

Dole South Africa and Mahela form joint venture

By [Fred Meintjes](#) | 4 March 2026

Two major players have formed an equal partnership to enhance operational efficiency and service delivery through the Letaba Pakkers facility



Image: Adobe Stock

Dole South Africa and the Mahela Group, one of the leading citrus producers in the country's northern regions, have announced a joint 50 per cent shareholding in Letaba Pakkers.

Hannes Nieuwoudt, managing director of Dole South Africa and Barend Vorster, CEO of Mahela Group, said in a joint statement that the transaction brings together two significant and established entities, "combining resources, expertise and infrastructure to further optimise the existing packhouse facility".

“The vision of the management team is unanimous: to develop and maintain a best-in-class, multi-produce packing facility that will deliver efficient operations, market-related packing rates and outstanding service to the producers who pack at Letaba Pakkers,” they said.

By aligning operational strength with commercial capability, the newly constituted board has pledged a commitment to enhancing value for growers in the region and supporting the continued development of the local agricultural industry.

Both partners will play an active role in governance and strategic oversight, they confirmed, “ensuring balanced decision-making and a long-term growth focus”.



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Nieuwoudt said the partnership represents a strategic step forward for Dole and the Letaba Pakkers facility.

“Not only will it support regional employment and contribute positively to the local economy but also combine our respective strengths to create a strong platform to serve producers with efficiency, transparency and long-term stability,” he outlined.

Vorster said the shared focus is based on operational excellence and service delivery.

“Together, Mahela and Dole are committed to building a facility that producers can rely on,” he commented. “We believe this joint venture will strengthen our ability to serve growers and customers alike.”

The Mahela Group, based in the Mopani district of Limpopo, was founded in 1942 when its founding father Ben Vorster rented his first piece of land, a section of The Junction farm, outside Letsitele.

He initially farmed with vegetables but in 1950 planted his first citrus trees, paving the way for what was to become one of South Africa’s biggest privately-owned citrus exporters.

From BJ Vorster Boerdery, Mahela Boerdery and Laeveld Sitrus were formed and today four sons of Edwaard Vorster oversee a diverse grouping of farming interests under the umbrella of Mahela Group.