery.

“The interaction with the people on the farm is also very rewarding.”



On the Moloto road west of Marble Hall, the huge irrigation centre pivots were creating rainbows as they irrigated fields of young vegetables on the morning I drove to meet Hennie Smit. On the unsealed road to the farm the deep fertile soil had turned to grade A mud and reaching the Frans Smit Trust farm was something of an adventure in my small hire car.

Hennie saved me from the three Alsatians that looked like they meant business when I stopped. Once he arrived, they fortunately relaxed and we sat down to chat in the farm office buildings.



“Citrus farming is not just about production as successful marketing forms a vital part of the process.”

Hendrik Smit

Production manager at Frans Smit Trust, Marble Hall

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“This is a family business and I am the third generation on the farm,” explained Hennie. “I attended Ben Viljoen High School here in Groblersdal and matriculated in 2002. Agriculture was not mentioned as a career opportunity at school but as I grew up on the farm and have always loved it, I never wanted to do anything else. After matric I had planned to study at Potchefstroom University. My father wanted me to study something else but I always wanted to study agriculture. Instead of Potch, I therefore enrolled at the Lowveld Agricultural College in Nelspruit and did my National Diploma in Agriculture. In my third year I did my practical year here on the family farm and directly after graduation I returned to the farm.

“We farm with 260ha citrus and 300ha of annual vegetable crops and the Frans Smit Trust also has a farm in Naboomspruit where we have a herd of around 450 head of Bonsmara cattle. I am the only male of five children and one of my sisters is involved with the Bonsmara farming in Naboomspruit. My father is still involved and travels between the two operations. I am responsible for irrigation here and although we do have a manager, I often have to keep an eye on the whole operation. I really enjoy the outdoor aspect of farming and to be honest after 2 hours of sitting in the office doing admin work, I have a headache! I far prefer working with the people, the plants and the animals.

“My first year in the business was tough. I came home and thought that I knew a thing or two and Dad and I had to get used to each other. In time I came to see his wisdom and I learned to keep my council and work at making the relationship successful. As my Dad scales down his involvement in the years ahead, I see myself continuing and expanding the farming operation in future. I know this environment and how to farm productively here, and that is why I would like to carry on with the farming business. My wife and I do not have any children, yet but we hope to be able to raise a family here and leave the farm to them one day. Life on the farm is not as safe as it used to be as we have had some violent incidents here, but we realise that we always need to be careful.

“There is a lot of revenue to be made in agriculture, both in production and the related industries. Citrus farming is not just about production as successful marketing forms a vital part of the process. In the past we used to export our own fruit but have gone back to using an experienced export agency. Afrifresh is our exporter and we produce around 450,000 cartons annually.

“The government needs to pay closer attention to the needs of organised agriculture. The unsuccessful land claims are starting to decimate good agricultural land. We have good labour relations and have not had any industrial action. The various harvesting times of the citrus and vegetables means that the men are permanently employed and the women work seasonally in the packhouse and at times they also help with the vegetable harvesting process. Generally in agriculture mechanisation is on the increase and soon less and less labour will be required. An example of this is that in the packhouse, the new machines are eliminating labour but people will always remain important to our production. In the face of the current global recession, it is good to have a variety of products as our prices for vegetables sold on the local market seem to be holding up better than the prices of our citrus in the foreign markets.”



LM Botha

Production and packhouse manager at JFK Botha Boerdery, Marble Hall
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It was early dusk when I arrived at the JFK Botha Boerdery farm packhouse but inside the packing was showing no signs of slowing.

Here I met LM Botha in the packhouse operations office and it was immediately clear that this was a family business where everyone is actively involved as he was hard at work alongside his wife Muriel and parents Anne-Marie and Joe.

“Farming is in our family and truly in our blood”



LM grew up in Marble Hall on the family farm and is the fourth generation on the property. “As I grew up on the farm this is the way of life I knew and from a young age I knew that I wanted to farm,” he explains. He attended Ben Viljoen High School in Groblersdal and after matriculating in 2001 he attended the Lowveld College of Agriculture in Nelspruit and completed his National Diploma in Agriculture. “My main subject was citrus and during my practical year I was able to do this here on our family farm. Once I had graduated I returned home to the family farm and I have now been here for four years.”

The Bothas planted their first citrus in 1976 and today they have 55ha of citrus as well as 80ha of potatoes, 120ha of tobacco, 150ha of wheat, 170ha cotton, 30ha of sweet corn and 30ha of peas. “This spread of crops means that we are busy harvesting pretty much the whole year round and this provides work for our labour throughout the year. I am involved in the entire production process of all the crops and with the citrus I am also responsible for managing the packhouse. We have our own brand (JFK) and export our fruit through a local grower/exporter Eben Kruger,” explained LM.

“Agriculture has a good future and although prices are better in some years than others, there is generally still a good living to be made off agriculture. We certainly could do with some subsidisation as costs have skyrocketed. Sometimes the large local retailers receive a far larger share of the profits than the farmers who have put in the hard work. When we export our fruit we compete against fruit from elsewhere that has been subsidised in the production process and of course this places our produce at a disadvantage.

“Despite the current challenges, I am positive about the future of agriculture. It would be great if the unions would take the time to listen to both sides of the story when there is a dispute before assuming that the problem always lies with the farmer. Sometimes the attitude of the government and trade union officials is antagonistic. If we want to see them we need to make an appointment and sit in a reception room but if they want to see us, they often turn up unannounced and demand to be seen immediately. Why should the normal rules of business meetings and interaction not apply to all concerned?

“There have been some land claims in the areas around here but fortunately there have not been any registered against our property and long may this last. We have approximately 200 permanent workers and most of them live on the property. We have a low staff turnover and we even have some men working for us that grew up on the farm with my father. As I have grown up here I speak Sotho which is a great help in the farming operation and it also makes it much easier for me to understand the culture of our Sotho workers.

“Agriculture was not put forward as a career option at school but I always knew my future lay in agriculture. I have no interest in the city or life in the corporate world. Farming is in our family and truly in our blood and I would like to stay here and develop the farm so that I can pass it on to my children one day.”



Orchards
OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

Eastern Cape



Citrus
Growers'
Association
OF SOUTHERN AFRICA





Kirsty Venter

BSc Hons, African Vertebrate Biodiversity, Rhodes University

Citrus Academy Bursary Fund beneficiary

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Kirsty currently lives in Natal and matriculated in 2002 from Howick High School, but spent most of her childhood years in Klaserie in Limpopo province. "When I started my studies, I did not have entomology in mind and started with a BA degree, only switching to a BSc later. Looking back I recall that when I was growing up I loved insects and in Limpopo's warm climate there were always plenty around. I would fish them out of the drains to rescue them and my mom had always said that I should work with insects when I grew up because I was so fascinated with them."

In her second year she took entomology and was soon hooked on the subject. During third year the entomology students were presented with motivational talks and presentations on what opportunities entomology presented for future careers and this was what persuaded her to follow this course. (These presentations were done by Professor Martin Hill and Tarryn Goble.) "I rediscovered the enjoyment I got from working with insects and it is great to be able to focus on what you know and enjoy for your career. It also became apparent that there are many jobs available in entomology within the citrus sector and this is very encouraging."

"I believe that if it is possible to implement successful biological control in production this would be very helpful both for the citrus industry and for the environment where this fruit is produced as it will be possible to avoid the use of pesticides that are harmful to the environment. The citrus industry is expanding rapidly and it seems that as an industry it could do with all the help it can get in the field of bio control."

Kirsty's current project is testing selected colonies of False Codling Moth from various regions of South Africa to see if they have a comparable fitness to lab colonies. This is relevant as years of captivity at ideal conditions, combined with possible inbreeding in the laboratory colonies, could affect their ability to survive when released to breed with wild colonies.

"For anyone who is enthusiastic about agricultural entomology, this is a very exciting field to go into as there are a host of opportunities. I am very grateful to the Citrus Academy for their bursary, but also for their incredible support beyond just the financial support they provide. They have made it possible for me to attend the Entomology Society conference in Stellenbosch later this year and this is a great opportunity for me to meet other people in our field and hear about what else is happening in the entomological field throughout South Africa."

It was a Monday morning when I was to meet Kirsty Venter in front of the Zoology building of the Rhodes University campus and I was just concluding that I was lost when a petite young student approached me and introduced herself as Kirsty, kindly rescuing me from a blue Monday. We navigated our way into the building up stairs, past lecture theatres and display cabinets containing Zoological displays to the Entomology Department's staff room where we could chat.



"This is a very exciting field to go into as there are a host of opportunities."



Tarryn has a practical, go-getter attitude to life - blonde hair scraped into a ponytail and ready for anything that the day brings. Her warm invitation to pull up a bench and chat over a cup of coffee also soon revealed her infectious enthusiasm for entomology.

She is from Natal and spent the last three years of school there with her dad. Directly after matriculating from Kloof High School in 2000 Tarryn went to the United Kingdom for three years where she did various jobs in all kinds of situations.



“Entomology can really make a difference in crop protection.”



Tarryn Goble

**MSc Entomology, Rhodes University
Citrus Academy Bursary Fund beneficiary
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“I found that I was often in the company of older people whose conversation made me feel uneducated and I was not able to add anything. This made me feel that there was something missing in my life and that I wanted to further my studies,” she explained.

Although her parents had not had tertiary education, an aunt of hers who lived in the UK believed strongly that she should follow her vision of tertiary education. She returned to South Africa with the idea of pursuing a career in media, perhaps writing or public relations or advertising. “I applied to study in this direction at a few places but even before I received replies, a friend of my mom’s who had been at Rhodes took me to Grahamstown to see what I thought of the town and the campus. Well, once I had seen it I fell in love with the place and there and then I decided to change direction to my other love which is animals and the natural world.”

She started with a BSc in Zoology in 2004 and really enjoyed this field. During her second year she did a course in Entomology and realised that this was something that she could do because the problems, projects and possible outcomes were real and could make a difference. “Martin Hill was so passionate about the benefits of biological control that this convinced me that putting my efforts into this direction could actually make a real difference within the agricultural sector. From 2nd year I continued with entomology until I reached my honours year.”

While Tarryn was looking for a project to tackle for her honours year, the availability of a Citrus Academy bursary for a citrus-related project proved to be both well-timed and convenient. Her project compared the genetics and effectiveness of two viruses which are the active ingredient in commercially applied spray treatments used in biological control. The project was a success and yielded good results. “I’m currently in the second year of my Masters degree and I’m investigating the possibility of using fungi as biological control for insects. This falls under the category of Insect Pathology. I find working with fungi very interesting and hands-on and it makes it easier to observe the infection process than with viruses.

“I really enjoy entomology, because the realisation of how important and beneficial biological control is to people and the environment as opposed to chemical control, is what motivates me. It makes me realise that we are working on something that can really make a difference in crop protection and ultimately food safety and environmental protection.

“Organisations like the CRI and the Citrus Academy are a great help to South African agricultural research as they are tapping into the universities and providing bursaries to promising students and assisting them with starting their career paths. The support that we have received from the Citrus Academy has been amazing as they have supported us during our studies as well as helping us with the challenging move of fitting into the commercial world once we have graduated.

“Our government is fortunate to have the example of an industry which is as successful and organised as the citrus industry. I believe that if the rest of agriculture was as organised, South Africa’s agricultural sector would have less problems. The industry is run by skilled people with experience and that is why it seems to function so well and inspires confidence in prospective entrants to the industry like myself.”



Lyndall Pereira da Conceicao

Entomology Honours graduate, Rhodes University
Citrus Academy Bursary Fund beneficiary
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Lyndall received her Honours degree in Entomology last year.

“As a child I had no desire to be an entomologist because I thought these were people who pinned live butterflies to boards,” says Lyndall.

“I’m from Ixopo in Natal and after matriculating there in 2003 I came to Rhodes to study microbiology. During my second year I took entomology as a subject and found that I really enjoyed it.” The students had to collect insects from various species and she found working with them very satisfying and went on to do agricultural entomology in her third year.

“Biological control of problem insects has huge potential benefits.”

After graduation she decided to continue her studies and needed to identify a project for her Honours degree. “Martin Hill told me about the Citrus Academy bursaries and proposed a project involving the citrus industry. My project encompasses both microbiology and entomology and this is an uncommon combination. The project involves studying the biological activities of viruses on False Codling Moth. In the process I was able to refine the techniques of these practices. The existing feeding practice was to place the caterpillars on the food and to allow them to eat an unspecified amount, but in my practices I refined that by using the droplet dose feeding technique which makes it possible to feed the insects the exact amount required.

“What I liked about this project was that it was aimed at biological control of problem insects and this has huge potential benefits both for producers and the environment. My dad was an agricultural extension officer and his interest in the topic inspired my interest in both agriculture and an environmentally friendly approach to agriculture.” Lyndall is clearly blessed with a wicked sense of humour. “When people ask me what I do, I say I feed the caterpillars a virus and then watch them die,” she laughed.

“Many people in urban areas are terrified of insects and view them as something scary that invades their space and as a result many of the entomologists are from more rural backgrounds. The process of biological control is quite remarkable and if the concept was presented to prospective young entrants to the field in a way that shows how success in this field can help both people and the environment, this could provide strong positive motivation.

“I like the active nature of entomological research as I really would not want a desk job. The Citrus Academy has been a great help as they judge each situation on its merits and assist us beyond merely paying our study fees. An example of this is that I wanted to present a paper at the EntoSoc 2009 Conference in Stellenbosch and, even though I am not currently a registered student, they assisted me with the costs associated with attending the conference. The Citrus Academy Bursary Fund is fast gaining profile and has already proved to be very successful in assisting graduates to find jobs.”

Rhodes University Entomology Department

“As entomologists we have a responsibility to agriculture,” says Professor Martin Hill, head of the Entomology Department at Rhodes University, who is clearly passionate about his field. “It is our ethos to reduce the numbers of poisons currently used to control pests and the important implications of this to both the environment and agriculture are strong motivators for our students.” He explained that the Entomology Department worked in co-operation with agriculture, addressing problems identified by various industries in this sector. The students are in the field of applied entomology and in the process of addressing these problems, they do the research in these fields as part of their studies.

“It is our policy to maintain our scientific integrity while doing this and that the outcomes of the research must be implemented. A successful example of this is the River Bioscience based in the Sundays River Valley. One of our biggest challenges, however, remains finding students who are interested in studying entomology and making a career out of it,” concluded Prof Hill.

Kierryn grew up in Grahamstown and matriculated from Victoria Girls High School in 2001. After completing her Masters degree in Entomology at Rhodes University, she was appointed as technical officer at Katco in 2008. “I heard about the position at Katco through Sean Moore from the CRI so I presented my CV, and kept my fingers crossed. I was thrilled to get this appointment as my husband and I live in Grahamstown and this meant that I could commute to Fort Beaufort daily,” explains Kierryn.



“At school we were never presented with career options in agriculture such as Entomology.”

Kierryn Keeton

**Technical officer at Katco Co-operative, Fort Beaufort
Citrus Academy Bursary Fund beneficiary
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“At Katco my responsibilities are quite varied, including preparing the packhouse for the implementation of auditing for the various accreditation standards and also assisting our growers with the implementation of accreditations. I am also involved in the continuous proactive monitoring of pests and diseases during the production process and in the quality testing of fruit on arrival at the packhouse. Pest and disease control extends to checking the chemical spray records of our growers and doing the MRL (minimum residue level) sampling on fruit as well as informing growers about MRL changes. I also liaise with growers regarding fertiliser and plant protection requirements and before the season I analyse the tree census annually and submit production forecast and crop estimates to our operations manager.”

All these varied tasks require Kierryn to move between the office, the packhouse and the growers’ orchards. “I thoroughly enjoy my job and would not swop it for another,” says Kierryn. “It is dynamic on a daily basis and, as I am involved in different areas, these each present their own daily challenges and allow me to gain experience in all fields of citrus production and a broad knowledge of the industry. Working in touch with a natural product and in sync with the seasons is also enjoyable.

“The people with whom I work are great as they provide valuable information to steer me in the right direction at the same time allowing me enough space to make my own decisions. This has helped in my growth in the job and my knowledge of the industry requirements. The knowledge gained while studying has certainly helped in the pest / disease monitoring and control. Having worked specifically on False Codling Moth (FCM), it has helped a great deal to have the knowledge about this pest as it is considered a phytosanitary pest in the export market and therefore requires strict control measures both on the farm and in the packhouse.

“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. At school we were never presented with career options in agriculture such as entomology. We only heard about the more popular career choices such as accounting, law and so on. I don’t believe the youth of today are aware of what opportunities are available in the agricultural sector. This should be presented to students at career days, for example what career opportunities there are available to graduates with a science degree. There are actual jobs where this knowledge can be applied and make a big difference.

“It would be great to remain within the citrus industry and grow within the technical division. I plan to study towards my PhD degree with a topic in pest control on citrus. I would like to see myself gain enough knowledge and experience so I may contribute significantly to the citrus industry and play an important role in ensuring we maintain high yields and export high quality fruit. I will strive to be one of the best in my field of interest and within the technical aspect of the citrus industry.”



**Right: DC Botha
and Daniel Maki**

DC Botha is a friendly, mild-mannered young man who started at Katco directly after school in 2006. He is also a case in point that when a youngster shows dedication and is prepared to work hard at his job, this is still recognised and rewarded in the workplace.

“My family moved to Fort Beaufort from the Northern Cape when I was young and I attended the Winterberg Agricultural School here in Fort Beaufort. The school gave us a comprehensive grounding in general agricultural practices and from Grade 8 we had practical and theoretical experience of such diverse fields as poultry, dairy farming, annual crops and horticultural practices.

“This education was more than just learning about agriculture. Our teachers arranged for us to attend large agricultural shows, such as Nampo, which gave us a deeper understanding of the origins of agriculture in South Africa.”

After matric DC was interested in becoming a game ranger but before anything developed in that direction, a job vacancy for production clerk at Katco was advertised in 2006. He applied for the job and was overjoyed when he landed this position and was able to work close to home. In the beginning of 2007 he was promoted to packhouse database administrator. By the end of 2007 he was promoted to quality manager. “This was truly amazing as I was only 20 at the time!



DC Botha

Quality control officer at Katco Co-operative, Fort Beaufort

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“It is a pleasure to work with people and a natural product such as fruit.”

My dad has always been in the agricultural sector and is currently managing a citrus farm, so moving into this direction for my career was not a huge shift. The agricultural grounding that we had received at school was also helpful for me to have an understanding of the nature of the citrus operation.”

DC is in charge of all the quality standards in the packhouse as well as all the various types of packaging. Katco packs about 1.2 million cartons of citrus annually and during peak season there are around 800 people working in the packhouse in two daily shifts, so it is quite a challenging and responsible job just to keep things running smoothly. “This job includes elements of both the production and business parts of the operation. It has also provided me with the opportunity to learn a great deal on the job in a short period of time. During the season things are pretty hectic and once the season is over there is a lot of paperwork to complete regarding the season’s quality control issues. We also have a Postharvest Report Back committee that reviews the season to see where any of the packhouse systems can be improved. During the off-season we visit the farms as part of Katco’s technical division. This seasonal variation of activities is both interesting and enjoyable, allowing me to learn quite a bit about the production side of the business.

“Working in agriculture is both challenging and interesting and it is a pleasure to work with people and a natural product such as fruit. Landing this job has been a good opportunity for me and has worked out really well as I enjoy the people and the working environment here. I am grateful for this incredible opportunity and to Katco for entrusting me with this highly responsible job at such a young age. I would like to study part time in agriculture or marketing.”

Daniel Maki

Storeman at Katco Co-operative, Fort Beaufort

Citrus Academy Bursary Fund beneficiary

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Daniel was so reluctant to be interviewed that his colleagues had to coax him from the packhouse to meet with me in the Katco boardroom. When he arrived he was very shy but after a few moments he relaxed and told me about his life.

Daniel is from King Williamstown and grew up in an urban environment. His family is involved in motor mechanics and has no contact with agriculture. "After school I wanted to study law but realised I would not be comfortable with the public speaking part of the job. A good friend encouraged me to do something more hands-on and this is how I ended up choosing agriculture. After school I enrolled at the University of Fort Hare and studied towards a BSc degree in Agricultural Economics," explained Daniel.

"While I was at university I received a Citrus Academy bursary and they arranged for me to spend university holidays working at both Katco and Sundays River Citrus Company. As my Afrikaans is limited I found the English speaking environment at Katco more manageable as here language is not a problem for me and I am able to communicate with everybody. The time I spent working during my studies was very important in introducing me to the working environment and in reality set me up to cope well with the real thing. Agriculture has become a highly developed applied science and it must be economically viable.

"After I finished studying I was lucky enough to get a job here at Katco as the store manager at the beginning of 2008. My job required me to report to management about the stock calculation and capacity of fruit in the warehouse as well as packing material stock keeping and store room supervision. This is quite a responsible job with many challenges and I am learning something new every day.

"I enjoy working at Katco as the environment is friendly and people are generally helpful. Looking into the future I would like to work my way up towards a management position where I can be involved in decision making and helping Katco stay ahead of its competitors. I am sincerely thankful to the Citrus Academy for their incredible assistance. They did not just assist me financially but also supported me socially during my studies when times were difficult for me. If it were not for their support and belief in me, I know that I would not be here now.

"The reason why I chose agriculture and enjoy being involved in this sector is because everything we eat comes from agriculture and thus it is of vital importance to all people. As my family has no connection with agriculture they do not really understand what I'm doing. The fact remains that I really enjoy this field as I enjoy living and working in tune with nature and I intend to continue my career in the horticultural sector."

"Everything we eat comes from agriculture and thus it is of vital importance to all people."



Despite its remote setting, the historically significant University of Fort Hare at Alice in the Eastern Cape interior is a bustling, modern university with attractive campus grounds. It was here where I met Asanda Mditshwa, a BSc Agriculture student in his final year and a recipient of a Citrus Academy Bursary. Asanda is from Bizana in the Eastern Cape, part of the former Transkei.

Asanda Mditshwa

**BSc Agriculture, University of Fort Hare
Citrus Academy Bursary Fund beneficiary
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"My parents practice small-scale farming and grow maize, cabbages, pumpkins and potatoes. I had always helped my parents with the farming and at that time I thought that if I studied agriculture, I would learn more and be able to help them more with their farming. Agriculture was never presented as a career option at school but my brothers knew something about agriculture so they encouraged me a lot."

By Standard 9 Asanda had decided to go into agriculture and after matriculating in 2005 he began a BSc, majoring in crops and agriculture. In his second year he changed direction and focused on horticulture. "When the Citrus Academy bursary became available I realised that this could help me to follow my dream. The Academy also arranged for me to do holiday work at Du Roi Nursery at Letsitele so this was a great experience for me to see the practical side of horticulture. Working in a different part of South Africa was also interesting. My home language is Xhosa and at Du Roi most people spoke Shangaan but we managed to communicate okay as I know some Zulu. The nursery manager Mr Smit was a great help to me as he taught me a lot about the technical side of the nursery. This practical experience was a good complement to the theoretical side of our studies.

"I have received incredible support from the Citrus Academy. They have sponsored me to attend industry functions which have taught me a great deal about the broader industry issues. I am interested in controlling postharvest quality. There seems to be a big need for this to ensure that the quality and handling practices are optimised in order to maximise the income for producers. I would like to be a researcher in the postharvest field of agriculture. I am planning to do a postgraduate degree and have applied to both the University of Stellenbosch and the University of KwaZulu-Natal. My parents are very proud of me and are very supportive of my studies.

"Our lecturers encourage us to help the agricultural sector as there are many problematic diseases. If we are able to improve on the current practices this will be of great benefit to our agricultural sector. The students studying within the citrus field are very important for the future of the industry because of the new technologies they are able to learn and test with producers to optimise production. It is also important that farmers are open to innovations and that they are prepared to try the new practices as these could prove to be an improvement on the traditional methods employed.

"Youngsters are not generally willing to be involved in agriculture. I want to tell them that citrus and agriculture in general are very interesting. We do not always end up getting dirty and sweaty and there are many interesting and new technologies from many disciplines relating to agriculture that can assist in the production of fresh produce."

Asanda emphasized that agriculture is currently focusing on increasing the non-chemical methods of pest control in order to keep the environment safe and added that, as global warming is expected to cause a decline in agricultural production, in future there will be an increased focus on agriculture in order to assist South Africa's population with food security.

"I would like to be a researcher in the postharvest field of agriculture."





Lunga Siletile

BSc Agriculture, University of Fort Hare

Citrus Academy Bursary Fund beneficiary

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Lunga Siletile is a third year BSc Agriculture student at Fort Hare and met me in one of the lecture rooms at the Department of Agriculture for our interview.

Initially he was a little shy but soon he became more animated as he started speaking about his passion for agriculture and soil quality in particular.

"I am from Qumbu near Umtata and I grew up in a rural area. My father is in the security industry and, although my parents are not involved in the agricultural sector, my father had a small orange orchard and also grows vegetables. When I was younger he found his lack of knowledge about the production of oranges frustrating and it encouraged me to learn more about this so that I could be of help to him. As I showed an interest in agriculture, my agricultural teacher encouraged me and when I reached Grade 10, I had made up my mind to attend university to study agriculture."

"When I was doing my matric in 2005 at St. Bartholomew's in Qumbu, I attended career exhibitions, specifically the Science career exhibition at Walter Sisulu University of Technology (WSU) and not a single person mentioned anything about agriculture. However I told myself that the best weapon for alleviating starvation is the improvement of agriculture in the country and that is when I found myself engaged with agriculture. Since there was no agriculture at WSU, I considered Fort Hare".

When Lunga started his degree at Fort Hare in 2006 he did not know how to go about sourcing bursaries. "It was a great day for me when I found out about the Citrus Academy so I applied for a bursary and was thrilled to receive assistance from them. I am very grateful for this assistance as it has really helped me to persevere with my studies. My particular field of interest is in soil composition and fertility and the effect of this on production. I have learnt how vitally important the composition of the soil is for good yields. The choice of a suitable position in which to establish orchards within the topography also plays an important role in the success of the orchard." Lunga explained that in the future he would like to become a researcher in the field of soil science but realizes that before he can do that he would need to be involved in practical field work to gain first-hand experience. Another particular field of interest for him is organic agriculture due to its highly beneficial effects on the environment.

"In 2008 the Citrus Academy arranged holiday work for me and I was fortunate to land a job at CAL Cape (Central Analytical Laboratories) in Cape Town, a business that is involved in soil testing and plant analysis. I found it very interesting to work in the lab and to apply the theoretical knowledge in a practical environment. I also attended the Combined Congress Conference of Agriculturalists in Stellenbosch, Western Cape, as well as the 5th Citrus Research Symposium in 2008 in the Drakensburg, KZN, and gained a good perspective of the broader horticultural sector in South Africa.

"There is a lack of young people entering the agricultural sector, as they generally do not want to be involved in manual labour. It is however of the utmost importance that young people do become involved in this sector as it needs the new energy and knowledge that youngsters bring in order to remain dynamic. The technological advances that we are being taught in agriculture could be highly beneficial to producers to assist them in improving their production methods."

"This sector needs the new energy and knowledge that youngsters bring."





Hardus Augustyn

Investment accountant for Unifrutti (Somerset West)

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"I like this friendly working environment."

Hardus grew up in Cape Town and attended President High School followed by the University of Stellenbosch, where he obtained a BComm degree in Financial Accounting followed by Honours in the same subject. After graduation he applied for jobs in a number of industries and ended up in the agricultural sector by chance. His first job was in the Porterville area for a company that produces blueberries. After a year and a half he moved on from there and joined Unifrutti last year.

Hardus Augustyn is an investment accountant for Unifrutti and is based at the company head office in Somerset West. He visits Unifrutti's packhouse in the Sundays River Valley and the group's other production units periodically. Hardus has quite a responsible job for one so young and this speaks volumes about his commitment.

"I'm based at the Unifrutti head office in Somerset West but travel to the various Unifrutti farming units and packhouses. My involvement in agriculture is on the financial side but when I visit a region I try to take a drive around the farm with the production manager. This provides some understanding of production as this is helpful in my line of work. I am also currently completing my CIMA (Chartered Institute of Management Accountants) qualification part-time so this certainly keeps me busy. Although my road to agriculture was unplanned, I like the environment and would like to remain involved in this sector. For someone in my field, agriculture is more relaxed than the corporate world and the relative peace and quiet of the rural setting is enjoyable. I like working for Unifrutti as the company cares for its people and it has a friendly working environment. Down the line I would like to progress to a position in management.

"The widely held views that agriculture only involves manual labour and is not very lucrative are both incorrect. In my limited experience I have already seen that there are certainly many opportunities in this field."

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Neville is the logistics manager at Unifrutti and is clearly capable of coping with challenges as there are few youngsters that can successfully complete secondary and tertiary education simultaneously!

He grew up in Addo and attended Gemble Street High School in Uitenhage. In Standard 8 (Grade 10) he attended a maths olympiad and as his marks placed him in the top ten entrants, he was awarded a two-year bursary to study with Vista University and PE Technikon, now known as the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. "The following year while I was in Grade 11 at school and I attended Vista University and the Technikon in Port Elizabeth, studying business and computer subjects in the afternoons."



Neville Makwanie

Logistics manager at Unifrutti, Kirkwood
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"This was a very intensive period of studies and required a great deal of self discipline. I matriculated in 1999 with an exemption and also graduated from Technikon at the same time. My tertiary education courses covered the commercial, economic and financial aspects of business. In 2000 I was unsure of what I wanted to do so when I heard that there was a post vacant at Addo Primary School, I applied for the job and taught there for a year. Well, during this time I found out that teaching was definitely not for me!

"In 2001 I landed a job at Unifrutti as a pallet loader and during that season and the following one, I held various positions including palletising supervisor, floor controller, production scanner as well as being a clerk completing consignment notes for both local and export shipments. Once the new cold storage facilities were completed in 2001, I was appointed as the stores stock controller. This involved the stock data capture and I worked on the Paltrack IT system. In 2003 I was appointed to the permanent staff at Unifrutti as a data capturer followed by logistics clerk, container clerk, despatch controller and product stock controller respectively in consecutive seasons. In 2005 I was moved again to logistics assistant manager and then to my current position of logistics manager in 2008. This came as a surprise to me as I did not expect this position to come my way so soon!

"I enjoy this job as I am always learning and I find that exciting and challenging. Part of my responsibility is to do the marketing of local market fruit, getting fruit on either conventional or container vessels as well as the fruit for processing to receivers in the UK. This makes my job quite diverse as I work with a wide variety of stakeholders in the industry such as my Head office in Somerset West, other exporters, local markets, transport companies, DAFF (the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries), PPECB (the Perishable Products Export Control Board), cold storage facilities, ports, shipping lines, etc. so this is truly never boring!

"The other senior managers at Unifrutti and I are currently doing a managerial course through the National Training Institute (NTI). As Unifrutti also has a grape packhouse and cold storage facility at Redelinghuys in the Western Cape, I have been involved in the logistics from there for two seasons. This has allowed me to learn about grape logistics and I aim to learn as much as possible about all fruit varieties exported by Unifrutti.

"My fiancée and I live in Addo with our 4-year-old son. He attends Sunland Pre-school where I am currently chairperson of the school board. Beyond my job and family commitments I am a very keen rugby player. I am quite involved in the sport locally. I'm also currently the president of the rugby club of our local community and play Super League Rugby under the Eastern Province Rugby Union.

"I had wanted to head up my own business but I am pleased that fate has brought me here. Although this is not my own business, I do hold big responsibilities and I really enjoy my job. In the future I would like to work more closely with the Unifrutti Logistics Division as a whole based in Somerset West, for a more 'hands-on' experience in shipping and marketing as I really enjoy the logistical side of the business. I would also like to learn more about the export industry and the markets."

"I am pleased that fate brought me here."



**Above: Piet van der Merwe, Jan Carel Kritzing and
Liza-Mari Bayer at Unifrutti, Kirkwood**

Liza-Mari is responsible for grower payments at Unifrutti's Sunday's River unit. This is not a job for the faint-hearted, yet she was warm and friendly, and clearly has a good relationship with the growers and the Unifrutti management. She is originally from the Western Cape and, after matriculating from Vredendal High School, she attended Stellenbosch College (Tech SA) and attained a qualification in Cost and Management Accounting. "I ended up in the fruit industry because this was the first door that opened when I applied for jobs. I have learned, however, that once you are involved in the fruit industry it is not easy to leave it," says Lisa-Mari.

**Liza-Mari Bayer
Grower payments at Unifrutti, Kirkwood
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***"Once you are involved in the fruit industry
it is not easy to leave it!"***

"The first job I landed was working for Oceanic Exports at a packhouse in Grabouw. This was in 2003 and I was responsible for packouts and finances. The following year I moved to their head office in Maitland where I worked in the bookkeeping department. A job became available at the Unifrutti head office in Somerset West and as I was living in Somerset West at the time, this was an attractive option. My application was successful and I started working for Unifrutti in 2006.

"My husband works for Paltrack (a company that works in co-operation with the fruit industry in providing tracking information on the fruit as it moves through the supply chain) and in 2007 he transferred to the Sundays River. Coincidentally and luckily for me there was a post available at Unifrutti in the Sundays River and so I was able to continue working for Unifrutti here! I really enjoy it here as it is quieter and I have more time for my family. I have two daughters and the youngest is six months old.

"Working in the agricultural sector, one's personality needs to be compatible with people who tend to be more natural, informal and in touch with the earth than in some urban environments. Living here you are completely immersed in the commercial activity of the area and as the whole valley is focussed on citrus farming, this is the topic of conversation wherever you go. During the season, the whole valley is psyched up and very busy as the area receives visits from all kinds of service providers to the sector during this time. Looking into the future, I would like to move up into a more senior position. The working environment at Unifrutti is friendly and I enjoy the rural lifestyle and this line of work."

Piet van der Merwe

IT systems manager at Unifrutti, Kirkwood

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Piet is from Kirkwood and has been with Unifrutti since 2002. His curiosity has motivated him to spend time in almost all the divisions of the operation and, despite the hectic schedule, his enthusiasm for his job was quite clear. He attended the Daniel Pienaar Technical School in Uitenhage and as a youngster he was interested in electrical systems and wanted to become an electrician. When he finished school, he planned to take a break in his studies before starting tertiary education. "I landed a job as a control panel operator at Unifrutti for the 2002 season but soon realised that I was looking for something more stimulating and challenging."

At this time Unifrutti was expanding and when a new packline was completed, they needed someone to run it. "The operating manager asked me if I thought I was up for the challenge and of course I said yes! I was only 18 at the time but eager for a challenge, so I ran the packhouse as the acting packhouse manager for the first two months. I was responsible for packing standards, sizing, dosing of chemical baths, waxing the fruit and checking on packing material. As this was a new facility there were many teething problems and it was very encouraging to hear that the management was happy with my performance.

"That season I learned a great deal from an experienced packhouse manager Almero du Pisanie and I became the floor manager. After the season I continued working at Unifrutti on a maintenance contract, dismantling and servicing the packhouse machinery. This was done by technicians from Greeffa, the Dutch company that manufactures the optical sizer. They trained us to perform basic maintenance and servicing on the machines. I learned about the mechanical side of the operation and the computer systems that run the machinery.

"In 2003 I was appointed as the night shift manager and ran this shift for two years. At night I had to rely on my own judgement to deal with issues and over time I managed and learned a great deal. After two years I was looking for a new challenge and as I had been working closely with the marketing office and the logistical side, this appealed to me. In 2005 I was appointed as a stock controller which represented a change of direction and a new challenge for me. I was responsible for the fruit stocks, monitoring the pre-cooling process and preparing fruit for loading. I enjoyed working with this next part of the supply chain which involved logistics and export standards and I also had the opportunity to visit the harbour a couple of times, learning about how the loading of the ships works.

"In 2007 I moved to my current position of systems manager when this position had become vacant unexpectedly. Over time I had gained a fair deal of knowledge about the administrative computer systems and I also attended an intensive computer course in Port Elizabeth. My job involves maintaining the IT system that tracks all intake and packout records and reconciliations of these activities. It might sound simple, but to ensure that we consistently receive all the information from all the people involved, is quite a challenge.

"Since I started here seven years ago, Unifrutti's capacity has grown from processing 15 tonnes per hour to 60 tonnes and on average we now pack around 3 million cartons annually. I think you will agree that keeping track of this in the IT systems and packaging is no small job and I have a great team helping me to deliver the required results. Every day there are many details to take care of and I am enjoying the challenge that this position offers. This is a great company to work for and we have a very capable management team to guide us. I don't see myself leaving Unifrutti anytime soon!

"Every day is different and I work in a varied environment as I am on the floor and in the office. I enjoy living in a rural setting because although we do have deadlines and stress like in the city, working in a rural environment we can still see the stars at night and breathe fresh air."



"Working in a rural environment we can still see the stars at night and breathe fresh air."

Jan Carel Kritzinger is the Unifrutti Group's overall quality manager and is based at the company head office in Somerset West. He was visiting the Sundays River production unit on the day I was there. He is from farming stock and after a few detours certainly seems to have found his niche at Unifrutti. He grew up on an apple farm in the Langkloof Valley, a deciduous fruit production area that runs west to east inland from George and Plettenberg Bay. He attended the Daniel Pienaar Technical High School in Uitenhage and matriculated in 1999.



Jan Carel Kritzinger Group overall quality manager for Unifrutti 27

"My father used to farm but sold his farm. After finishing school I joined him in his agricultural implements business. Later he started procuring fruit for Oceanic Fruit Exports in the Langkloof. They also needed a procurement and quality control person in the citrus industry so I started doing this in the Kirkwood area in 2005. I learned on the job as I was not qualified. Later the same year a post became available at Oceanic's Maitland office in Cape Town and I moved there. In 2006 I made the move to Unifrutti and now I'm based in Somerset West.

"My job involves a lot of travel and I learn an incredible amount about the product from farmers and in the packhouses. I have also had the opportunity to travel to Egypt in the course of learning about quality control. I really enjoy my job because there is always a lot to learn and the activities of each day bring something new. I am continuously learning about issues that affect the whole supply chain. I have ended up in this position by fate and hard work and it is a pity that I did not know about this kind of job and the opportunities it offers when I was at school.

"This year I was appointed overall quality controller for Unifrutti throughout the country and I have been striving towards this for some time now. Each area has its own dedicated quality controller and I receive information regarding quality from them and then pass this on to the markets. This includes everything that affects quality, before and after harvest. Getting to the bottom of quality issues is quite fascinating and there is no substitute for learning hands-on in the workplace as I have and continue to do.

"Working in the citrus sector is enjoyable because the industry is quite mature and organised, and the research side of the industry also seems to be well organised. I would like to learn more about fruit production and the manipulation practices prior to harvest, as well as postharvest practices. In the future I would like to become more involved in the technical side of production.

"I like working for Unifrutti as it is an international company with many opportunities locally and internationally. The company has a friendly ethos and I get on well with the people. Weather conditions have a huge influence on fruit quality and this makes the challenges different every year. I enjoy the relaxed rural life as I am really a farm person at heart, although this does pose challenges like opportunities for schooling one's children.

"Career guidance with regards to opportunities in the agricultural sector needs to be presented to our country's schoolchildren in a better way as the broad spectrum in agriculture is not exposed as much as it should be."

"There is no substitute for learning hands-on in the workplace."





Craig Chambers

Production manager at River Bioscience, Hermitage

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It was just after sunrise on a winter's morning when I met Craig Chambers at the River Bioscience production facility at Hermitage in the Sundays River Valley. Despite the cold he enthusiastically explained River Bioscience's remarkable work and his activities at the facility.

River Bioscience was established in 2004 as a sister company of Citrus Research International and a commercial subsidiary of the Citrus Growers Association. The objectives of the company are to commercialise innovations, developments and discoveries from CRI research and to provide the Southern African citrus industry with innovative products aimed at improving its global competitiveness.

False codling moth is the most significant pests in the South African citrus industry and growers suffer huge annual losses as a result of FCM damage. Dr Sean Moore, a bio-technologist with the CRI, discovered a virus that is able to kill FCM larvae during a particular part of their lifecycle. River Bioscience has developed a product called Cryptogran®, a biological control agent which is completely harmless to the environment or other insect species. This was a big breakthrough in the control of FCM as some populations had built up a resistance to the traditional pesticides. A huge added benefit of Cryptogran® is that it offers a softer biological option against FCM. Cryptogran® has been well received in the citrus industry and is widely used throughout South Africa.

Craig is from Natal and completed a BSc degree in Entomology and Plant Pathology followed by an Honours and Masters degree in Plant Pathology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg. His Masters degree was based on the biological control of insects using fungal pathogens. "After graduation, I didn't manage to find a job in my field for some time, so I was thrilled to hear about the post at River Bioscience and applied. My application was successful and I have been the Production Manager at River Bioscience since 2006."

Craig explained that the River Bioscience Production facility breeds false codling moth (FCM) larvae for the production of Cryptogran®. "My job here is to manage the staff of 9 people and ensure that the Insectary runs smoothly. We rear millions of false codling moth larvae on a continuous basis and when the larvae reach late fourth, early fifth larval life stage, they are infected (sprayed) with the virus. The virus kills the larvae which we then harvest and blend to make the active ingredient in Cryptogran®. Once the correct formulation is completed, Cryptogran® needs to be refrigerated and it remains effective for 18 months." (As Cryptogran® it is not poisonous, producers often simply keep it in their household fridge!)

"The soft control offered by Cryptogran® is in accordance with Sundays River Citrus Company's policy of a softer approach to insect control and producers are using Cryptogran® together with Isomate, a product that disrupts the false codling moth's mating pattern. The more biologically friendly approach is also assisting farmers in the Sundays River Valley who are moving towards organic production.

"Looking back, I did not ever think I would be involved in this line of work as I had always enjoyed wildlife. When I started my BSc, my subjects were Zoology and Botany. Half way through my degree I changed direction to Entomology and Plant Pathology as I enjoyed these subjects and decided to follow this course.

"On a practical level I enjoy this line of work because I am directly in control of what is happening in the rearing process at any given time. As this is a small company we work together well. In the future I would like to remain in the citrus industry and continue working towards biological control. Soon I will be starting my PhD and this will be aimed at discovering other potential biological control products for problem insects."

"The more biologically friendly approach is assisting farmers."

Clint Mac Aleer

Operations manager at Sun Citrus Packhouse, Kirkwood

29



“The benefit of investing in people through training is unlimited.”

Sun Citrus is on the outskirts of Kirkwood and this is where I met operations manager Clint Mac Aleer who has been with Sun Citrus since its was established in 2000. Our appointment was late in the day but there was still a hive of activity at the packhouse so the Operations Manager obviously has a very busy job. Within moments of meeting Clint, it became clear that he has a no nonsense, can-do attitude and empathy for his workforce which is a testament to his success.

Clint went to school in Humansdorp and matriculated in 1998 and when his parents moved to Kirkwood in 1999 to retire, he moved with them. “In April 2000 Sun Citrus packhouse was completed and I applied for a job. I was appointed as a pallet packer and started right from the bottom of the ladder. After a few months of hard work, I was moved to receiving clerk. I held this position for two years and then in the 2002 season I was promoted to line manager, where I was responsible for the pack line and postharvest treatments in the packhouse.”

In 2005 he was promoted again to production manager and his responsibilities were now expanded from receiving all the way through the production line until the fruit was packed and ready for dispatch. He has held his current position as operations manager since 2007.

Sun Citrus was started by Dr. Cecil Brummer, currently the MD of Sun Citrus Packers which is owned in partnership with Colors Fruit and Nampak. When the packhouse first opened in 2000, there were 80 employees and 350,000 cartons passed through the packhouse. Today these figures have grown to a workforce of 650 and they pack around 2 million cartons of citrus annually. Sun Citrus receives fruit from 20 growers in the Sundays River Valley.

“I have been with the company for nine years. It has certainly been hard and challenging work but it has also been enjoyable and stimulating. We simply do not have a pool of trained manpower to draw from in the Kirkwood area so we have to train people on the job. The benefit of investing in people through training is unlimited and many of our

At Sun Citrus, we're focused on quality, on service excellence, and developing the very best talent we can find. For our clients, that means the best service. And for our people, the best future under the sun.



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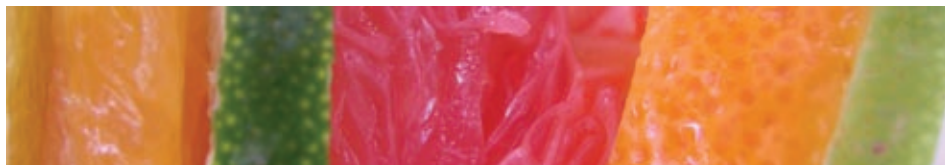
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staff have grown into superb leaders in their field and have moved 'up the ranks' because they have grabbed the opportunities that training has given them.

"We are currently packing 1,000 bins daily and we have two shifts in the packhouse, one from 06h00 to 15h00 and the second one from 15h30 to 00h30. We have four line managers monitoring the lines and the packhouse is currently incredibly busy. Our season runs from February to the end of

September and I am one of 45 permanent staff members. The four line managers who have successfully completed Agriseta learnerships through the National Training Institute. These men are a great help and make things run smoothly in this hectic environment. They had the opportunity to visit the UK during November 2008 to experience fruit receiving at the UK markets, and this was an invaluable experience for them. During the off season we do maintenance on the equipment and once again, the staff completed Maintenance learnerships to give them the necessary know-how."



Cathrine du Toit

**Senior account manager for UK desk at
Sundays River Citrus Company marketing office, Port Elizabeth
28**

*"If you enjoy excitement this is
a good industry to be in."*

Cathrine is no stranger to agriculture as she grew up on a deciduous fruit farm in the Koue Bokkeveld near Ceres. She attended Charlie Hofmeyr High School in Ceres and after matriculation in 1999, she attended Stellenbosch University where she attained a BComm degree followed by an Honours degree in Logistics. "Directly after graduation I went to the UK and spent 3 years in Europe. During this time I also went to Belgium and worked for Capespan in Antwerp on the logistics side of imports. This was an invaluable experience. After two years I returned to Cape Town and landed a job with The Fresh Chain Logistics, a logistical service provider that is a subsidiary of Capespan. I was with them for 18 months and worked as a key account manager before I moved to Port Elizabeth for personal reasons and joined SRCC in January 2008."

**Sundays River Citrus Company's
marketing offices are not at the
packhouse in the Valley but are
at the Port Elizabeth airport.**

**Over the past few seasons,
SRCC has developed a strong
marketing division and undertake
most of their own domestic
and international marketing.
This is where I met Cathrine du
Toit, senior account manager
for SRCC's UK desk. Cathrine's
qualifications, experience and
proven abilities within the fruit
sector are clearly an asset to the
SRCC marketing team.**

At SRCC Cathrine works directly with the company's clients in the UK and this has been a move from logistics to the commercial side of the business. "Again I have been on a steep learning curve and I have learned a great deal since I've been here."

Cathrine says that she has ended up in the agricultural sector more by chance than by design. "I have always wanted to be involved in imports and exports but not necessarily in the fruit sector. As I am from farming stock I suppose it is largely because I knew people in the fruit industry that my career moved in this direction, but I really enjoy what I do and don't plan to move out of this field in the future. If you enjoy excitement this is a good industry to be in as no given day is the same as the next. I have always liked the logistical side of this industry and now I have become a lot more familiar with the commercial side as well.

"Having grown up on a farm I understand the trend that young people do not want to become involved in agriculture and live a quiet rural life. Between the ages of 13 and 25 youngsters want to be where the action is and only later one learns to appreciate the pleasures of slower country living. I am one of 5 children and I have a brother and sister who are both involved in our family business. My father is supportive of my career and enjoys chatting to me about my job as it is interesting for him as a deciduous farmer to hear about what is happening in other sectors of the fruit industry."



Mpho Ntsike

Citrus programme co-ordinator at Sundays River Citrus Company, Addo
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Sundays River Citrus Company is the largest citrus packing operation in South Africa, packing up to 8 million cartons of fruit for export annually.

Here I met citrus programme co-ordinator Mpho Ntsike, who was sharp and impeccable and has the savvy of one who has worked his way up through the ranks by sheer determination and hard work.

“I grew up on a farm in the Sundays River Valley and attended Samkelwe Senior Secondary School in Addo. After school I got a job as an exporting clerk at SRCC in 1999. I worked in that position for two years and saved to study at Russell Road College in PE. I returned to SRCC the next season,” explained Mpho.

“In 2002 I was promoted and became an export supervisor, overseeing packing and loading at the logistics department. I did this for three seasons and in 2005 became a local market co-ordinator.

“These were all seasonal jobs from March to October. I recognised the importance of computer training and in 2004 I did a computer skills course at Varsity College in Port Elizabeth. This was quite a commitment in time and money but I was determined to complete it. In 2005 I completed a learnership offered at SRCC by the National Training Institute in Fruit Packaging and Grading. This was great as it gave us a global view of all the functions in the packhouse and of all the other departments. In December 2005 I was given a permanent appointment as the packing material administrator. This was a positive change and a very responsible job as I had to keep track of the availability of all the various kinds of cartons.

“In 2006 the Fresh Produce Exporters’ Forum’s Top of the Class programme was offered at SRCC. This was a very informative programme as it clearly illustrated the workings of the whole supply chain and how they depend on each other for a successful final result. It would be great if all the people in the packhouse could attend this course. The top student in this course won a sponsored trip to Fruit Logistica in Germany. I just missed it as I came second.

“When I started at SRCC in 1999 we only had two brands and now we pack under up to 25 different brands. This requires close supervision of the packing materials for all these brands. I did this for a year and in 2007 I was moved to the marketing department becoming a citrus programme co-ordinator for export and local markets. This entails co-ordination between the packhouse and the customer. In this time of recession it is very important to give the customer exactly what they want and they are usually more than willing to pay for it. I really enjoy my current job and thank Mr Jan Alberts who has been a great help to me.

“I started at the bottom and have worked my way up over the past 10 years by showing an interest and working hard. I like challenges as they test one’s character. Looking back I would not have believed I would be where I am today but my keen interest was recognised and rewarded and for that I’m very grateful. I have very supportive parents and I can thank God and my parents for helping me to stick with this and see it through. My parents are very proud of my success and continue to encourage me in my career.

“I’m happy here and I actively encourage the other youngsters here to work their way up as I have. Around 95% of the people employed in the Sundays River Valley work in the citrus industry and there are many local youngsters who have a lot of potential. I would like to see myself in a managerial position and if I am successful, this will also provide further inspiration to local youngsters that this can be done. I am from a Xhosa home but I speak both fluent English and Afrikaans. This is a great help in my job as the management at SRCC speak mostly Afrikaans while I speak English to customers.

“There are agricultural components in a diverse field of disciplines such as IT, finance, mechanics, engineering, business, research and many other fields. Agriculture can be very exciting and every year brings new challenges. SRCC is currently creating opportunities for black farmers on farms in the Sundays River Valley and these initiatives are supported by the SRCC as well as government.”

“I actively encourage the other youngsters from the area to work their way up.”



Pieter Nortje

Production manager at Sitrusrand, Kirkwood

National winner of the Young Farmer of the Year Competition in 2006
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"I'm positive about the opportunities ahead for our industry."

Pieter Nortje is the owner of Sitrusrand, a considerable citrus production unit in the Eastern Cape's beautiful Sundays River citrus production region. He has also served as CGA board member for the Sundays River Valley and is currently the Chairman of the Navel Focus Group. "Our farm is a family farm and in essence I've been involved in the citrus industry since I was a schoolboy," explains Pieter.

"After matric I attended Stellenbosch University and achieved a BComm Accounting degree and then returned to the farm in 1994 where I started at the bottom."



"As I learned the ropes I tried to improve all the systems on the property and we also started with large expansion projects and built our own packhouse." Since 1994 Sitrusrand's production has increased from 60,000 cartons to 1.5 million cartons of citrus annually.

Pieter explains that he tries to serve the industry as much as possible, as keeping the image of South African navels where it deserves to be internationally, is of great importance to him. "Together with other role-players in the citrus industry I also work hard at bridging the North-South divide in the South African citrus sector in the interests of increasing the value of our product. Our combined efforts have shown positive results during the past two years."

Pieter's involvement in organised agriculture has been recognised beyond the citrus industry. He was chosen as Young Farmer of the Year by Agri SA in 2006 and also voted Businessman of the Year by the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Business School in association with ABSA. "For The Young Farmer of the Year Award I was proposed by fellow farmers. The competition has two parts. First a winner is chosen from each province and then an overall winner is chosen from these nine contestants. To receive this level of national recognition was a huge privilege for me as farming can feel like a lonely battle at times. This served as an affirmation of my work and as further personal motivation. Interestingly, it also created an awareness of and interest in our area and produce from the national agricultural community."

"The pace of running an operation this size is frenetic at times and today I look back and I thank my dad for his valuable mentorship. He has handed the reins of the citrus operation to me and today he remains involved in the game farming side of our operation."

"It has become increasingly difficult to produce citrus due to the high standards set by receivers and in order to produce citrus successfully, one has to be focussed and specialised. As global competitors in the market place, South African fruit exporters face keen competition from other fruit producing countries. However, the standard of our infrastructure and the resulting cost of our logistics chain through South African ports amounts to twice that of our competitors from South America, placing us at a disadvantage from the outset."

"The citrus industry is a huge creator of employment in South Africa. The South African fruit industry is arguably the biggest supplier of jobs to unskilled labourers, yet despite reports of high unemployment levels in our country, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find labour. It appears that the Government's social grant system has had unintended counterproductive consequences."

"It has now been 13 years since deregulation and we have entered a new, post-deregulation era with a new generation of citrus producers. The improved value that we are receiving of our product as a result of the ability to export to a vast range of destinations, has led to an increase of exports from South Africa from 40 million to 90 million cartons in the last decade. The industry and role players have matured and people are generally working well together in the best interests of the industry. I'm a positive person and remain upbeat about the opportunities that lie ahead for our industry. We have a world class product with an excellent reputation which will continue to be of great value to our country."

**Right: Adri Nel
and Adele Tolmay
at Sitrusrand,
Kirkwood**



Sitrusrand is a large operation with approximately 800 hectares of citrus. Adri Nel, the logistics and quality control officer took a break in her hectic schedule to chat to me, emerging from the midst of the frantic and noisy activity of the Sitrusrand packhouse looking remarkably fresh and neat.

Adri says that she became involved in agriculture quite by chance. "I grew up in Prieska and matriculated in 2000 from High School Prieska in the Northern Cape and, although I was always close to the agricultural sector, I never saw myself going in that direction as I thought of it as a male-dominated environment where women did not fit."

Adri Nel

Logistics and quality control officer at Sitrusrand, Kirkwood
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"In 2005 my husband got a job here at Sitrusrand on the logistical side of the operation (Sitrusrand has its own logistics division, transporting their fruit to the ports and the market). We moved to the area and I also applied for a job at Sitrusrand to do the wages. This was my first responsibility here but soon I realised that it was not for me. In observing the quality control issues and the logistics of the operation, I found this to be more interesting and challenging.

"As I had never worked in a packhouse before, everything was new and I started at the bottom. I worked hard at learning new concepts and after hours I would study up on all the systems to gain a better understanding. Today my responsibilities are logistics and quality control, including MRL's (Maximum Residue Levels) on the fruit. I also do a measure of market research such as what the various international market requirements are in respect of type of fruit, fruit size and packaging. On the logistics side, it is a great help to me that my husband is also involved in logistics and his input has been a great help in this field. During the off season we finish all the jobs that are necessary that have been postponed during the urgency of the harvest, and then it is time to prepare for the next season. We have two food quality and safety audits per year. This includes spray records, orchard sanitation, worker safety and environmental sustainability.

"Last year I started studying part-time and I am doing a course in comprehensive computer programming. I started this because we often work with computer programmes that do not fulfil all or specific needs and I would like to reach a point where I am able to create programmes that work more efficiently for us. I have already been able to use skills that I've learned in the course on the IT side of Sitrusrand's operations. This course is both interesting and stimulating and I am enjoying the challenge. Whenever I have the opportunity, I teach the young matriculants working on the floor in the packhouse some IT skills by showing them how to do some functions on the computer. They are then able to help me with simple tasks and this is also empowers them and stimulates them to learn more.

"I love my job, both for the working environment and for the challenges it brings. One of my favourite sayings is that adrenaline is my drug of choice and all these challenges suit me



just fine! I see this job and this industry as sustainable because food security is important and will only become more vital in the future. Agriculture equates to food and all people have to eat. I like the rural life we lead and I enjoy taking the opportunity to work outdoors at times. Sometimes it is quite

satisfying to get involved in doing some manual labour, both in the packhouse and out in the orchards. This variation on my daily responsibilities is great and I would like to continue in this field. I hope to stay at Citrusrand as my job here is hugely satisfying and I feel safe in this rural working environment."

"Adrenaline is my drug of choice and all these challenges suit me just fine!"

Visiting the Sundays River Valley during the harvesting season one sees a hive of activity amongst the orchards as pickers work flat out in order to bring in the harvest. Despite this, Adele Tolmay, the administration and human resources officer was calm and down-to-earth.

"I grew up in the Sundays River Valley and attended high school in Kirkwood. After matric I worked in the accounts and admin department at Unifrutti Packhouse for a season. The next year I moved to Sundays River Citrus Company where I worked in the packhouse receiving and was also responsible for internal audits. I enjoyed working there and learned a great deal about the packing process," explained Adele.

Adele Tolmay

**Admin and human resources officer at Citrusrand, Kirkwood
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"After four years with SRCC I was approached by Pieter Nortje to fill a position here at Citrusrand. This represented a new opportunity for me as both my previous positions were at large co-operative packhouses and this would be a move to a smaller operation where the production and packing belonged to a single grower. I started here in 2007 and I work in the packhouse at logistics and wages as well as the quality protocols such as GlobalGap and Nature's Choice. This keeps me constantly busy and I enjoy my job as my wide range of responsibilities means that not one day is the same and there are new daily challenges. Over the years I have done many tasks within the packhouse system so I have a good overall knowledge of the functions of the packhouse."

During the harvest season Citrusrand employs up to 450 pickers and 300 packers so the Human Resources portfolio is large. The wages are paid fortnightly and Adele is responsible for this. When the workers are receiving wages based on piecework tariffs, it has always been a huge job to calculate this and the farm managers spend hours tallying it up manually before it can be submitted to the wage system. "We have recently introduced a new scanning system which allows the farm managers to calculate piecework wages electronically and once we have mastered this system it is going to be a huge improvement on the current system," explained Adele.

The preparation and maintenance of Citrusrand farm and packhouse to comply with GlobalGap and Nature's Choice protocols are big challenges and Adele adds that the farm managers have certainly been helpful with this. "We have now achieved these and are working towards HACCP compliance in the near future. Our season runs from March to the end of September and after the season is over, I work at completing the administration for the season. Although we are frantically busy during the harvest season, during the off season the job becomes a half-day post so this seasonal variation is also enjoyable."

"I have lived in Kirkwood all my life and working in this environment came naturally. I know the lifestyle and most of the people in the area, so I far prefer the rural lifestyle to the fast pace and stress of the city. Even though my job is challenging, life in the countryside is still fresh and peaceful by comparison. I get on with my fellow workers and in the area there is a strong sense of community and a willingness to help each other as we are all involved in the same industry. I hope to stay in this position for the foreseeable future as I'm happy here. I have recently married and would like to continue at Citrusrand."

"In the area there is a strong sense of community."



Grant du Preez

Production manager at Thorndale, Hankey

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*“People skills
and
adaptability
are vital.”*

West of Port Elizabeth, the fertile Gamtoos River Valley runs inland in a north-westerly direction. The main towns in this citrus production region are Hankey and Patensie. The area produces citrus, vegetables and tobacco and although this land has been cultivated for decades, there is still a definite untamed feel to the valley. Near Hankey there are dramatic soaring red cliffs and the hilltops flanking the valley are covered with dense indigenous vegetation, home to the region's wildlife. The valley floor has many large circular fields cultivated with vegetable crops and irrigated with massive centre pivots.

Grant du Preez's enthusiasm for farming and the area are immediately evident. He explained that after matriculating from the Agricultural School at Riversdale in 2000, he completed a degree in Agricultural Economics followed by an Honours course in Logistics Management at Stellenbosch University.

“After I had finished studying I came home to help on the farm during my December holidays and, before I knew what was happening, I was permanently involved! After many years of independence it was quite an adjustment to be living at home with my parents again. Initially this was tough but now we have all adapted and things are running more smoothly on that front.”

Grant and his father cultivate a total of 200ha including 80ha of citrus. “We are planning to expand our citrus plantings in future bit, unlike our annual vegetable crops, citrus farming requires more detailed long-term planning. The costs of establishing citrus orchards are increasing and producers have to consider cultivar choices carefully. We are currently expanding onto new ground and planting 20ha of Nova oranges and Eureka lemons. Our farms produce a wide variety of citrus types and we export exclusively through Colors Fruit Exports. We are part of a group of four producers that has established a packhouse in Hankey. This was a big commitment at the time, but the packhouse has now been in operation for two years and this is working well for us.

Our business is about
constantly finding
innovative ways of
connecting growers
with markets. That's
why we're not just
passionate about
picking fresh talent,
but growing it too.



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"I believe that in citrus production orchard sanitation is vital for success and striving to achieve biological control is very important as it eliminates the use of heavy poisons in the orchards and it is of great benefit to the environment."

Grant believes that agriculture is both challenging and stimulating. "Let's face it, today it is very difficult for a prospective farmer to buy a farm and start the process from scratch. On

the marketing side one of the big problems that we face internationally is that as an unsubsidised industry, South African fruit competes against fruit that has been subsidised by the government in their country of origin, placing our product at an immediate disadvantage. On a positive note, the image of farmers and farming has changed rapidly as farmers clearly have to be businessmen first and foremost for the farm to be successful. People skills and adaptability are also vital skills, because without the co-operation of your workforce, the farm will not succeed.

"I really enjoy farming and I plan to stay here and make my future on the farm. It certainly helps that there is a fair group of us young farmers in the valley and we have a good social network. The relaxed rural lifestyle is a wonderful way of life and the peace of the 'platteland' is one of the largest factors that will keep me here in the long run."



Stephan Rautenbach

Production manager at Vensterhoek, Hankey

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Stephan attended Nico Malan High School in Humansdorp. "After I matriculated in 2000, I did a flying course at Port Alfred for two years as I planned to work as a pilot for a few years before I became involved in the family farming business. After that I completed a degree in Agricultural Administration at Stellenbosch University. After graduation, however, two of our farm managers left within a short period and I was asked to come to the farm to help out. It is now four years later I'm still here! I have flown light planes in neighbouring countries such as Namibia and Mozambique and, although I am now involved in the farming operation, I still have the opportunity to do this from time to time and intend to continue with it." Stephan's love for flying is reflected in the neat rows of model aeroplanes on the display cabinet in the living room.

Stephan Rautenbach volunteered to meet me in Hankey so that I could follow him to Vensterhoek, the farm that has been in the Rautenbach family for three generations. The wisdom behind this soon became clear as the dirt road took many twists and turns through the beautiful undulating landscape that begs the traveller to linger. At times his bakkie disappeared in the dust and I was certainly grateful for the escort.

The farm currently has 80ha of citrus and 70ha of open ground on which they cultivate vegetable crops. "This means that although the crops vary, we are busy throughout the year. As the returns on citrus have proved to be better than on the vegetable crops, we are currently expanding with Cambria navels which do well in our area." Stephan explained that his parents are very grateful to have him on the farm as they know he is taking care of operations. This has allowed them to take things a little easier and spend more time at their beach house at Jeffrey's Bay. He added that he has a younger brother and sister who are not currently involved in the farm.

"I have always wanted to farm and was never pressured by my family to return to the farm to continue the family business. Although at times it can be tricky working in a family business, I love the lifestyle that farming offers and I see myself remaining in production here in the long term. Our proximity to the coast means that we are often able to get away to the sea for a break and the bush in the area allows good hunting opportunities during the winter months. Despite the current scepticism, I am truly positive about agriculture and its future in South Africa as agriculture seems to be entering a new period of resurgence. As producers our lifestyle beats that of most people who live and work in cities and this is a strong persuading factor for me. Things are generally going well for us and I believe that we have a great deal to be thankful for."

"We have a great deal to be thankful for."



Trying to find the CRI's Citrus Foundation Block near Uitenhage is like trying to locate a top secret military facility - a remote and unlikely location without a single signpost and a myriad of 'red herring' roads to mislead the mildly curious! When I did arrive successfully, Michelle Koegelenberg, the CIS administrator laughed at my simile and explained the importance of keeping the Foundation Block isolated and free of plant diseases.



“Career guidance aptitude tests suggested that I should work with plants.”

Michelle Koegelenberg

Citrus Improvement Scheme administrator at the Citrus Foundation Block, Uitenhage
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Michelle is young and bubbly and clearly loves her job. She grew up in the area and after matriculating from Framesby High School she worked for a wholesale nursery for a few months. “In retrospect I realise how much I enjoyed the environment and working in close contact with the earth. Interestingly, at school the results of career guidance aptitude tests also suggested that I should work with plants and at the time I just laughed!”

“After that I worked in a bank for a broker and soon realised that the pressure and formal environment of that job were not for me. I moved on to doing freelance bookkeeping, admin and payroll for a few companies for quite a period and this was a good opportunity to learn the basics of bookkeeping. Sometime later I heard about the vacancy at CRI and applied for the job. To my great delight I got the post and have been here ever since. Part of the job required knowledge of Access and Pastel computer software and the experience I had in both has proved to be very helpful in this situation.

“We provide rootstock seed and budwood of various cultivars to South African citrus nurseries and export excess seed to other countries. During the past year we exported a total of 1,991 litres of seed to China, Australia, La Réunion Island and neighbouring countries”. Outside Michelle showed me how the seeds were extracted from the fruit of the seed source trees that are used as rootstock. These are then treated with hot water and a fungicide, dried and hand sorted by a team of workers on site.

“I am responsible for the finances and recordkeeping of the operation. Completing the tree certificates is quite a big job. After the trees are cultivated by the nurseries, CRI is responsible for tree certification. This represents a large part of my job and the process requires meticulous checking and rechecking of the data to ensure that all the trees produced are correctly certified. Tree certification is about maintaining clear traceability as we are able to trace the budwood back to a specific increase block of trees and then from there further back to a particular mother tree. We make use of approximately 122,000 ‘increase block’ trees in 10 litre planting bags for the multiplication of budwood. The mother trees in 90 litre pots are continuously evaluated for trueness-to-type.

“I love working here. When I arrived I truly knew nothing about citrus and I’m continuously learning more as there is constant stimulation within this field. I am doing a course developed by the Citrus Academy entitled Citrus Nursery Workers Programme, together with the two CFB supervisors. The people I work with are always friendly, kind and respectful.

“As I live only 2km from here, this position is very convenient and it fits perfectly with my lifestyle. I have no intention of moving on. I enjoy working in a rural setting and the bush around here is quite wild in places so sometimes we see little antelope peeping shyly at us from the undergrowth. This is a stable job and I enjoy the comfort of routine. I am creative and impulsive by nature so the structure this job offers me creates a good stabilising counter-balance to my impulsiveness.”





Hombisa Manakaza

Industrial Engineering student, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth

Citrus Academy Bursary Fund beneficiary

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"While I was studying, I came across the Citrus Academy website on the internet and read up on their Bursary Fund. I applied and had forgotten about the application when the Citrus Academy contacted me to tell me that I had been awarded a bursary! This was wonderful news, but the fresh produce sector was very different to anything I had had exposure to so I had to study up about the industry."

In 2008 Hombisa spent a year working at the SRCC (Sundays River Citrus Company) as part of her studies. This was her year of practical experience after two years of theory and she worked in the projects department, and in logistics and marketing. "The time I spent there was a truly remarkable learning curve. Before I went to SRCC I was apprehensive as I did not expect people there to understand my point of view. To my surprise they were not only understanding but very helpful and the experience turned out to be much better than I expected. It was a life lesson for me to realise that people working in the field have a great deal of knowledge gleaned from experience and that I could certainly learn a lot from them. I am grateful to both Greg Jones and John Perold at SRCC for their mentorship and all the practical knowledge I gained from them."

"For a young woman used to a vibrant urban environment, living and working in a rural area is not very stimulating and transport presents a big problem. Although the people that I worked with were very friendly, I still wanted to go out and have some fun in the evenings sometimes, but everything closes at 18h00!"

"I live in Sydenham in PE with my parents. My mother is a teacher and my father is a driver and they are very proud of my achievements and have always encouraged me. I hope to start a career working in logistics and marketing in the fruit industry and would like to specialise in holding and managing a few key accounts."

"In the future agriculture is likely to become more and more important as one looks at global food security. None of us would be able to live without the agricultural sector. Agriculture has a vast array of opportunities for careers and my specific field of interest in agriculture lies on the business side as I enjoy the postharvest part of the supply chain."

"I enjoy the postharvest part of the supply chain."



Our meeting was at the NMMU campus in Port Elizabeth on a gloriously warm and still winter's day. The campus has a beautiful setting overlooking the Indian Ocean and the view en route to the student centre was of lush green lawns rolling down towards the sparkling waters in the bay.

Hombisa arrived looking fashionably elegant. She was also articulate and easy to chat to. "I am originally from the Transkei and attended High School in Port Elizabeth. After I matriculated in 2004 I enrolled at NMMU to do a degree in Engineering. I chose engineering because I was not really sure what I wanted to do and because the engineering field has a broad application. I am currently doing a BTech degree. This is a one-year postgraduate degree and it focuses on project management, logistics and systems dynamics," explained Hombisa.

KwaZulu- Natal





The Carisbrooke Valley Citrus packhouse near Ixopo in Southern KZN is a co-operative packhouse, packing fruit for its eight shareholders who are local producers. The growers currently have 300ha of citrus and together produce 8,000 tons of fruit annually. Charles Hackland is the production manager as well as the son of one of the Carisbrooke shareholders.

The Hackland family has farmed in the Ixopo area for more than 150 years. The family farm, Cromleigh, is a mixed farming operation with citrus, sugar cane and timber.



“Our farm borders on traditionally owned land and we have good relations with our neighbours.”

Charles Hackland

Packhouse manager at Carisbrooke Valley Citrus, Ixopo

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“Quality export citrus has been grown in the area by the Button family since the 1960s and since the mid-1990’s producers in the area have planted significant volumes of citrus. When the orchards matured the producers needed a packhouse and they put in a bid on a disused packing line in Swaziland. Their bid was successful, and the complete packing line was dismantled, loaded on to flatbed trucks and transported to Ixopo. The machines were reassembled on site and packing at Carisbrooke Valley Citrus began in 2003,” explains Charles.

“Carisbrooke is one of the few packhouses that has a chemical free line that packs fruit without using chemicals in the process. The line packs mostly lemons destined for Japan, the Far and Middle East. Deregulation has meant that we also receive export orders for some unusual destinations. We sell fruit on the local market, mostly in pockets, and this is sent to markets in KZN and across the provincial border to the Eastern Cape.”

Charles attended Michaelhouse and after matric he completed a BComm at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg). “My major subjects were Economics and Accounting and after graduating I worked for a KZN auditing firm for 4 years and completed my Chartered Accountant training. In 2007 I spent six months working for the firm’s Los Angeles office. Although the hours were long, the firm looked after us well and we had a great time. We jokingly said that we were simply providing the LA office with skilled migrant labour! I came back to the farm in July 2007 and helped my father for a few months. Fathers and sons working together can be tricky, but we got on well and I really enjoyed the work. I spent 2008 in London working in finance and I recently returned to a production manager position at Carisbrooke Valley Citrus.

“After being involved in the production process, working at the packhouse has given me a broader picture of the marketing process. I enjoy my job as it involves a range of aspects including marketing issues, mechanical issues and the management of people. The packhouse has provided many new job opportunities and we do not have a shortage of labour. There is some staff turnover, but in general the employees are experienced and well trained. We have a good staff and I enjoy the daily interaction with them. Finding seasonal fruit pickers is also not a problem in our area and historically producers have had good labour relations. Like many in the area, our farm borders on traditionally owned land and we have good relations with our neighbours.” Charles speaks fluent Zulu, which clearly is a great help in his position.

“I returned to citrus production as it is a great opportunity for me. I’m pleased to be back in South Africa and I would like to remain involved in agriculture, but many farms in the area have had land claims registered against them. Although this has caused uncertainty, the Carisbrooke Valley citrus growers are positive and are following a business-as-usual approach. The land claims are hampering investment in new developments and the uncertainty is a challenge to young people making career decisions. My dilemma is whether to stay in agriculture or go back to a career in finance. My hope is that the land claims can be finalised quickly so that we can focus on producing and packing high quality citrus and continuing to grow these successful farming operations. In future I would like to remain involved in production. The climate and topography of our area means that farms will continue to be mixed operations and a benefit of producing different crops is that business risk is reduced.”



Rochelle Adkins

General assistant and website administrator at Citrus Academy, Durban
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Rochelle Adkins is the website administrator for the Citrus Academy. She started with the Academy as a general assistant in April 2008 and has recently taken responsibility for the website.

Rochelle is from Durban and attended Fairvale Secondary School. Before joining the Citrus Academy, she worked in the purchasing and logistics division of a printing ink company.

"I am a city person who had never had exposure to agriculture before this and never considered a career involving agriculture. When I matriculated I wanted to travel abroad and I remember my mother commenting that why should I go abroad to travel when I had not travelled through my own country yet," says Rochelle.

"This position has given me a fresh look at our country's rural areas and I have also been bowled over by how massive the South African citrus industry is and how it is truly spread across the length and breadth of our country. The relatively short time that I have spent with the Citrus Academy has taught me a great deal about this vast industry.

"The Citrus Academy is a great organisation to work for because it is dynamic and in our daily activities we deal with a wide range of organisations and individuals in both the private sector and government. I really enjoy the working environment and although we work hard, we work well together and still make sure we have some fun from time to time. There are daily challenges and I enjoy working towards making them happen. If you believe that you can do something it helps you along the road to succeeding. As the Citrus Academy continues to expand, the new developments are also very exciting. I was responsible for the administration side of the Academy but recently my job has changed to website administrator. I received training for this and together with our IT service provider we have established a new website which I am responsible for administering. Our website is young, fresh and user-friendly and relates both to our Citrus Academy bursary students and other industry users. It is indeed a pleasure to be involved with this.

"Interacting with the Citrus Academy students has been the first time that I have been exposed to people who have chosen to study agriculture. It is truly remarkable to see the difference that the Citrus Academy is making in the lives of the bursary students. The life experiences of some of our students touch one's heart and give one perspective on the blessings in one's own personal life.

"To be perfectly honest I used to think that the agricultural sector was dead boring – not exciting or dynamic at all. The last year has certainly changed my mind as I have learned a great deal more. In an abstract way we all know that without agriculture we would starve, but seeing the amount of time and effort it takes to produce food and supply it to the market has brought this home to me in a more immediate and real way.

"It has also become clear that within the broader agricultural sphere there are many avenues of involvement which provide jobs, both in a rural and urban setting. I can see myself continuing in this sector as part of the development and progress of the Citrus Academy.

"I would say that it is true that city people generally and the youth in particular don't know enough about the importance of agriculture or the opportunities it offers. These were never presented to us as career options when we were at school and consequently I thought that agriculture only involved farmers. A pro-active approach of highlighting opportunities in agriculture to scholars would go a long way to persuading more youngsters to enter this sector."



"It is truly remarkable to see the difference that the Citrus Academy is making in the lives of the bursary students."



Lindokuhle Mkhwanazi

Intern at Crookes Brothers Limited, Nkwalini

Agri-Industry Development Programme (AIDP) participant

Citrus Academy Bursary Fund beneficiary

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"As Crookes Brothers Limited is a large organisation we are able to introduce youngsters into the business in this way," explained Tiaan Viljoen, general manager at Riversbend Estate. "This is a long-term process and is proving to be successful as trainees are involved in all aspects of the business."

Lindo is from KwaDlangezwa near Empangeni and attended school at Mtubatuba, matriculating in 2004. "After school I attended the University of Zululand (near Empangeni) and did a BSc Agricultural Economics. I chose this because prospects in agriculture looked promising and there were bursaries available.

"In my third year at university I heard about the Citrus Academy bursary programme through friends. My application was successful and I completed my fourth year last year with the support of the Citrus Academy bursary. The Citrus Academy has been incredibly supportive in ways far beyond what we ever expected. "Desiree is the mother of our Nation" is the saying amongst us when the bursary students get together! (Desiree Schonken is the Citrus Academy Bursary Fund Manager)

"I have learned at Crookes Brothers Limited that agricultural economics is not just about sitting in front of the computer as it requires practical involvement and a thorough grasp of the workings of the operation's production. My position here involves observation, supervision and reporting back about how functions are progressing. In the process of observing, I am learning a great deal from the people that work here. The learning curve of understanding why things are done in a certain way is both challenging and enjoyable and I am truly learning something every day.

"When I arrived I was apprehensive but I have been well received here and the management is very co-operative and patient in teaching me. After 6 months I have also become more confident within the working environment. It has been quite a revelation to see what a complex set of processes are involved in harvesting. A practical learning experience like this is invaluable and I have also come to realise that there is no substitute for practical experience and why this is such an important requirement to secure employment.

"Adjusting to the quiet rural lifestyle is a big change from the busy social life on campus but internet access helps to stay in touch with what is happening in the world. Despite this I still see my future in the country and have already identified a number of business opportunities in the rural area that I could develop. I am interested in the marketing side of agriculture and would like to go down that avenue.

Lindo is one of five trainees currently completing a one year in-house training at Crookes Brothers Limited's Riversbend Estate in the Nkwalini Valley. This is part of the AIDP internship programme run by the National Department of Agriculture's Directorate for Education and Training.

"There is no substitute for practical experience."

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"Agriculture in South Africa is up against some considerable challenges to productivity as the government Land Reform Programme is allowing productive agricultural land to fall into the wrong hands. The transfer of productive agricultural land to people who do not have the experience to continue with commercial production is having a detrimental effect on

agriculture and food security. For the Land Reform process to be successful land ownership should be transferred to people who have the necessary experience, qualifications and the intentions to continue with production. Agriculture also needs more exposure at school level. It is important to teach children the value of agriculture and its diverse career opportunities.

"My dad is a service provider in the forestry industry and my mom works in the retail sector and I have seven younger siblings. My parents were very surprised when I chose to go into the agricultural sector but they have come to appreciate the opportunities that agriculture presents."

It was getting late in the afternoon on the winter's day when I met Sabelo and Sifiso at Crookes Brothers Limited's River Bend Estate at Nkwalini. This was during the university holidays and these two students were undertaking interviews with producers in the area to gather data for one of their university projects.

As they did not have their own transport they were relying on public transport to Nkwalini from Empangeni (40km) but had resigned themselves to moving the distance between the farms on foot. Fortunately for them, the producers that they were interviewing realised their difficult circumstances and each kindly drove them to their next appointment. So by the time we could finally meet, they were somewhat flustered from rushing to get to the appointment and with limited time we simply launched into a combined interview.

Sabelo Khumalo and Sifiso Mthabela

**BSc Agriculture students at the University of Zululand
Citrus Academy Bursary Fund beneficiaries**



Above: Sabelo Khumalo and Sifiso Mthabela at Crookes Brothers Limited River Bend Estate, Nkwalini

Their Citrus Academy Bursary Fund commitments require them to do vacation work and Sabelo and Sifiso have both done 8 weeks of picking, first at Carisbrooke Citrus at Ixopo and then at Crookes Brothers Limited at Nkwalini.

Sabelo Khumalo

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Sabelo is from Inkwavuma in Northern KZN and attended Namaneni High School, matriculating in 2005. His parents have a small farm where they farm with maize for home consumption. "I enjoyed helping them with this process so it is what got me interested in agriculture. After I matriculated this led me to the University of Zululand and I am currently in my fourth year of studies. I have received a Citrus Academy bursary since 2007."

continued on page 70

He explained that vacation work has given him exposure to the production side of citrus farming and that this had made him realise how important it is to understand the entire production and marketing process. He added that he would like to become involved in the marketing side of the chain. "If I need to move to a rural environment to start my career this will indeed be a big change from what I am currently used to but I am familiar with the rural lifestyle from my childhood and I will simply have to adapt.

"When we were coming to Nkwadini this morning to interview growers I was hesitant as I did not know how well I would be received by growers. My fears have been dispelled as the growers have been very helpful and accommodating, and have even helped us with our transport.

"Agriculture is truly the foundation of life and in our busy modern lifestyles people often overlook this fundamental principle. Agriculture is also vastly underexposed at schools and there is a strong need for this to be communicated to school children more successfully. My parents are proud of my choice to go into agriculture and they are hoping that I will return and help them and the other farmers in the area with their farming practises someday."

"Agriculture is truly the foundation of life."



Sifiso Mthabela

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Sifiso is from near Newcastle and was raised in an urban township setting attending Thembalentsha High School. His family has a small plot of land with a vegetable garden where they produce vegetables for their own family consumption.

"As kids we helped our parents with this and it is what encouraged me to further my studies in the direction of agriculture. When I told my parents of my chosen field of tertiary education, my mom was surprised at my decision but my father was proud and has encouraged me."

Sifiso is also currently busy with the fourth year of his studies and has received a Citrus Academy bursary since 2007.

"Agriculture in South Africa has some political problems at the moment which are affecting production. In the land transformation process the government needs to transfer land to people who are both educated and skilled at agricultural production and who know how to produce and market their produce successfully."

Sifiso added that in the course of the research they were busy with in the valley, growers had been very helpful and that they had been well received. "Despite their current busy schedules the growers have taken the time to assist us and that has been very heartening.

"The practical part of our training has given us some experience and I really enjoyed working in the production environment. Working in the outdoors and in touch with nature was particularly enjoyable for me and I would like to become involved in production in the future. Moving to a rural environment will be a change but I am prepared to do this and see how things progress from there."

These young men both show a clear enthusiasm and sense of motivation and both volunteered a huge sense of gratitude to the Citrus Academy for their assistance. For the citrus industry to be receiving young entrants of this calibre certainly bodes well for the future.

"I would like to become involved in production."





Lauren Richardson

Sustainability administrator for Agri-IQ, Durban

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“For my tertiary education I went to the University of KZN at Pietermaritzburg and did a B.A. degree, majoring in English and Psychology. My Psychology studies led to my involvement with Agri-IQ. I have known Bronwyn Palmer (the CEO of Agri-IQ) for many years and last year she asked me to assist Agri-IQ with training at Neos Estate in Mpumalanga. I really enjoyed this practical involvement which combined the theoretical side of my psychology studies with the understanding of farm workers’ circumstances. The successes of the training, particularly the ABET (Adult Basic Education Training) were very inspiring and I realised that this was a field that I would like to follow.

“I had planned to continue with my studies full-time as I am doing my honours in Psychology but Bronwyn persuaded me to join Agri-IQ and continue with my studies part-time. This way I am doing both practical work and theory at the same time – it provides a good balance and certainly it keeps me busy!”

Agri-IQ is a transformation and management company which addresses the human development, training and management needs of agricultural organisations in Southern Africa. Agri-IQ is based in Durban in KwaZulu-Natal and has satellite bases in Mpumalanga, Free State, Western Cape and Mozambique. Lauren Richardson joined Agri-IQ last year and I spoke to her at their Durban offices.

Lauren is from a rural background and grew up on a farm at Amatikulu near Zinkwazi in KwaZulu-Natal. She attended Felixton College and matriculated in 2005.

“My father is a sugar cane farmer so growing up on a farm has given me a good understanding of farming and farm workers which has been a great help to me in this position.”

Agri-IQ is designing a sustainability model which incorporates economic, social and environmental sustainability as a general guideline which can be applied specifically to each individual farm. This would allow each production unit to assess their situation, formulate a plan for implementation which includes necessary education required to achieve this goal. “This is very relevant to the future success of our industry and involvement at this level is truly fascinating.”

After each training session, Agri-IQ has a feedback report from students regarding the presentation and content of the course and as it is part of Lauren’s job to capture this information, she gets a first hand perspective on how Agri-IQ training is received and how relevant and successful it is. This direct feedback allows Agri-IQ to monitor its successes and respond immediately with the relevant changes where necessary.

“Agriculture was never presented to me as a career option at school and in general, career guidance seldom includes agriculture. Secondary and tertiary institutions, industry and government need to facilitate highlighting the opportunities and importance of agriculture. I have come to realise that the answer lies in both education and training, because without this, there will be no success in this sector. There is a great deal of work to be done on the education and training side of agriculture I would like to be part of this process. I have seen how training impacts directly on productivity. People who are classed as unskilled labour are usually highly skilled at the specific job that they do but they are not educated. As a country we need to stop being so focussed on race and rather look at skills and ability first.

“Although I grew up on a farm and enjoy the rural lifestyle, I never envisioned a situation where I would be working in the agricultural or environmental sectors! I became involved in the sector by chance and my parents are pleased with this turn of events and are very supportive.”

“The answer lies in education and training as, without this, there will be no success in this sector.”



Lahen Ramoutar

Network administrator at Fresh Produce Terminals, Port of Durban

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FPT is a huge facility and to be the network administrator for such a large concern is a huge responsibility, so it came as no surprise that the young man who shoulders this responsibility is serious and has a no-nonsense approach to his job.

Lahen is from the North Coast and after matriculating from high school in 1999, he did a comprehensive IT course in Durban. "Once I completed my course I started my first job with a programming and outsourcing company. This was simultaneously my worst and my best job. It was my first venture into the working world and I was dropped in the deep end, but at the same time that level of pressure made me grow up quickly and learn a great many lessons in a short time," says Lahen.

"One of the life lessons that I have learned here is how important teamwork is."

He moved on and worked for another IT company for a year before joining Dimension Data from 2005 to 2007. "This was based at a multinational client in Umhlanga. The position was in a corporate environment which adheres strictly to established business processes. It certainly was interesting to work for a large company with those kinds of resources and budget.

"I had placed my CV with a recruiting company and they approached me with an offer from FPT. So my route to involvement with the agricultural sector was unexpected. A visit to our terminal rapidly dispels the myth that the agricultural sector is slow paced as our business moves at a fast and furious pace and in the peak season our terminal operates 24 hours. This is a time sensitive sector of the industry, due to the hourly costs of vessels and the perishable nature of our products which have to be cooled within strict international protocols. We provide a service to the industry and if it doesn't work efficiently, this has huge implications.

"IT systems are infrastructure, comparable to electricity and water – you expect them to be available and operate optimally, and when it doesn't, it puts the entire business at risk. This position has been interesting as I have stepped into an entirely new sector and exposure to the operational and logistics side of the fresh produce sector has given me a new perspective on this. Consumers generally don't realise how complex the process is to get fruit to the market and the amount of effort and resources that go into the continuous maintenance of the supply chain.

"In the IT function of a business it is vital to take a proactive approach to maintaining the system as a reactive approach is very costly and impacts heavily on productivity. To respond immediately to any problems I am on call 24/7. We have a great team who assist with maintaining the system and if there is a crisis when I am not on site, they are able to start first line troubleshooting before I arrive.

"At FPT our stock control system runs on a customised hardware and software solution. FPT is also quite unique as our barcode scanners work on a wireless network. The amount of time needed to process the stock is reduced, as the data only has to be captured and shared once, and can be checked for errors extremely quickly. Repetitive tasks are handled by the system, reducing the amount of human labour needed. Our systems work exceptionally well at FPT and we are able to provide complete management for every pallet processed. Our IT systems benefit the business by reducing our overheads, creating savings which we can pass on to our partners and customers.

"When I was at school companies visited our school to talk about opportunities in the IT industry. There was not much focus on the agricultural sector as a career opportunity, yet we did learn about the value of exports to our economy.

"I enjoy the working environment at FPT and would like to continue working here, proceeding up through the ranks. I arrived here from a corporate environment, which is very different to the hands-on approach that our business thrives under. My team at FPT have shown me the ropes very thoroughly. One of the life lessons that I have learned here is how important teamwork is and I have seen how all our departmental functions are integrated into a cohesive business unit. My parents are proud of my achievements and appreciate the fact that I have a stable job with a strong company where I have room for growth."



Mohamed Tahir Ebrahim

Ambient store controller at Fresh Produce Terminals, Port of Durban

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Mohamed is friendly and speaks with such warmth and conviction about his job that one can envisage his successes as supervisor, communicator and delegator. It was also clear that he enjoyed chatting about the interesting aspects of a job he clearly loves.

He controls the outside stores for FPT which includes Triple Tree and Durban South Cold Store, which are not in the port, as well as the shed that adjoins the FPT terminal building. "I am from Phoenix in Durban and attended Lanarea Secondary School. I have been working at FPT on a contract basis since 1997 when a friend of mine who worked here as a security guard told me that FPT was recruiting people.

"I was appointed to a seasonal position and started here as a tally clerk for the first two seasons. Back then the computer systems that we now have did not exist and all documentation was written manually and there were hand written labels for everything. We had to ensure that arrivals were processed correctly as everything relied on the details on the intake document. It was a steep learning curve when the computerised systems were introduced and new departments were set up to administer the IT functions."

During the 1999 season Mohamed was moved to FPT's Japanese office, the administrative side of the cold sterilisation process that FPT does for fruit for export to Japan. "This is specialised cargo and one of my jobs was to prepare the fruit for inspection by the Japanese inspectors. Once the fruit had been inspected I also processed the documents required for their export to Japan. This was a completely new position and here I learned a great deal about the protocols and special requirements for the Japanese market. We also worked in the same office as the Japanese inspectors, most of whom spoke no English and this was quite interesting at times!"

Two seasons later in 2001 he was appointed as a permanent employee. "This was very good progress for me and during the off season I was involved in the loading of other types of cargo. At this time I was moved to the stowing division distributing fruit that had been received from the floor to the various cold rooms in the terminal as well as preparing cargo for shipment. The introduction of the IT systems to this area of operations had a major positive impact on efficiency."

Mohamed applied for the job as a team leader and was this was successful. "At that time the company created a new direct shipping department. This deals with fruit cargo ready for loading which comes directly to the quayside from FPT's remote stores and I was involved in that from 2002 to 2005. This made another interesting change and this space had a completely different atmosphere, directly at the water's edge. Working outside I was close to nature and I enjoyed working next to the sea as it is different each day. Direct contact with the vessels was also a pleasure as each vessel has its own specifications and set of requirements. At the time I was quite young and as most of the people working on the quay were older and more experienced, I had to work hard to earn their respect. This position also placed people below me and I had to supervise and motivate my team as this was a new department and we were all new to the job. On the quay all communication is by 2-way radio. This also takes some getting used to and is also how we communicated with the supervisor who was on the ship at all times during loading.

"In 2006 I moved to my current position as ambient store controller and I now supervise the day-to-day activities of these remote stores where fruit is stored for later dispatch to this terminal for inspection, cold storage and shipment. The years of learning the various steps from the ground up have been a great help in this management position as knowing the job certainly helps with the instruction and delegation of people who are doing the jobs.

"Fresh Produce Terminals is a great company to work for and in the 12 years I have worked here I have moved up in the ranks. I am very grateful to FPT management for the opportunities I have had while working here as although I have no tertiary education, my hard work and loyalty have been rewarded and I believe that what you give is what you get. I am also very grateful to my co-workers who showed me the ropes through my early years with FPT. This is a great company to work for and I would like to move on in my career in gradual steps and will most likely stay with this company."

"I am very grateful to FPT management for the opportunities I have had."





Taahir Tayob

Temperature controller at Fresh Produce Terminals, Port of Durban

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It was certainly not cold on the day I met Taahir Tayob at the FPT terminal, yet he arrived wearing a very thick jacket which was a clear indication of where he works. He was also wearing a broad smile and from what he said, obviously loves his job.

Taahir grew up in Durban and attended Overport Secondary. After matriculating in 2000, he studied mechanical engineering and motor electrical at Cato Manor Technical College. "After my studies I found it difficult to find a job. I was told that I was overqualified and under-experienced. During this period I had some part-time jobs and did some mechanical work on cars. I was referred to Fresh Produce Terminals in 2002 by a friend who was an employee there. He saw that I was keen and had some experience and suggested that I apply for a job here. I was employed as a temperature monitor in a seasonal position by Sisonke Logistics, a service provider to Fresh Produce Terminals and after two seasons I was appointed as a permanent employee."

The FPT plant has three control rooms and there are nine temperature monitors responsible for controlling the fruit temp throughout the plant. "When the fruit is received by FPT, we liaise with the planners regarding the destination of the fruit and cool the fruit accordingly. Our terminal handles approximately 80% of South African citrus that undergoes the cold sterilisation process required for import into Japan and I work in one of these control rooms that handles these shipments. In order to ensure that the fruit is cooled strictly according to the protocols, we have to follow complex routines meticulously. At the outset it is important to make sure that the pallets of fruit are stacked absolutely straight so that skew pallets do not disrupt the airflow and create uneven cooling. This characterises the kind of strict adherence to detail throughout the whole cold-steri process. We have to remain ever vigilant as even a temperature variation of 0.1 degrees Celsius requires a response so we are continuously monitoring temperatures all day." The purpose of the thick coat becomes abundantly clear!

"We use about 6 chambers and 60 tunnels for this process moving large volumes of fruit during the season. To give you an idea, last week we loaded a vessel with 5,000 pallets

Below: Interior of Fresh Produce Terminals, Port of Durban



for Japan. I have been involved in the cold-steri process at FTP for seven years and we are continuously refining our application of this protocol. We work in different shifts during the week but when the cold-steri vessels are being loaded, we work a 12-hour shift to ensure that the fruit is shipped within temperature protocol and everything goes smoothly.

"We work with citrus all day and I would enjoy the opportunity to visit the farms where the citrus is produced as it would give me a better perspective on the product. I really enjoy my job because the challenges of temperature control during the season are exciting. During the off season I am able to use my engineering skills when we do maintenance of the cooling plant and other machinery. I am fortunate to be part of a great team at work. We work very well together and there is a true sense of loyalty to each other.

I am grateful to my department head and for the supportive people I work with at FPT. I would like to grow within the company and if an opportunity arises would like to become a vessel project manager. As for me, it is quite simple - I love my job and don't ever wake up regretting that I have to go to work."

"I am fortunate to be part of a great team at work."



Above: Loading fruit, Fresh Produce Terminals, Port of Durban



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When I met Nhlanhla Mathaba, the empty car park at the University of KwaZulu-Natal campus in Pietermaritzburg, was a reminder that it was during university holidays. “Not for us postgraduate students,” says Nhlanhla, smiling broadly. “We don’t take much notice of the holidays and just carry on with our work regardless.”

Nhlanhla is articulate and passionate about agriculture. He is from Kwambonambi near Empangeni and matriculated from Uyengo High School. “My father was a manager of a Eucalyptus forest and at home we had our own vegetable garden where we produced vegetables for home consumption as well as some to sell. I come from a big family and my dad used to tell us: ‘If you want me to buy meat for the family, sell some of the vegetables and then we can do that!’

“When I finished school I really did not know what I wanted to do. As I was from a rural area there was not really much in the line of career guidance available. A friend told me about the Science Foundation Programme offered at UKZN which is a one year pre-university course that bridges the gap between secondary and tertiary education for youngsters in similar positions to myself. The programme was great because the subjects it offered were Maths, Science, Biology, Physics, Chemistry and Commerce. During the course we could see which direction were most suitable for us and apply for our first year studies in the field of our choice. This project is subsidised by the university as a student loan and, although this academic support and stimulation were great, I was on a tight budget and times were tough.

“During the course I decided on horticulture. I have stuck to this and am currently busy with my Masters degree. It has been difficult at times but the support I receive from the Citrus Academy has been a great help to me.



Above: Nhlanhla Mathaba and Xolani Siboza

Nhlanhla Mathaba

**MSc Horticulture at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg
Citrus Academy Bursary Fund beneficiary**

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There is a stigma attached to agriculture and fellow students are often surprised by my choice. At my graduation ceremony one of my female relatives was completely astounded by the direction of my qualification! My brother is an engineer and is somewhat non-plussed about my passion for agriculture, but my mother is thrilled that I am persevering with my education. My father has passed away, but I sometimes think that his spirit is guiding me to succeed.

“The only people who will be successful in agriculture are those who see a crop in terms of a business that can yield tangible economic returns. This requires specific management and marketing skills for success. In future I would like to be involved in encouraging new entrants into the agricultural sector and also continue in research.

“When farms are handed over to claimants who are unable or unwilling to continue with production and the farm fails, this affects not only the owner, the workers and the consumer but the entire supporting network of stakeholders, service providers and financial institutions. This ripple effect has a far bigger economic impact than simply the loss of the actual product and the government needs to take cognisance of this. The skills shortage in agriculture is a big problem partly due to the uncertainty of land ownership. South Africa also experienced a big brain drain during the late 1990s. In order to achieve a greater degree of success, the government needs to revise their approach to land reform. They need to slow the process a bit and first train people and build up their skills before transferring the land to them. The bottom line is that people still need to eat and farmers cannot produce unless they have the necessary skills and are assured of their financial situation.

“Our government also needs to monitor the new capacity entering agriculture to meet the future needs of the country’s agricultural sector. The number and diversity of people and skills currently entering this sector is clearly too low to provide the capacity of skills that this sector will require and therefore the government clearly need to make a major move to increase these numbers. The Citrus Academy’s model of providing bursaries to

young students with potential and also assisting them with placements where possible once their studies have been completed, provides a good example for other parts of the agricultural sector."

"The only people who will be successful in agriculture are those who see a crop in terms of tangible economic returns."

Xolani was initially reserved but his passion for agriculture and huge gratitude to those that have helped him along the way soon had him chatting and beaming.

Xolani Sibozza

**MSc Horticulture at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg
Citrus Academy Bursary Fund beneficiary**

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"I am from Mangweni, near Komatipoort in Mpumalanga and grew up with my grandparents. They were pensioners and grew vegetables and kept cattle to supplement our diet. In the afternoons after school I took care of my grandfather's Nguni cattle. My grandmother grew pumpkins and indigenous leafy green vegetables such as cocorus and gleome gynandra. They were humble and lived close to the earth, and encouraged me to go into agriculture as I have always wanted to be a farmer. My grandfather stressed that although the cattle only needed grass to sustain them, they provided us with milk daily and with meat occasionally. My grandmother impressed on me that if one takes care of the soil responsibly, it will always provide for you.

"After I matriculated from Nkomazi High School in 2001 I wanted to continue my studies but this was a tough time. My grandfather had passed away which was very traumatic and this also halved our income. I could not get into university in 2002 and so I did security training and worked at our local hospital for a while but still dreamt of tertiary education. I applied to the University of Zululand but did not even have enough to pay for registration.

"By a stroke of luck a family member agreed to pay my registration fee of R3,500 and so I travelled long distance from home to northern Zululand in the hope that I could register and perhaps study. My family and community did not have much hope that I would be

enrolled and some of them even encouraged me to come home. Again I was lucky as in an interview with the university's admissions department I was told that if I was prepared to work hard and get good grades, I would be assured of a bursary from the Rector's Fund. I was very happy and enrolled in a BSc Agriculture (Agronomy) degree. I lived on campus, working hard for the four years of the course and graduated at the end of 2006. Graduating really felt like a dream come true as it was by chance that I had been accepted and at times it had been such tough going that I did not think I would make it.

"When I was in my fourth year of studies a fellow student told me about the Citrus Academy bursary programme. I went onto the internet and found out more about this and applied for a bursary. I was approved in November 2006 for a bursary to do my honours and then enrolled at the University of KwaZulu-Natal here in Pietermaritzburg in 2007. I am currently doing my MSc in Horticulture. At times I cannot believe I have made it this far but believe it has been because I have received a great deal of social support. My grandmother has been truly amazing and the other people in my community have also been very encouraging and I owe them a great debt of gratitude.

"The Citrus Academy has been incredibly supportive. Desiree has really looked after me and supported me beyond anything I ever expected. She really has taken care of me and is like a mother to me as I can always share my problems with her. In the future I would like to become involved in sharing the knowledge that I have acquired with other producers to help them apply this to their farming operations. As I am from the Malelane area I have seen a good example of this at the CRI at Nelspruit. Farmers need practical support from skilled extension officers and I would also be open to learn the tried and tested practical skills from farmers.

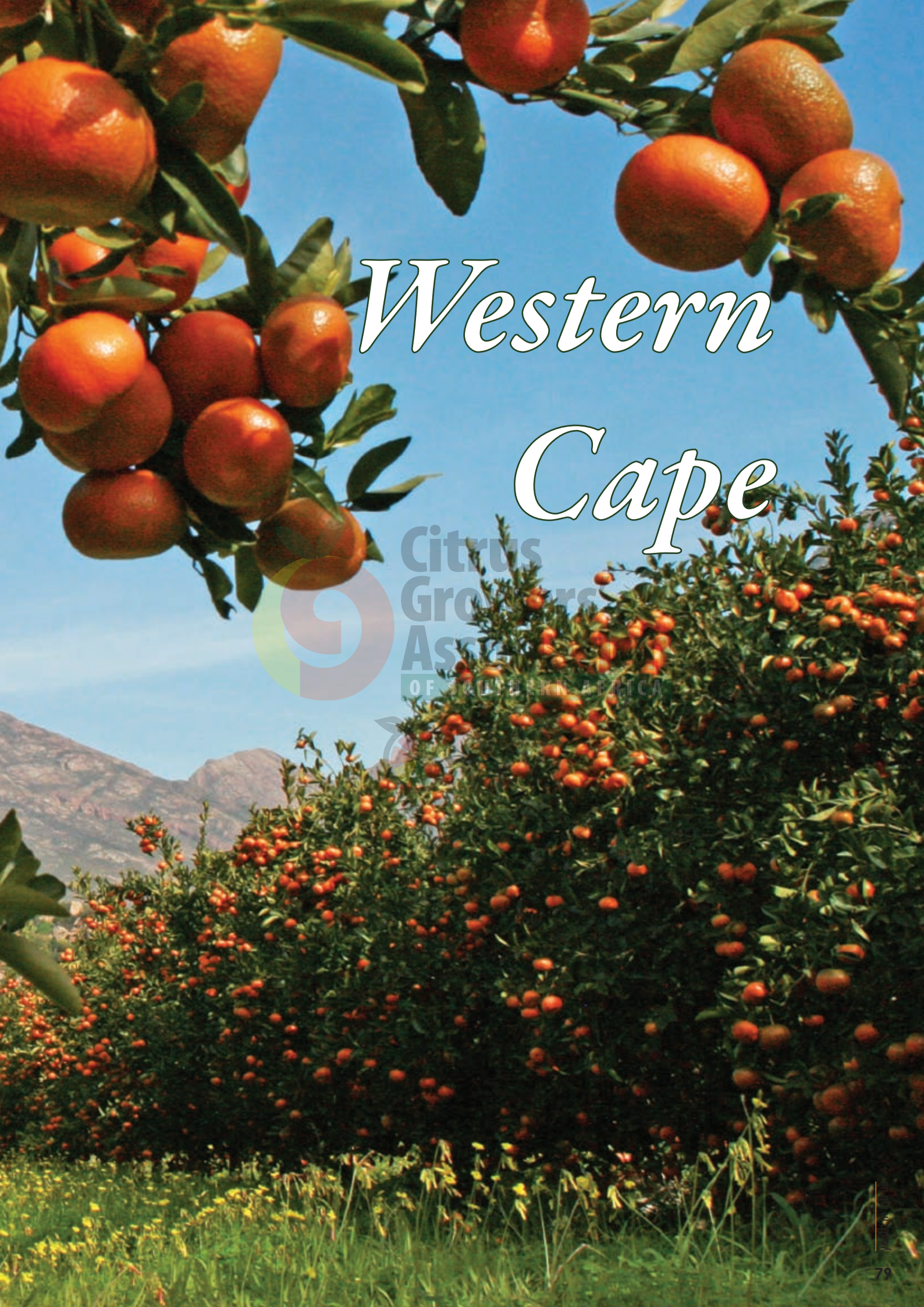
"Agriculture has a very negative image and this is not appealing for young black people due to traditional perceptions of a farmer, but in my contact with the farming community I have learned a lot about farming and farm life. This has made me realise that the traditional racial prejudices are being broken down as we are all the same and have the same needs. In closing I really have to thank God for his providence."

"I really have to thank God for his providence."





AFRICAN
ORCHARD
OF SOUTHERN AFRICA



Western Cape

Citrus
Growers
Assoc
OF SOUTHERN AFRICA



Gerrit van der Merwe

Domestic marketing manager at ALG Citrus, Citrusdal

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It was a cool, still day in Citrusdal after rain. The trees in the valley were in blossom and the heady scent of orange blossom hung in the air at the ALG packhouse. The Van der Merwe family were one of the first families to farm in the Citrusdal area and have been producing citrus for over a century. The ALG farming operation has 400ha of their own citrus orchards and also manages a further 100ha. "The name ALG was derived from the initials of the three Van der Merwe brothers who started ALG, Alwyn, Lieben and Gerrit, my father," explains Gerrit.

Gerrit grew up in Citrusdal and attended Rondebosch Boys High School in Cape Town. After matric he completed a degree in Management Accounting as well as an Honours degree in the subject at the University of Stellenbosch.

to spend some time working abroad and thought the most meaningful way to do this would be to work in the fruit industry. As Fisher Capespan is our receiver in the USA, the company was happy to arrange this for me. In 2007 and 2008 I spent 18 months working in Fisher Capespan's operations office in Philadelphia and was involved in the offloading of ships as well as shipping products to customers. This was a very meaningful experience for me because it gave me a clear understanding of the integration of the supply chain.

"ALG is a family business so, although I could choose any career, it was while I was working in the USA that I finally decided to join ALG. My friends have mostly entered the corporate world and, before I went to Philadelphia, I was not sure if the family business would be stimulating and challenging enough for me. The time spent there convinced me that the dynamic nature of our industry would certainly be engaging as today we are not farming by the old definition of the word, we all need to be proactive and constantly on the ball. I returned in 2008 and have been at ALG since then. It certainly is a stimulating 21st century business operation and no two days are the same.

"An interesting facet of industry involvement is dealing with clients and business partners that are older and at times from a different culture. This requires one to treat people as business associates while respecting their various values in the process of the social and business interaction. One of the other challenges in the business is successful labour relations and union negotiations. We are fortunate that ALG has established a good relationship with our workforce and we work proactively at making this successful.

"I would encourage young people to become involved in agriculture as this is generally a people friendly and casual environment to work in and the varied nature of the sector provides opportunities in a wide range of functions. Despite the informality of the sector, the seasonal nature of the production means that at times the work often extends beyond traditional office hours and there are periods of huge pressure that any new entrant into the sector needs to be aware of.

"Citrus is a vibrant leader in the South African fresh produce sector, as the industry is both dynamic and innovative, and is earning better profits than other agricultural industries. Producers have become a lot more discerning in their marketing strategies and involve themselves directly in securing good markets for their products. In our case the USA market is very important for our fruit and through personal market research and establishing strategic business relationships, we have established good markets in the region.

"Fisher Capespan is our importer in the USA and our relationship with them has moved from that of agent to partner. The people I worked with in Philadelphia were open and honest and I truly appreciated the opportunity to work there and develop an understanding of the supply system. In the long term I see myself with ALG indefinitely. This is our family's business and it is big, complex and stimulating, giving enough scope for future development to challenge me. My father has been very supportive and shown faith in me, encouraging me to become truly involved in the business. Thanks also to my uncles for their support and help in the business."

"This is generally a people friendly and casual environment to work in."

"After I had finished my studies I wanted

When I called Rob to set up a meeting his voice message said “Sorry I can’t take your call because I am probably in an orchard, up a mountain or fishing so please leave a message.” - all pretty strong clues that I was not likely to catch him behind a desk. Rob works for XSIT, the SIT (Sterile Insect Technique) company that has been established in Citrusdal by the citrus industry in order to suppress false codling moth in the area. He is also a CRI bursary student and is currently studying for his Doctorate in Entomology at the University of Stellenbosch.

Rob Stotter

**Entomologist with XSIT (Sterile Insect Technique) in Citrusdal
CRI Bursary Fund recipient
27**

“I was thrilled to finally receive my ID book last month,” said Rob when I tracked him down in Citrusdal. Rob explained that he was born and raised in Zimbabwe and after matriculating (A levels) from Falcon College near Bulawayo, he went on to study entomology and plant pathology at the University of Stellenbosch in 2001. His intention was to return and take over his family’s tobacco and coffee farms, but in the interim the family’s two farms were taken as part of the Zimbabwean land claims initiative. Besides the uprooting of his family, their loss of income and way of life, it left Rob in a serious quandary about his future.

“During my studies I worked part-time, studying vine mealybug and olive fruit fly in vineyards and olive groves respectively. I realised that I enjoyed entomology and the outdoor working environment, so I pursued this avenue. The past two years have been tough as the difficulties in getting South African citizenship and study permits forced me to interrupt my studies for almost a year as I was threatened with deportation. CRI and XSIT have both been incredibly understanding in the face of these uncertainties and I am very grateful to them.”

XSIT is currently suppressing the FCM populations on 3500ha between Citrusdal and Clanwilliam and is now starting its third season of operations. The second season produced excellent results after the slightly wobbly start in the first season. The SIT control technique is competitive with other FCM controls and although it is slightly more expensive, it is a holistic, long term control technique. “We release the irradiated moths by gyrocopter as well as by quadbike. My job is stimulating and I enjoy the challenge of FCM control as well as interacting with farmers and working in the outdoors,” explains Rob.

“I would advise people in my position to consider using their skills overseas because in general our industry is not able to pay people in my field an income that is competitive with overseas levels. However, I love living in Africa and so the salary shortfall is probably a side effect that I will need to live with. At some point I would like to spend a short period working abroad, perhaps in the USA, to experience something different. I have found chatting to visiting USDA officials very stimulating. Although I would enjoy the opportunity to work in agriculture abroad for a while, my heart is in Africa. Agriculture provides a great working environment and although I enjoy the production side of agriculture, my personal experiences have made me very realistic about how tenuous this can be in the African context.

“For the first 18 months I was in Citrusdal, I lived in a tent in the campsite every second week and it sure was cold in winter! Since then I have found more comfortable accommodation, made some friends and my Afrikaans is improving by the day. I enjoy living in Citrusdal because I enjoy exploring the mountains and the fishing is great!”



“My job is stimulating and I enjoy the challenge of FCM control.”





Boet Mouton

Business development manager at Mouton Citrus, Citrusdal

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From Citrusdal a gravel road leads north to Algeria in the Cedarberg Mountains and along this remote route is the Brakfontein citrus estate with its lush citrus orchards and beautiful established gardens. This is the headquarters of both Mouton Citrus and Carmien Tea (organic Rooibos) operations. This is also home to the Mouton family including brothers Boet and CP Mouton, respectively business development manager and production development manager for Mouton Citrus. The brothers grew up here and attended Paarl Gymnasium, followed by tertiary studies at Stellenbosch University. Boet did a BComm Law degree followed by Honours in Economics, and CP completed a BSc Agriculture degree majoring in Agricultural Economics and followed this with an Honours in Economics.

Boet explained that his father, Johan, established Mouton Citrus in 1982 and had been involved in organized agriculture. When the fruit industry went through the process of deregulation,

things changed rapidly as farmers could establish themselves closer to the final customer. "If our industry was still operating under the old single channel marketing system, I don't think that I would have become involved in the family business. My brother CP was always more likely to be involved on the production side of the operation but I would probably have gone into the financial sector," he added.

"In 2001 Seald Sweet International in the USA invested in Mouton Citrus enabling the business to grow at a higher rate and we started exporting our own fruit. At around the same time Mouton Citrus initiated a black economic empowerment project. This was a natural process built on empowerment of our people since 1985 and made tangible the culture of accepting ownership at every level of the organisation. Development of leadership is a strong focus and people empower themselves if they have the appropriate environment and opportunities. Social development is an important part of our business ethic and we hope to build on the foundation already laid. The nature of South African agriculture with small communities on farms makes the supply of the necessary amenities and community services a challenge.

"After I finished studying I was not sure if I wanted to join the family business. As a result of our business partnership with Seald Sweet I was able to work at Seald Sweet's operational offices in Philadelphia and Florida during 2005 and this was really my entry into the fresh produce sector. I worked as an operations manager and saw fruit arriving from many foreign destinations, including our own fruit. This hands-on practical experience was a remarkable learning opportunity and inspired me to join the family business. In 2006 I also spent 3 months in Holland working for Bakker Barendrecht, the category manager for the Dutch supermarket Albert Heijn, and this taught me a great deal about the retail sector.

"We are fortunate to have a great team of dynamic young men whose commitment and enthusiasm make them vital assets to our company. Dirk Mouton and Liaan Janse van Vuuren as production managers while Jakobus Burger is our financial officer and John Ferreira is in responsible for logistics. Mouton Citrus fruit is packed under contract by Goede Hoop in Citrusdal and the successful and profitable marketing of this fruit is a hugely responsible and challenging job. The days of thinking that one could sit back and continue in the same fashion as the previous generation have long gone. Our industry is truly dynamic and has become increasingly sophisticated, both in the production, packing and the marketing of the product. We take our product as close to the consumer as possible.

"South African citrus is the origin of choice for citrus in Europe and CGA does a good job in representing us at an industry level. Citrus represents the largest sector of fruit exports from South Africa and the onus is on us as an industry to take the initiative in maintaining and expanding our image and market access. Government support is still lacking somewhat and, although government has good intentions and seems committed to agriculture, the commercial implementation of policies is not always successful and the supply of an efficient infrastructure and regulatory environment to enable us to compete worldwide is not always successful.

"Lifestyle is a huge benefit to living and working in a rural area. We are only two hours from Cape Town and, even though we are based in this rural landscape, we work continuously with state-of-the-art technology both in the production and marketing spheres of our business. There are many opportunities in the supply chain for prospective entrants into the fresh produce sector. The shortage of qualified people in certain fields in agriculture is such that these are recognised as scarce and critical skills and we need highly trained people to provide the necessary support to the sector.

“My future lies with Mouton Citrus as this is a long-term business with many challenges and opportunities ahead for us. I also hope to do an MBA degree through the University of Stellenbosch's Graduate School of Business. I realise that I have been privileged and would

not be where I am today without the opportunities that have come my way and it would be good to continue developing the human potential of the people in our business.”

“Social development is an important part of our business ethic.”



CP Mouton

Production development manager at Mouton Citrus, Citrusdal

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“Growing up on the farm I was continuously exposed to the farming operation,” explains CP. “The variety of different sciences involved in agricultural production is stimulating and developed my interest in production. I have thus always found agriculture exciting and although at one point I did consider pursuing the corporate financial direction, I am pleased I have stuck with what I know and love. I was at university between 2004 and 2008 and directly after graduation I started working for Mouton Citrus, so I am still on quite a steep learning curve.”

“My job involves many aspects of the operation. One of the most crucial areas of focus is to ensure that Mouton Citrus keeps up to date with international best practices, technology innovation as well as product and cultivar development. We proactively keep up with issues associated with production such as Good Agricultural Practices, ethical trading practices, maximum residue level legislation, environmental and social responsibility.

“The development of new capital projects as well as the sustainable growth of production operations form a large part of my responsibilities. In the process I work with our Mouton Citrus staff, consultants and service providers and interfacing with such a wide range of people on various levels, is both stimulating and rewarding. In general the atmosphere is quite relaxed and across the board people are friendly and enthusiastic about the job at hand. My previous exposure to the business meant that there were not many surprises when I started here but it is truly a pleasure to work for a successful company with motivated people.

“I was never forced to join the family business. This was optional and the knowledge that there was enough space for me in the company and the amount of exposure and opportunity for growth I would get made it an easy decision for me. My father Johan is the MD of Mouton Citrus and my mother Mientjie is the MD of Carmien Tea, so our family is fully involved in the production and marketing of our produce.

“Although there are countries that have better natural resources suited to agricultural production than South Africa, I believe that our good scientific background, professional approach and committed workforce make us one of the leading countries in the agricultural industry. I believe that these advantages will ensure that South Africa will remain a leading country for certain agricultural products. I would most certainly encourage other young people to consider a career in agriculture, and specifically the citrus industry as it is exciting, dynamic and interfaces with a very wide range of sciences.

“I thank my parents for their ongoing support and would like to make special mention of Prof Mohammed Karaan, Dean of the University of Stellenbosch's AgriSciences Faculty, whose enthusiasm for agriculture and encouragement helped me face challenges and push the limits. One can never be sure what the future holds but it is likely that my future lies with Mouton Citrus. Developing good working relationships and striving for excellence will remain important goals for the future.”



“I have always found agriculture exciting.”



Above, from left to right: Gareth September, Pierre Hough, Jo-anne Breunissen, Gys Van Wyk, Kosie Smuts and Renaldo Beukes

Jo-Anne arrived for the interview looking a little apprehensive but it soon became clear that she is passionate about her job, stands by her principals and is well respected by the rest of her all-male operations team.

Jo-Anne Breunissen

Food Safety officer at Goede Hoop Citrus, Citrusdal
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"My family lives on a smallholding near Hopefield and I matriculated from Hopefield High School in 2000. After school I enrolled at the University of Stellenbosch and completed a four-year BSc degree in Food Science. After graduation I went to the UK and worked as a minder for elderly people for a year. I returned home in January 2006 and during February I saw an advertisement in the newspaper for the position of safety officer here at Goede Hoop Citrus.

"At the time I had a choice of two positions that I could choose from, and I chose to come to Citrusdal. I was excited about the rural setting aspect of the company and I was looking forward to working with citrus. With my limited knowledge at the time, I thought what could really go wrong with an orange? How little I knew back then, four seasons later I've learned a great deal about that! I was fortunate to land this position and I started here

in March 2006. Goede Hoop packs approximately 4.7 million cartons annually and has four packhouses, three in Citrusdal and one in Eendekuil, named Citrio. I had just started here when I had to prepare one of the packhouses for a BRC audit which was quite stressful. Subsequently this has been followed by a number of other HACCP and BRC audits and it has now become more routine for me to prepare for these.

"This is a great job as I do not sit in an office all day - I work with a wide range of people and have diverse functions. Our packing season runs from March to October and this is a very busy time when we are continuously working under pressure. Our rural situation means that we have a more personal and comfortable relationship with each other. During the season we work hard and the hours are often quite long.

"Agriculture is dynamic and offers diverse opportunities for potential entrants. Intrinsic in agriculture is the challenge of working with the changeable nature of the production and marketing environment and prevailing weather conditions. One needs to take this into account and have the temperament to cope with it.

"The operations side of Goede Hoop is a great place to work and we work well as a team. It is a pleasure to know that people appreciate your input and support you in your job. I really enjoy working here and at some time in the future I hope to further my studies. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the operations team at Goede Hoop for the wealth of information that they have taught me and the support they have given me since I started here. They are skilled in their fields and I learn from them every day."

"It is a pleasure to know that people appreciate your input."

Renaldo started at Goede Hoop Citrus as a general worker. As a result of his IT training background, good timing and hard work, today he is the company's logistics co-ordinator and takes handling the logistics of all Goede Hoop's fruit in his stride.

Ronaldo grew up in the small Namaqualand town of Loeriesfontein and matriculated from Schoonspruit High School in Malmesbury in 1996. After matric he did an IT training course at Dynamics Computer Training in Bellville.

“Our South African fruit has a good name in the markets that receive our products.”



Renaldo Beukes

Logistics co-ordinator at Goede Hoop Citrus, Citrusdal 31

“My mother is a teacher in Citrusdal and after I had finished my studies I came to live with her. I worked for Goede Hoop as a general worker for two seasons then left for 18 months later. I returned in 2001 and I have been with the company ever since. Between 2001 and 2003 I worked as a label operator, a tip operator and a switchboard operator for the packhouse. When Goede Hoop opened a new packhouse in 2003 they offered to train any volunteers from the workforce in Paltrack IT software. I volunteered and achieved good results in the course. I was then appointed in a permanent position as Paltrack administrator to perform this task. In 2005 the position of logistics co-ordinator became available I was appointed and still hold this position today.

“I am responsible for all the pallets of fruit despatched from Goede Hoop's packhouses as well as for fruit receiving. I enjoy my job because it is dynamic and there are always new systems and innovations to learn. I work closely with many people outside of Goede Hoop including the producers at the receiving end and the logistics and shipping agents on the dispatch side of the operation and in working closely with such diverse groups. I truly learn something new every day. For me the rural life is definitely preferable to the city lifestyle as I am part of our community and my parents live here. I am single and it is great to live here and be close to my parents.

“I truly never imagined I would end up working in the agricultural sector. It was certainly never encouraged at school and as a youngster I dreamt of becoming a civil engineer. Working in Citrusdal was not what I expected but when I did come and work at Goede Hoop, I decided to embrace the opportunities that the company offered me, preferring to apply myself and work my way up in the ranks instead of doing the same monotonous job for years.

“Agriculture is exciting, dynamic and challenging and I believe that there is a good future for the sector in our country. It would be great if youngsters who are raised on farms could be given the opportunity to study agriculture, returning to this sector for employment.

“I am the only one in my family involved in agriculture and my family think that it is great that I have a stable job. It seems that agriculture is going through a period of rejuvenation and that a large number of young people are entering the sector. With better support from government, agriculture is likely to grow from strength to strength. Government could be of more direct help to emerging farmers and assist in establishing them in a less risky situation than many of them find themselves.

“Our South African fruit has a good name in the markets that receive our products and it is part of the government's responsibility to help us protect and nurture this good reputation. The general workers at Goede Hoop are well informed about how competitive the fresh produce sector is and understand why we make the incredible commitment to the quality of our product, on which we pride ourselves.

“In the future I would like to stay at Goede Hoop and work my way upwards in the logistics division. This is a great company to work for and over the past few years a sense of openness to change has developed, giving people with potential the opportunity to develop themselves within the company. In general people are genuinely happy working here. I would like to thank management for seeing my potential and placing their faith in me.”

Pierre Hough

Product planning and co-ordinator at Goede Hoop Citrus, Citrusdal

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Planning and co-ordinating the delivery and packing of approximately 4.7 million cartons of citrus that Goede Hoop processes annually must take some doing and despite his unassuming nature, Pierre seems to have this huge responsibility well in hand.

Pierre grew up in Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape and matriculated from Muir College in 1999. After school he completed a BComm degree, specialising in accounting and logistics at the University of Stellenbosch.

"During the time I was at university my parents moved to Citrusdal. My father was in the property business and during one of my holidays a friend of my father's asked me to help him at a citrus packhouse at Eendekuil near Citrusdal," explains Pierre. "When I had finished my studies I sent my CV to a number of companies and the first response that I received was from the Eendekuil packhouse. After some time there, I worked for a rye milling operation but as this was a family business without much scope for me, I was looking around for something else. When a

job became available at Goede Hoop I applied for this post and was appointed in 2006.

"This is an enjoyable working environment as for eight months of the year we work flat out and then during the off season we have a quieter time which allows for some breathing space and catching up. I am a practical person and this line of work suits me well. I love the rural lifestyle that we have here as it is more relaxed, safer and cheaper than living in the city. I went to Cape Town yesterday and could not wait to get back home! The way we do business is also much more relaxed than in the corporate world and I certainly find this to be preferable. My wife and I have a good social life and really enjoy living in the country.

"Agriculture is very important both from an economic and food security point of view. There are many fields serving agriculture and as a result of world food safety issues, agriculture will become increasingly important. One of the biggest challenges is communicating with people – communicating the message successfully about what has to be done and getting them to carry out the instructions correctly in order to get the job done. When this is successful the positive results are hugely rewarding. It is also great to work with something natural and tangible like citrus.

"People outside the agricultural sector may think that agriculture is relatively stress-free. It can however be highly stressful and demands long hours at times. The unpredictability of nature, the exchange rate and market conditions also mean that the profitability of the fresh produce export industry experiences considerable annual fluctuations.

"I enjoy working at Goede Hoop and in time I would like to work my way up through the ranks of the company as I enjoy the marketing side of the industry and would like to extend my involvement in that field. Working at Goede Hoop has also allowed me to remain near my family and my parents are grateful that I have a good position so close to them."

"Effective communication is vital for success."

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On the morning I spoke to Kosie he and his wife had just spent the first night at home with their newborn son and first child, so Kosie was smiling broadly and receiving well wishes from all his colleagues.

Kosie grew up on a farm near Malmesbury, matriculated from Hoërskool Swartland in 1996 and then went on to attend the Cape Technicon where he studied mechanical engineering. After completing two years of theory, he changed direction to industrial engineering. For the practical part of his training Kosie worked at Tiger Brands in Paarl from 2000 gaining experience in both industrial and mechanical engineering.



“We urgently need new blood and innovation in the interface between government and agriculture.”

Kosie Smuts

Logistics manager at Goede Hoop Citrus, Citrusdal

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“After I graduated I landed a job with Tiger Brands and continued to work for them until 2004. While I was with them, I worked in production management and this was a good learning opportunity. My wife and I had married in 2002 and we were looking for an opportunity to work in a more rural environment. I applied for the position of logistics manager at Goede Hoop in 2004 and was thrilled that my application was accepted.

“Goede Hoop was a good choice for me because it presented the opportunity to move into a business that was in a growth phase. I thrive on the challenge of creating structures and systems in area where they were needed. I enjoy working with clients and growers and fine tuning our company’s functioning. There has been much growth and benefit over this time, and it has been satisfying to see the inputs and systems that we have created showing dividends.

“A number of initiatives were established within the citrus industry since deregulation that aimed to create synergies in particular areas of the industry. One of the challenges for the industry is that we need comprehensive information of both upstream and downstream processes to ensure product quality and cost efficiency in your area of the value chain. The visibility of this information should be better between role players in the supply chain, not to create competitive advantages within the supply chain, but rather to create a more competitive South African fresh produce chain. Within the citrus industry there is still a lot of competition locally, while the competition should be in the market place. We could all save on costs if there was more co-operation and standardisation on certain levels.

“Agriculture is vital to our economy. We urgently need new blood and innovation in the interface between government and agriculture, as the old guard is not as proactive as they need to be and the new guard is generally somewhat inexperienced and still require further development. There has been remarkable progress in other government departments and agriculture is lagging behind in this respect.

“Producers are the group that ultimately pay all the service providers and they cannot get away from increases in input costs which are all passed along to them. This means that producers need a big financial buffer to cope with the unpredictable fluctuations in weather patterns, input costs and the rate of exchange. Government could assist entry level producers by providing or financing essential value adding services, and one of the areas where this is sorely lacking is in research and development. The citrus industry is proactive in this field and the Postharvest Innovation Fund initiatives and the Citrus Academy bursaries are a good start in this direction.

“We like the rural life because in a small town people know you and are generally friendly and caring. The relaxed country living is great and it is a pleasure not to have to spend ages in the traffic every day. We are fortunate that my wife also works at Goede Hoop in the technical division. I enjoy working in this environment and in the future I am likely to stay in the secondary part of the agricultural sector. As I find working with and developing the systems in business stimulating, perhaps I would like to pursue this direction.”





Gareth September

Overall quality controller at Goede Hoop Citrus, Citrusdal

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Gareth grew up in Citrusdal and had always envisaged a future far from home. Although the journey to his current position owes more to fate than planning, his dedication and potential was recognised by the management of Goede Hoop Citrus Company who appointed him to the position of overall quality controller.

Gareth was born in Springbok, his mother's home town. His father is originally from Citrusdal and was teaching at Springbok when his parents met. "After that my father was appointed as a headmaster in the Citrusdal area and our family moved here," explained Gareth. "I attended school at Schoonspruit Senior Secondary School in Malmesbury and after matric in 1998, I went to Cape Town to do a Market Management course at the South Peninsula College at Muizenberg," he added.

"In our home education was always highly valued."

"This was a three-year course consisting of an 18 month academic module and an 18 month practical work experience. During my practical, I worked for a number of companies including a telemarketing company and a "Chic & Veg" franchise in Citrusdal, continuing with them after my graduation in 2002. In the meanwhile my father had retired from teaching and had opened his own business, a restaurant. I spent some time helping him there.

"I was somewhat disillusioned as I had never thought that I would return to work in Citrusdal after my tertiary education. It had always been my dream to work in a glamorous setting such as a casino and I never imagined that I would work at Goede Hoop Citrus. My brother landed a job at Goede Hoop in 2004 and he heard that there was an admin post available. I applied for the position and got the job. This was something new for me and I started in the label printing department. I did that for three seasons but this was not very stimulating and by the end of 2005 I was considering looking around for something else. When the quality control job became available, somebody suggested that I should apply for the post and it was truly a wonderful surprise when I was told that my application was accepted!

"This was exciting but also very challenging. As I had grown up in Citrusdal I knew the difference between a naartjie and an orange but that was about as far as it went. Boy, have I come a long way from that! I had to hit the ground running and learn on the job. For the first year I felt I was floundering, but by the second year I was feeling more confident and even today I still learn something new every day. Since then my responsibilities have been extended and I am responsible for all three of Goede Hoop's Citrusdal packhouses and for training at our fourth packhouse, Citrio in Eendekuil, which I find both challenging and stimulating. Nowadays I am also responsible for training others in quality control.

"Initially I had to work extra hard to gain the respect of both my fellow workers and management. Many of the older people working at Goede Hoop had known me since I was a child and as I was one of the first youngsters from our community in a position like this it was not easy for them to take instructions from me.

"When we were at school, agriculture was never promoted as a sector to consider for a career. There are many positions for ambitious youngsters in agriculture and I have met some good examples of this in the keen young guys who work for PPECB. My path to agriculture has been purely by chance, but working for Goede Hoop has been an incredible learning opportunity. I can truly say that I enjoy my job and go to work in a cheerful spirit. I believe that a positive attitude takes one a long way down the road.

"In our home, education was always very highly valued and at some stage it would be great to have the opportunity to study further. I enjoy marketing and would like to explore that avenue in time. Living and working in Citrusdal is enjoyable and I have a great group of friends whom I hang out with whenever possible. They also keep me grounded. At times people get bored and this makes them behave badly, but generally we have a good sense of community.

"My colleagues at Goede Hoop have been a great help in teaching me and people in management have also guided me along the way, giving me more responsibility as they could see I could handle it. I am very grateful for the guidance from my colleagues and trust that Goede Hoop has placed in me."

Gys van Wyk has certainly been around the country. He is originally from Namibia and, after some years in the Free State, the family ended up in Caledon where Gys matriculated from Overberg High School in 1998. His tertiary education was at the Cape Town Technicon where he completed a three year National Diploma in Information Technology, after which he moved around quite a bit before settling in Citrusdal.

“After graduation in 2001 I had a three-month contract with Application Frameworks, the company where I had done the practical part of my diploma. When this was over, I struggled to find a job,” explains Gys.



“The importance of IT in this industry is not always fully recognised.”

Gys van Wyk

IT manager at Goede Hoop Citrus, Citrusdal

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“My parents live in Namaqualand so I took a temporary job as a teacher in Springbok for six months. I soon realised that this was no easy job and certainly not for me! After working as a systems administrator at The Caledon Casino, Hotel and Spa for a little more than a year, I landed a job with Goldfields Casino in Welkom and I worked for them from 2004 to 2007.

“This was a stable job but I worked really long hours and I was on call all the time. My wife and I got married and had two children during this time, and it became clear that I needed a job with more regular hours. I heard about this position at Goede Hoop Citrus from a friend of mine who works for APL Cartons. My application was successful and this represented a great change in lifestyle for us.

“For most people the shift from a casino to a citrus packhouse seems a huge change, but although the functions are different, the job still entails IT system support. Moving into the packhouse, it was interesting to note that for many of the employees, the computer is not central on their desk. Many people here are not computer literate they often need to be trained from scratch. The importance of IT in this industry is not always fully recognised. In the packhouse people are used to mechanical things working on their own. Now that they are computerised, systems are more complex and this changes things completely. Before I arrived in 2007, a new computer system was implemented. People had not received the necessary support there were some frustrations with IT when I arrived. Fortunately we have sorted out these problems and people are forthcoming in asking me for support. We have about 200 people using computers at Goede Hoop and there are about 130 computers and 8 servers in the company.

“My job differs from the other people in the company somewhat - I do not have an off season, the IT functions being necessary all year round. One of the biggest challenges in this position has been for me to get to know the different citrus varieties. I enjoy the working environment and would enjoy the opportunity to meet and get to know the farmers who supply us. We have a facility on our systems that allows producers to access their own individual producer packing and processing information via the net with an individual password. While some of our producers make extensive use of this and are enthusiastic about how helpful it is, others seem unaware of this facility.

“We do enjoy the rural setting and the small town community, and in comparison to Welkom, it certainly is a great deal friendlier. Living in the country one generally earns less but then the living is slightly cheaper. We do however miss the conveniences that one takes for granted in a city and have had to learn to live with that. Although I come from a rural background with my father being a sheep farmer, I have always wanted to be involved in IT.”





Krisjan Mouton

Production manager at Marcuskraal, Citrusdal

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A few kilometres north of Citrusdal on the N7, a road leads off the highway to the left towards Marcuskraal. This takes the traveller to a hidden valley and the road winds past farmyards where ancient trees shade old stone homesteads which have been occupied by generations of farmers. This is where I met Krisjan Mouton, who is the sixth generation of Moutons to farm at Marcuskraal and whose family have been growing citrus for more than a century and also farms with rooibos tea.

“Well, farming is truly in my blood as I literally grew up in agriculture and I have never wanted to do anything else. One cannot turn someone who is not interested into a farmer as one has to love the soil and the way of life,” says Krisjan.

“The Citrus Growers’ Association really does a great job on behalf of its producers.”

“I matriculated from the Drostyd Technical High School in Worcester in 2001 and then completed a Diploma in Agricultural Management at Boland College, also in Worcester. The course consisted of 2 years of academic studies and 18 months of practical training, which I was able to do here on our farm. After graduation in 2005, I returned to the farm and have been here ever since,” he explained.

“Our business has changed radically in the last 15 years and now one has to continuously manage all the inputs more attentively and make sure that one’s fruit has the correct specifications for each of the markets. This has now become a sophisticated industry with innovations in many fields, such as pest control, and there are also a large array of new cultivars. Our buyers set high standards for our fruit. Producers carry the risk for production and the supply chain until the consumer buys the product, so this is a truly high risk industry.”

The farm has 50ha citrus and approximately 80ha of rooibos tea. “Our citrus is packed in Citrusdal by Goede Hoop Citrus and our main markets are the USA, Canada and Middle East while Khoisan Tea is the company that processes our tea which is marketed mainly in Germany.

“I have been involved on the farm for six seasons and have a good relationship with my parents. My father and I work very well together and as he has other responsibilities, he is giving me increasingly more responsibility. I have been living in the main farmhouse with my parents but will be moving into my own home soon.

“I do believe that there is a future and many opportunities for young people in the fresh produce sector. The Citrus Growers’ Association really does a great job on behalf of its producers. It would be good if our government could be more supportive of agriculture, as we definitely do not have what other competing countries have in this respect. Government needs to engage and join hands with the agriculture sector in order to ensure the sustainability of the sector. After all, what is a country without its agricultural sector? We all need to eat and without agriculture people will starve.

“Continuing at Marcuskraal is my future, not just because my heritage is here but because I truly love this. I have my parents to thank for the opportunities I have had in life. The experience that I have learned from my father since I’ve been working with him has been truly invaluable and I could not have learned this anywhere else. I also have a debt of gratitude to God for my good health and passion for agriculture.”



Arriving at Korhaanshoogte homestead, nothing unusual met the eye until John Van Wyk ushered me into the big shed behind the house to have a look around. Here the visitor is met with the most remarkable sight. John and his father John Senior have collected and lovingly restored a remarkable collection of John Deere tractors. With 41 different models of John Deere tractor released between 1928 and 1965, including implements and stationary engines, this is one of the biggest John Deere collections from that era. "We are only short of 8 tractors to finish the series of tractors from that time. Everyone has their passion and other than farming this is a passion and a pastime my father and I share," explains John. "We receive many visits from enthusiasts and would like to turn the collection into a more formal museum."



John Van Wyk

Production manager at Korhaanshoogte, Citrusdal

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John grew up on his parents' farm in Citrusdal and after matric, he went to Boland College in Worcester, completing a Diploma in Agricultural Management. The course consisted of 2 years of academic studies and 18 months of practical training. "I did my practical training here on the farm, because I have always wanted to learn about citrus production," says John.

"My dad and I farm in a partnership and I have been working with him on the property for five years. Our operation consists of 60ha of oranges and soft citrus. We also produce vegetables and melons and run a herd of 150 cattle. Our citrus is packed by Goede Hoop here in Citrusdal. The diverse farming operation ensures that we are harvesting produce throughout the year and we are able to keep our workers employed permanently. This type of production is labour intensive, and as we appreciate the vital role human resources play in our business, maintaining good relationships with our workers is an important part of our business ethic. We are the kind of farmers who continuously walk the soil and work amongst our people.

"Never have I doubted that I wanted to farm. For me agriculture is about a passion for the industry and farming in a profitable way which does not impact on our invaluable environment. My father and I get on extremely well and I've enjoyed spending time with him on the farm for as long as I can remember. My mother recalls that on my first day at school I asked her how long I would need to stay there because all I wanted was join my Dad back on the farm! In my school years I used to travel with him to the Cape Town municipal market, doing my homework in the lorry's cab on the way.

"I am positive about the future of agriculture in our country. Yes, there are challenges but these exist in every sector and it is important to remain positive and proactive as a negative attitude really achieves nothing. As a citrus producer, I have confidence in the future but we will need to farm smart in order to minimise our risks."

John's roots at Korhaanshoogte are certainly deep as the Van Wyk family has been farming here for 120 years and John is the fourth John Foster Van Wyk on the property. He showed me the old stone farmhouse and family graveyard where his ancestors' graves lie in the shade of an ancient pepper tree. As in many instances where farms have been in the family for generations, the expectation to continue the tradition rests heavily on the shoulders of the current generation who is farming in a high risk production and marketing environment, but John is resourceful and has some plans to augment the farm's income and thus spread the risk.

"Aside from improving the technology in our farming operations, I would like to start a tourism business. We are planning to build cottages up in our mountain ground and start a 4x4 trail, combining these with visits to our tractor and old farming implement collection. I am grateful to my parents for their wisdom and encouragement and to God for my passion of agriculture and my ability to remain positive in the face of challenges."

"I am positive about the future of agriculture in our country."



Paul Cronjé

Postharvest physiologist and researcher with CRI, Stellenbosch

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Paul completed a BSc degree in Agriculture at the University of Pretoria and followed this with an Honours degree. During his university holidays he worked at Group 91 in Letsitele where he got a good introduction into citrus production. After a working holiday in the UK, Paul decided to continue his studies and applied to Stellenbosch University's Department of Horticulture to complete his MSc degree.

"During my studies at Tuks on citrus and avocados I realised that I would like to have some knowledge of deciduous fruit production as well. This was what motivated me to apply at Stellenbosch and I completed my MSc here at the end of 2002 on dormancy and tree architecture of apples with Dr. Nigel Cook as my study leader."

Paul was fortunate to be offered the opportunity to work for a year in the Postharvest Technology Group at the Katholieke University of Leuven (KUL) in Belgium. "This was a very interesting experience as up to then I had mostly been involved with pre-harvest issues. This exposure to the postharvest field was fascinating and I had the inspiring opportunity to work with Prof. Bart Nicolai, a well-known Flemish expert and leader in the field of postharvest research and technology."

In 2003 Paul heard that Citrus Research International (CRI) was offering a research post in postharvest physiology of citrus fruit, but they could not find a candidate who had a doctorate in the field. "I was interested in the post and CRI offered me the post and the opportunity and bursary to complete my doctorate simultaneously. This meant that I was seconded to the Department of Horticultural Science at US as a staff member and have been here since then," says Paul. He has specialised in rind conditions and the physiological breakdown of the fruit rind as influenced by both the pre- and postharvest conditions, and he is involved with projects in all South Africa's citrus production regions. After five years of studying he completed his PhD and received it in December 2009. His promoters are Professor Marius Huysamer and Dr Graham Barry and his project were on rind breakdown on Nules Clementine mandarin.

The steady decline in the number of students choosing to study agriculture at South African universities is cause for concern and the Faculty of AgriScience at Stellenbosch University and the Department of Horticultural Science are proactively encouraging students to follow this direction. "Our department offers bursaries (with the help of institutions such as the Citrus Academy) and within the university we try to encourage students interested in plants to take an interest in horticulture by taking them to visit fruit farms and see the production process. We also offer students fruit which serves both as a gift and a positive and tangible result of our horticultural practices. Horticulture offers many and equal opportunities for men and women as this sector is very knowledge-driven and, from the nursery right through to production and export, relies on quick integration of tree and fruit physiology, postharvest handling systems and commercial opportunities.

"The horticultural sector of agriculture has the opportunity to expand and become a bigger player in global food production and our government could certainly be of more help to the sector. We could also extend our skills into Africa and help to produce nutritious food for countries that are not able to produce enough food for domestic consumption. I would most certainly encourage interested youngsters to become involved in horticulture as it offers many opportunities and one does not have to come from a production background for this. Qualifications in horticulture also provide opportunities internationally. South Africa horticultural expertise is highly rated and sought after internationally. We are leaders in our fields and researchers from Spain, Australia, California and Chile value our contributions to international research and regularly learn from us.

The oaks on the University of Stellenbosch campus were awash with new green leaves on the spring morning when I spoke to Paul Cronjé. Paul is a postharvest physiologist, researcher and lecturer in citrus at the Department of Horticultural Science. His field of speciality is the postharvest quality of citrus fruit, with emphasis on the problems associate with rind disorders such as rind breakdown, rind pitting, peteca and chilling injury. During his childhood years Paul lived in Ellisras, Thabazimbi and finally Pretoria, where he matriculated from Overkruin Hoërskool in 1993. "I was not too sure what I wanted to do as a career. My older brother was in the mining industry and after chatting to some of his friends from university, I decided that horticulture sounded like an interesting option."



"In the future I would like to establish myself as an international expert in the postharvest handling of citrus fruit and would welcome the opportunity for international visits and collaborations with researchers in other citrus producing countries. I enjoy my involvement with the CRI and working

with people in the industry as I have always found them to be helpful. CRI is involved but independent of the commercial aspect of production, so producers trust us to assist them in finding solutions in their production of export fruit."

"Horticulture offers many and equal opportunities for men and women."



Sinazo Mkupa

BSc Horticulture at University of Stellenbosch

Citrus Academy Bursary Fund beneficiary

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When Sinazo was about to graduate from Fort Hare, she was able to extend her bursary from the Citrus Academy to continue her studies at Stellenbosch University where she is currently doing her honours in Horticulture, specialising in pre-harvest citrus. "This is a big cultural change for me but it has also been a good learning curve and a great deal of fun," says Sinazo. "Studying here I have had to learn Afrikaans rapidly!"

"Agriculture was never mentioned as a career option at school and my decision to study in this direction came from personal experience," explains Sinazo. "I used to work in our family's large vegetable and maize garden with my father. I love working with the soil this sparked my interest in plant production. My family approve of my decision to go into agriculture but my friends think this is something of a joke and regularly tease me!"

"It is important to tell young people about the significance of agriculture because if the youth does not bring new skills and manpower into agriculture, this vital sector will not grow as it needs to in order to successfully produce food. In general young people are not interested in agriculture as one of the perceptions is that it is not a lucrative sector. We need to be proactive at changing this and other negative perceptions. When I was studying at Fort Hare, we were doing a project on land use planning, and it was our idea to visit high schools in the area to get this message across. Youngsters are often not nearly well enough informed at the time that they have to make very important career choices.

"My mother is a domestic worker. I am from a family of six girls and I really need to thank my parents for their support. They phone me every week without fail. I have also received incredible support and encouragement from my mother's employer, Mrs Robertson, as well as from my mother's friend, Nomazitha Mbusi Metuse. Of course I also need to thank the Citrus Academy for both their financial and moral support. Desiree Schonken is like a second mother to me!

"In the future I would like to own a citrus farm in the Sundays River Valley. I visited the area on a field trip and was delighted by the beauty and productivity of the area. I would also like to inspire other youngsters to go into the agricultural sector."

Sinazo is confident and passionate about agriculture. She is from Tyusha a village near King Williams Town in the Eastern Cape and after matriculating from Khumbalani High School in 2002, she spent a year at home as she was unsure of what she wanted to do. "In 2004 I enrolled at the University of Fort Hare and did a BSc in Crop Science and Horticulture. This is a four year course and in my fourth year I was able to secure a Citrus Academy bursary. Initially I was interested in studying Animal Husbandry but after finding out more about the subjects I realised that I was more interested in Crop Science and Horticulture."

"It is important to tell young people about the significance of agriculture."



Zanele Phiri

MSc Horticulture at the University of Stellenbosch

Citrus Academy Bursary Fund beneficiary

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"After finishing my honours, I heard about a position in Swaziland with the FOA (Food and Agriculture Organisation) of the United Nations. My application was successful and I worked for them for 2005 and 2006. The job involved teaching rural youngsters in impoverished situations skills so that they are able to grow fruit and vegetable crops, such as maize and sorghum, for their own food security. These are invaluable survival skills but as some of these teens and pre-teens were orphans in vulnerable positions, they were not always that able or keen to do this.

Zanele is from Swaziland and grew up in a semi-rural area.

Her family had a vegetable garden for home consumption and she worked with her family in the garden. She found that she enjoyed working with the soil and growing plants, so she decided

to study agriculture. After matriculating from Mhlatane High School in 2000, Zanele enrolled at the University of Swaziland and did a BSc in Agriculture majoring in Horticulture. Some of her other subjects included Animal Husbandry, Irrigation, Economics and Agronomy. After receiving her degree she followed this up with an honours degree in Horticulture as well.

"During this time I decided to continue with my studies and came to Stellenbosch to study towards my MSc here. When I arrived in 2007 I was enrolled as a special student and after completing the required modules in 2008, I was enrolled as an honours student, progressing to a Masters student in 2009. I applied to the Citrus Academy for a bursary and was able to secure a partial bursary. This has been a long journey for me as I have had to do a number of undergraduate modules as part of my studies and the problem with undergraduate modules is that the lectures are all in Afrikaans. This has meant that I have had to do a lot of extra work through self study while doing the required work for my masters degree.

"Studying at Stellenbosch University has been a big adjustment in many ways and, although my fees and accommodation are covered it is quite tough going as I cannot afford much beyond that. My two years have now stretched into three and I am really looking forward to finishing my degree. My area of focus has been the pre-harvest disorders of citrus and I have really enjoyed visiting production regions like Citrusdal and working in the field.

"Agriculture will always have a future because people need to eat. It is as simple as that. We need to do more research about how to optimise production, particularly in the face of climate change. The logistics surrounding the supply chain could also be more streamlined. South African horticulture is very advanced in comparison to practices in Swaziland.

"When I was at school it was recommended that I do science and agriculture was my choice. In general the perception is that agriculture is just about growing plants and is unscientific. When I visit home, my aunts jokingly ask me to come and weed their fields. My father is a forester and my mother is a teacher. They have been very supportive during my studies and are very proud of my achievements as I am the only member of my family to do postgraduate studies.

"I would like to thank the Citrus Academy for their financial support - without them I would not have been able to come to Stellenbosch. I am also very grateful to Stephan Verreyne as he has been a great help with my academics.

"In the future I would like to return to the FOA and continue to teach youngsters about the importance of agriculture in Swaziland. The FOA employs many foreigners in their operations in Swaziland. While I worked for them my boss was a Zambian who encouraged me to pursue my studies. Once I have graduated, I will be able to contribute to agriculture in my homeland and do something for my own people."

"Agriculture will always have a future because people need to eat."





Hildegard Witbooi

**Nat. Diploma in Horticulture at Cape Peninsula University of Technology
Citrus Academy Bursary Fund beneficiary**

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"After leaving school, Hildegard knew that she wanted to follow the agricultural sector, but was not sure which field to follow due to its diversity. "I was fortunate to have been accepted at a number of universities for different courses in agriculture and finally decided on the National Diploma in Horticulture at Cape Peninsula University of Technology. This was my choice as here I would receive both excellent academic and practical knowledge," explains Hildegard. "I enjoy plant material studies and when we did a small module in horticulture on tissue culture, I discovered that I was particularly interested in this field. As I found this to be stimulating I studied further on my own and realised that this was the field I would like to follow during my work integrated learning period."

Hildegard is young, confident and determined to make her mark in the fresh produce sector.

She grew up in the Paarl Valley and matriculated from Klein Nederburg Senior Secondary in 2007. "I grew up surrounded by wine and fruit farms, nurseries and flower farms and this, together with my love for nature and the analytical component in the classroom, greatly influenced my choice of study. I was even more motivated by the mere fact that this is a male dominated field," laughs Hildegard.



As a second year student she was expected to complete a six-month work integrated learning period during the first semester. "I chose to complete my internship with the University of Stellenbosch Institute for Wine Biotechnology within the grapevine tissue culture and transformation unit. I chose this as a result of my interest in the horticultural research sector and I worked closely with Mrs Charmaine Stander, a junior researcher, as my mentor. I was responsible for the micro propagation of many cultivars and assisted in plant transformations. Not only did I learn a great deal by working in this environment, but I also gained experience in more than one sector by working with people from different scientific backgrounds. This was training to be a prospective scientist familiar with doing research and lab work individually or as part of a team, and was a very valuable experience for me both from a personal and academic point of view.

"My main interests are biotechnology and plant breeding and in the future I am hoping to further my studies and contribute to ongoing research in South Africa. This is possible by bringing the environment into the lab and still getting the best of both worlds. Agricultural development in South Africa varies from well-developed commercial to subsistence farming and therefore agricultural research is crucial to alleviate poverty.

"I have been away from home since my matric year and my parents live in Paarl. My father is a driver, my mother a nurse, and they are both very proud of me. I have two older sisters, the eldest of whom studied IT and immigrated to France about ten years ago. My other sister studied viticulture and oenology and is currently completing her PhD in Viticulture. Because of our common agriculture interests my younger sister and I relate well to each other. My sisters are both very proud of me and I am constantly motivated and reminded by them that I could be a valuable addition to our country's agriculture sector. I am very grateful to my sister Erna for her support and motivation the past three years. She's been my mentor, sister and best friend. She's given me something that I could never measure in value and is a true role model to me and most definitely others."

"I am hoping to further my studies and contribute to ongoing research."





Sebastine van der Merwe

Logistical director at Freight Logistics4U, Tygerberg

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The quiet suburban surroundings in the Tygerberg Hills seem an unlikely setting for the offices of Freight Logistics4U and neighbours are blissfully unaware of the ongoing urgent and frenetic activities required for shipping a perishable product such as fruit. This is where I met Sebastine van der Merwe, who is petite and elegant and, as logistics director for Freight Logistics4u which moves in excess of 40,000 pallets of fruit annually, also very capable.

putting the stickers on the cartons and later progressed to packing the fruit. When I was in high school, I began attending industry functions with my father who would jokingly introduce me as the future marketing manager for our farm. This involvement sparked my interest in the commercial side of our product. My interest in the citrus industry was fostered directly as a result of our family's involvement and from a young age I never thought that I would work in any other field.

"After I had completed my studies, I worked for ALG Marketing, a division of our family business, for two years. During this time I found the logistics part of the operation quite stimulating so in 2006 I bought shares in a new company JS Logistics. Within a few weeks of joining the company, the document clerk left so I was dumped in the deep end and had to learn the ropes pretty fast! Things changed rapidly that year and in 2007 Freight Logistics 4U was established as a freight service provider by a group of producers (including ALG), shippers and receivers. It was clear that this company would provide me with better opportunities so I bought a shares in the company and have been the company's logistical director for the past two years."

The main logistical function of Freight Logistics4U is to organise and facilitate the successful shipment of fruit (in this case citrus) from South African ports to the relevant ports of destination globally. "We work closely with officials from the Department Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) and the Perishable Products Export Control Board (PPECB) to ensure that the fruit and its accompanying documentation is correct and on time for shipment, which entails quite a complex paper trail," explained Sebastine. "We also manage the full USA programme which is sensitive and complex, to say the least."

"I chose to work in logistics due to my citrus background and because I enjoy the daily challenges this brings. At times things can get quite stressful but it is great to work with supportive colleagues like Stephanie van Straten, who is the executive director and also a shareholder, Wian Marais and Herman Viljoen and, when the going gets tough, we really work well together as a team. Even though I am working harder now than I have in years, I can truly say that I enjoy logistics. As both my family and fiancé are involved in the citrus industry, this tends to be the topic of conversation when we socialise!

Sebastine grew up on her parents farm ALG Citrus in Citrusdal, attended school in Cape Town and matriculated from Groote Schuur High School in 2000. After school she attended the University of Stellenbosch and completed a degree in Human Resource Management. "I did think about doing something specifically in the marketing line but as my aptitude tests showed a strong propensity for human resources, I decided to follow that course," explains Sebastine.

On the farm she was exposed to citrus production during her childhood years. "During the school holidays, my dad allowed us to harvest and pack the citrus on our farm for some extra pocket money. In the packhouse I started by

"South African agriculture has great potential and I believe that the future of South Africa's agriculture could certainly be enhanced by empowering young people in the sector. There is currently quite a crowd of young people involved in the USA programmes and despite their differences, there is a strong feeling of community amongst them. People work together and help each other which I find to be hugely positive. The South African citrus industry is a dynamic and stimulating sector to be involved in and in general I find the people in the industry pleasant. My dad is passionate about the fruit industry and is my role model. I am very grateful to my parents for providing me with the opportunities to forward my career."

"People work together and help each other which I find to be hugely positive."



Michiel (MJ) Du Toit

Logistics co-ordinator at GoReefers, Tygerberg

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"I matriculated in 2002 from Parow High School in Cape Town. My school subject choices were all business orientated because I enjoyed figures and excelled at math and accounting, but I really did not know what I wanted to do after matric. A friend of mine told me about a holiday job at GoReefers starting in December just after I had written my final exam. Well, that turned into a permanent job and this is how my career at GoReefers began!

"I have been in the operations department for seven years now and have been involved in quite a few links in the logistics chain. Before I was a logistics co-ordinator, I handled transport for the Western Cape and also for Port Elizabeth and Namibia. This included container transport as well as tautliners, flatbeds and reefer trucks. During my time here I have learned the importance of clear communication.

"These days I'm more directly involved with our clients and I am responsible for forward planning. This is done to ensure clients' weekly logistical needs are met, for example co-ordinating the total containers required for the various markets. My daily routine consists of bookings, communication between the various shipping lines and loading points, as well as communicating with the transport co-ordinator. GoReefers has its own in-house computer programme developed to optimise the booking and transport process. Our logistics department currently has five logistics co-ordinators who handle national logistics, a transport co-ordinator and a data capturer who keeps our sailing schedules updated to ensure correct information on our system.

"GoReefers is in a residential area which creates a relaxed atmosphere. The operations department is an open plan office which makes communication between people in the office easier. Throughout my journey at GoReefers, I have worked with quite a number of different personalities, but they all shared the love and passion for logistics. As we work very long hours, especially in citrus season, they have become like a second family to me.

"The time I have spent at GoReefers has taught me everything about this industry. Although we do work long hours with constant pressure, no two days are ever the same and this is always exciting and keeps the blood pumping. I truly learn something new every day. My family has supported me through the crazy citrus seasons and we are often on standby.

"The South African agriculture industry is interesting, challenging and I especially enjoy the export part of the industry. There is much potential for growth in the South African agricultural industry, and innovative thinking and implementation will see our industry growing and becoming a serious world contender in all areas.

"The citrus industry is not meant for everyone and certainly not for the faint hearted. If, however, you are an adrenalin junkie, you will fit right in!"

***"If you are an adrenalin junkie,
you will fit right in!"***

MJ was born and raised in the urban environment of Parow Valley in Cape Town. "Although I was brought up in the city, we had a number of family members who farmed with livestock. I would spend many school holidays on these farms and thus had some exposure to agriculture," he explains.





Fanie Naude

Production manager at Denau, Hex River Valley

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The Hex River Valley is predominantly a table grape area but in the early 1980's local farmer Pieter Naude decided to diversify into citrus on his farm Denau and pioneered commercial citrus production in the area. Despite local scepticism he has established a successful citrus unit and has 190ha of table grapes and 60ha of citrus. It was at Denau that I spoke to Fanie Naude, Pieter's eldest son who is responsible for citrus packing and marketing.

Fanie grew up on the family farm in the Hex River Valley and matriculated from Paarl Boys High School in 2000. Directly after matric he enrolled at the University of Stellenbosch and completed a BComm degree in marketing, graduating in 2003.

"After my studies I wanted to spend some time in the UK before joining the family business, as I hoped to gain some experience of the other end of

our fruit supply chain," explains Fanie. "Once in the UK, I applied for a job at Mack Multiples and after some persistence was lucky to land a job as a citrus quality controller. After that I spent the 2004-2005 table grape season as the representative for Exsa in Europe and the UK, and that was certainly interesting. (Exsa is a South African fruit export company that was affiliated with the Denau production unit).

"In April 2005 the manager of the citrus division at Denau resigned, leaving a vacancy prior to the citrus harvest. My father offered me the position and I decided that the time was right to return. During that first season, it was a steep learning curve but my father has helped me a great deal in teaching me about citrus packing. In the meantime my brother Marinus has also joined the management team in the grape division and, as our interests have grown quite rapidly over the past three years this has been a great help. Marinus has a BSc Hons in Viticulture and his expertise is most helpful.

"Our diversification into citrus has been beneficial as we are able to provide employment for our workers throughout the year and a well-trained, contented labour force has proved to be an invaluable asset. We believe strongly that our workers should share in the success of our business and are passionate about the empowerment process extending beyond land reform to the development and upliftment of people." (In 2003 Denau initiated a BEE project on a 36ha table grape farm in which the Farmworkers Trust, with 118 beneficiaries, has 50% ownership.)

"As table grape growers pack their own fruit this is part of our thinking, so my father built a packhouse which we use for both grape and citrus packing. Our grape harvest finishes before we start harvesting our citrus, allowing us to use the packhouse and cooling facilities throughout both harvests. On the marketing front, the grape supply sometimes opens doors for our citrus and visa versa, and our extended production period keeps us in year round contact with our suppliers and service providers.

"I am passionate about the fruit industry and feel privileged to have the opportunity to join and add to the family business and farming tradition. (Fanie represents the sixth generation of Naudes on their family farm). Our marketing strategy is based on good relationships with our receivers so that you actually know the person you are dealing with on the other end. Denau is a shareholder of Hoekstra Fruit Exporters. My time spent working in the fruit industry abroad was a real eye opener, and I realised that to succeed one needs to produce a superior product as cost effectively as possible. For producers to be successful today they need to be good at production, but also need to be continuously on the ball with the marketing of their product.

"Our business is quite informal, which is generally pleasant but the down side of this is that the casual approach means people often do not make appointments before arriving, which does not allow for proper time management. I am grateful to my parents for their encouragement and the opportunities they have given me. My father has always involved us in all big decisions and also taught us to enjoy production and my mom is the mediator in the family. I would also like to thank my wife Laetitia for her support and my brother Marinus for his valued assistance in the business."

"We believe strongly that our workers should share in the success of our business."



Elegant and friendly, despite the frantic activity in the Expofrut offices in Stellenbosch, Marelize took a moment from her hectic schedule to chat.

Marelize was at school at Paarl Gymnasium and matriculated in 2002. After school she studied marketing at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in Cape Town. This was a four year course including a 6-month practical internship. "This was a fantastic course as it really taught me a great deal and prepared me for a career in marketing," says Marelize.



"It is incredibly interesting dealing with diverse international clients."

Marelize Keevy

Head of the Citrus Division at Univeg Expofrut, Stellenbosch
25

"After I graduated I got married and settled in Strand where my husband is based. my husband and I got married. Soon afterwards I saw an advertisement for a job with Katope and I applied. It was great news to hear that my application was successful and I started at Katope in 2007 as a market co-ordinator. At that stage Katope's offices were in Somerset West, but soon after I joined them Katope merged with Intertrading and Expofrut, (Expofrut is the South African branch of the global fresh produce company Univeg) and our offices have since moved here to Stellenbosch.

"I worked as a market co-ordinator for about a year and then I got involved in market management. At the start of 2009 we had four marketers, but within a short time, two of them left the company and a female colleague and I were left to handle all the markets. We certainly had our work cut out for us as our markets are as diverse as Russia, Middle East, Far East, Japan, Europe, Canada, USA, Southern Europe and the Indian Ocean Islands. In August this year I was appointed as head of the citrus division which means that I now manage two citrus marketers and one market co-ordinator. At the moment I am also doing my masters degree in marketing and have passed all my subjects with distinction. I am currently working on my thesis and the topic is service quality.

"It is incredibly interesting dealing with diverse international clients and learning about the conditions and requirements of each market. There is a great deal to learn, both on the marketing side and the production side, and I am constantly learning about the markets, cultivars and technical aspects of fruit. Every day presents new challenges, and there is a wonderful sense of accomplishment when you finish something successfully. This overcomes all the challenges the job holds and the resulting job satisfaction is a great motivator.

"The citrus industry is well organised and the industry bodies support the various sectors of the industry well, keeping us well informed of relevant issues. The fruit industry has matured and there seems to be a lot more trust and co-operation than a decade ago. At the same time things are getting tougher for both producers and exporters, as input costs are rising and it is becoming increasingly difficult to make a profit. This is particularly tough on the smaller producers. Despite this, agriculture and its related service providers will always offer opportunities to young people as agriculture will have to continue expanding to feed the world's population.

"My parents are sheep farmers near Swellendam and although it is a different type of agriculture, this does give me some perspective on the challenges faced by producers. My academic and career efforts have always been motivated by my own will to succeed and my family has been supportive of me.

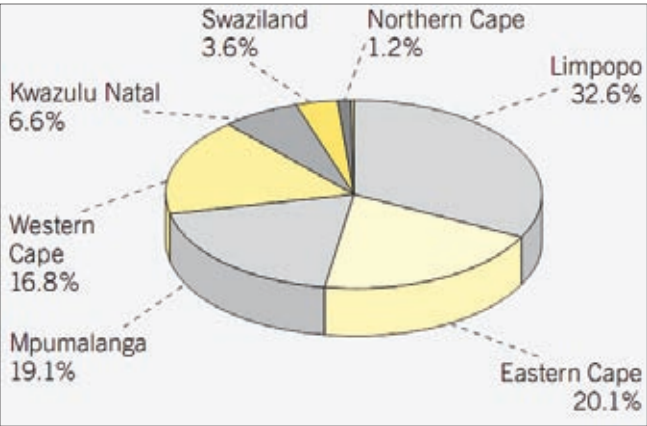
"The fruit industry was the first door that opened for me after my studies. I have truly grown to love the industry and can understand where the adage comes from that once people are involved in the industry, they seldom leave. I fall into this category myself as I see myself remaining in the export sector of the fresh produce industry well into the future."



Overview of South African Citrus

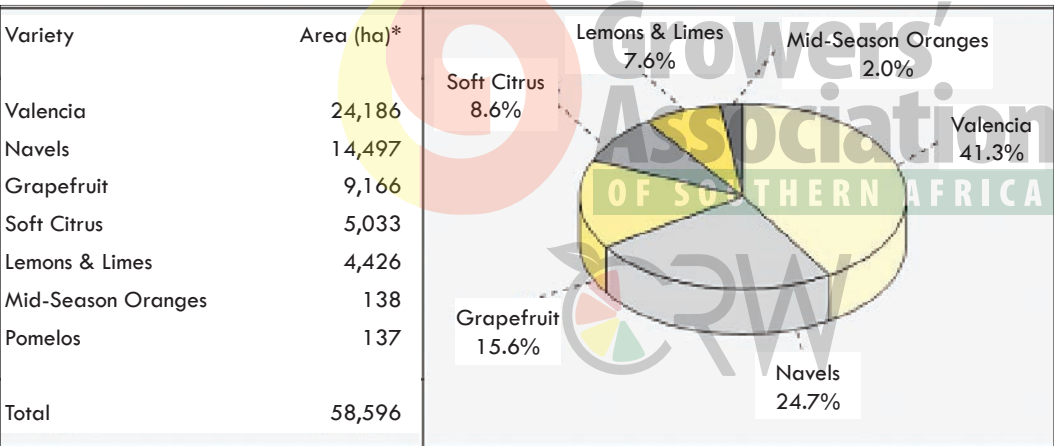
Citrus has been grown in South Africa for well over a hundred years. In fact the industry recently celebrated one hundred years (1997) of exporting fresh citrus fruit to international destinations. Citrus is grown along the full length of South Africa from Limpopo in the north to Boland in the south and across the breadth from the Western Cape to the Eastern Cape.

South Africa: Production Areas



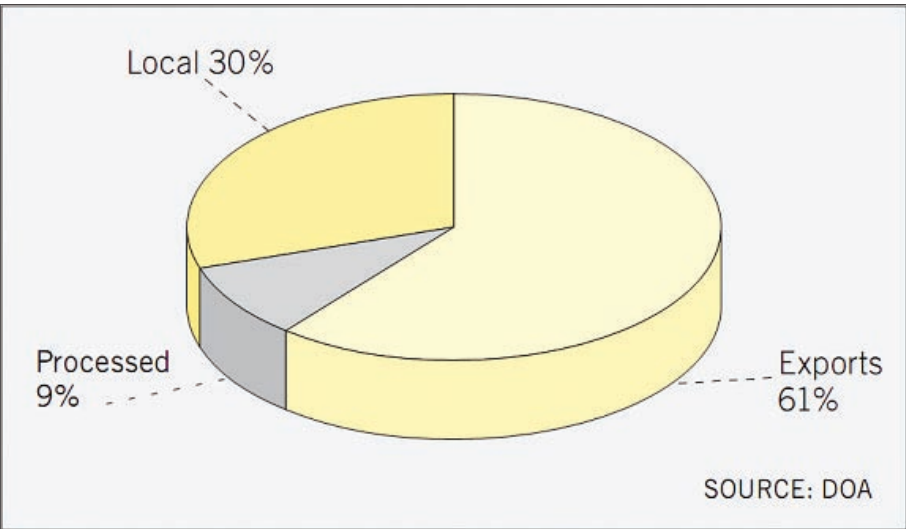
Valencia oranges are the most widely grown citrus product with over forty percent of the total citrus area as can be seen in the graph below. The northern areas have most of the valencias, whilst the southern part of the country grows more soft citrus. The Eastern Cape has a lot of Navels and most of the lemons.

South Africa: Area by Citrus Type



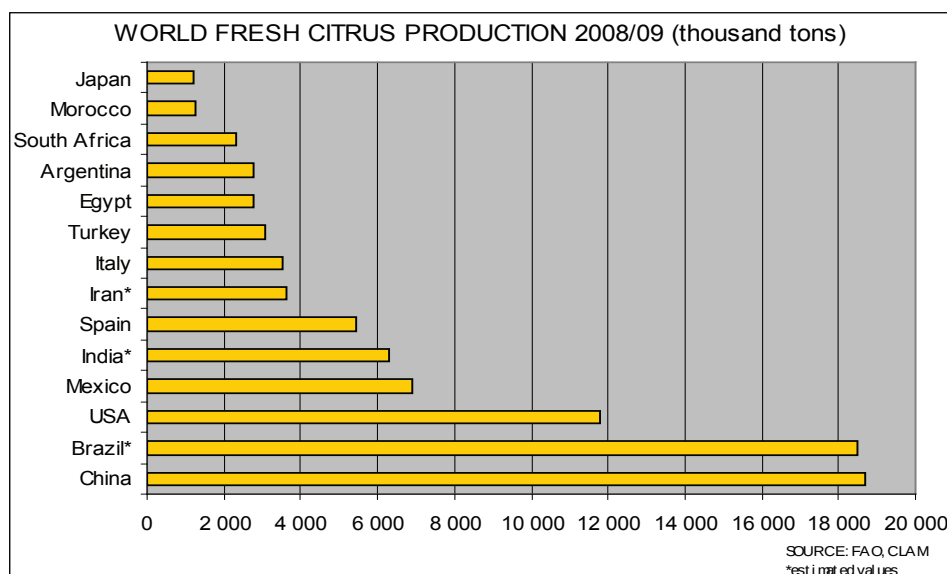
Most of South Africa's citrus is exported via the ports of Durban, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth. Some citrus is also exported via Maputo port. The balance of the citrus is either sent to processors for juicing or local markets for domestic consumption.

South Africa: Production Volume



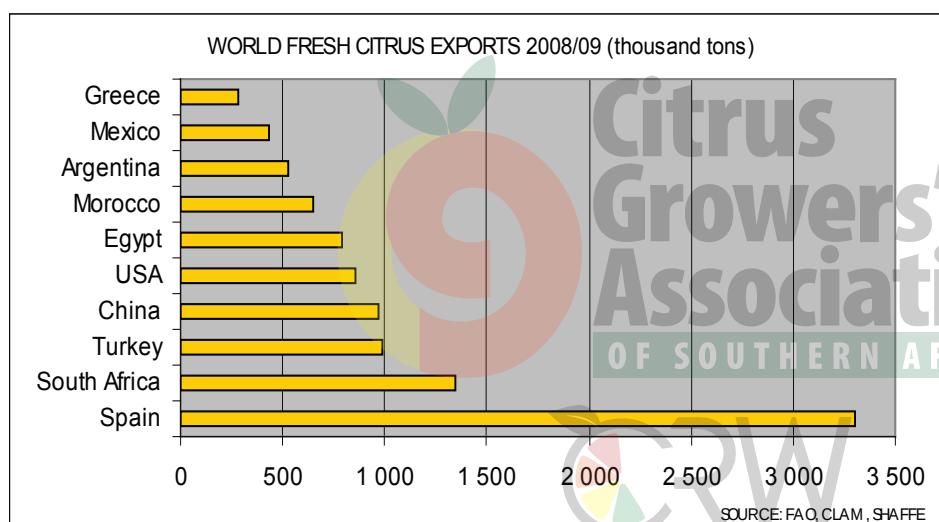
China and Brazil are the biggest producers of citrus in the world but they are not the biggest exporters of fresh fruit. Most of China's production is consumed domestically whilst Brazil converts most of its production into juice.

World fresh citrus production



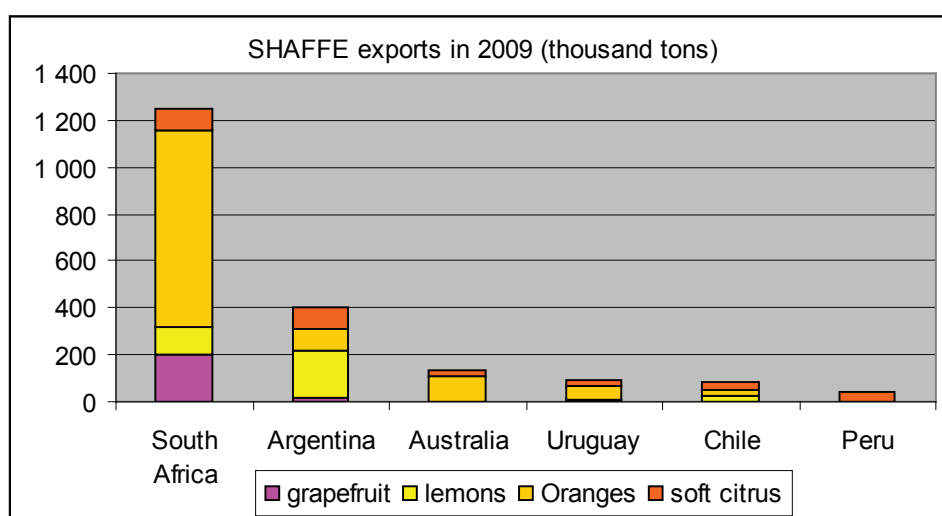
Although South Africa ranks only about twelfth in world production, it is the second biggest exporter of fresh citrus fruit after Spain. With Spain in the northern hemisphere and South Africa in the south, they do not compete with each other in the peak of their respective seasons, although there is an overlap at the beginning and end of the seasons. Thus South Africa dominates the southern hemisphere in terms of overall citrus.

World fresh citrus exports



South Africa dominates total southern hemisphere citrus exports (62% market share), and in particular grapefruit (93%) and oranges (75%), but the lemon sector is dominated by Argentina. The most competitive sector is soft citrus. Argentina is the highest volume player (narrowly ahead of South Africa) with 33% market share.

Southern hemisphere citrus exports



Earning a gross revenue of about five billion rands in 2008 and employing an estimated one hundred thousand people, the South African citrus industry has been and will continue to be a valuable source of income and employment for present and future generations of South Africans. It is therefore vitally important for the youth of South Africa to be encouraged to enter this vibrant and every-changing industry. There are thousands of young people who have no idea of what career path to follow, but there are numerous opportunities just waiting for them, on the farms, in the packhouses, in research related fields and in the Government's Plant Health and Quality departments.

In compiling this publication I had the privilege of interviewing a number of former and current Citrus Academy Bursary Fund students. Time and time again, I listened to them singing the praises of the Citrus Academy and particularly of “Saint Des”, better known as Desiree Schonken, the Bursary Fund manager at the Academy.

From helping a failing student in his first year to go for eye tests and get glasses - because she believed that his failure was not because he lacked the ability to learn but only the ability to see clearly – to taking calls from distraught students on Sunday afternoons in exam time, Desiree seems to spend her life in the rarefied air above and beyond the call of duty.

The Citrus Academy Bursary Fund was established in its current form in 2006 and has grown both in student numbers and value over the past four years. The Bursary Fund creates a breeding ground for a qualified future workforce and provides a conduit for those who wish to be involved in agriculture and in this growing sector.

The Citrus Academy Bursary Fund

The Bursary Fund provides financial support to students involved in tertiary education in the form of bursaries. Students are supported from their second year onward, at a wide range of educational institutions and in a variety of qualifications, all related to the citrus industry. The Academy also provides assistance to students who work in the citrus industry and are studying part-time.

In 2009, the Bursary Fund supported 4 students at secondary education level, 23 students studying towards diplomas and certificates, 12 students at undergraduate level, and 10 postgraduates. The Bursary Fund strives to find balance in diversity, in 2009 supporting 27 male and 14 female previously disadvantaged individuals, and 4 male and 4 female white students.

The Citrus Academy Bursary Fund believes that financial assistance to obtain a qualification is only one of the many things that students need to prepare them for entering the citrus industry. They also require experience during their studies, to provide them with an opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge and learn how things work in the real world. Furthermore, students require an understanding of the industry and the sector, so that they have a framework in which to understand their current and future role. To this end, diploma and undergraduate students are obligated to do a minimum of four weeks holiday work every year, and all students are given opportunities, through the Industry Exposure Programme, to attend conferences, symposia, and other industry events.

The Citrus Academy also assists students who are required to do practical internships as part of their qualification and with finding placements. Funding is obtained from AgriSETA to provide the student with a stipend during this period. In addition, the AgriSETA provide funding for the Workplace Experience Programme, which provides opportunities for students who have obtained degrees to gain experience in their fields.

Students also receive personal support during their studies and advice on their academic and career choices. Students are obligated under the Bursary Fund rules to work back the time for which they received financial support within the citrus industry. It is the students'



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Apply between
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Bursaries that are awarded may cover tuition and accommodation fees, as well as other study costs such as books and research expenditure. Any citizen of South Africa, Swaziland or Zimbabwe who is studying a course related to agriculture at a recognised tertiary institution in South Africa can apply. Students in the Tertiary Education Support and Scarce and Critical Skills Support categories are only supported from their second year of tertiary education onwards.

responsibility to find a job in the industry on completing their studies with the assistance of the Academy staff. In addition to managing the Bursary Fund, the Citrus Academy also develops a range of learning tools and programmes to enable and support skills development in the citrus industry.

More information about this and its various other initiatives can be found on its website: www.citrusacademy.org.za or www.sitrusakademie.co.za.



Above: Citrus Academy T-shirt



Authors' Note



“There is great hope for the future of the citrus industry.”

“Interviewing 80 youngsters in the citrus industry has indeed been a memorable experience, as the enthusiasm, ambition and energy that I encountered truly inspires great hope for the future of the citrus industry.

“I would like to sincerely thank CGA for entrusting me with this remarkable assignment. In particular, I would like to thank the CGA directors in the various South African citrus production regions as well as the Citrus Academy for their assistance in identifying subjects for this initiative. Thank you also to Gloria Weare of CGA and Jacomien de Klerk of the Citrus Academy for their sub-editing of this publication, as well as to Colleen Goosen of Paper Chefs for her pointers on layout and printing.”

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.

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