

PMA Fresh Connections Southern Africa

Exploring opportunities in Africa, Asia and the world

This year will see the 6th edition of the PMA Fresh Connections in Southern Africa, the event will take place 17-18 August in Pretoria.

The event has changed considerably since the first year when it attracted 150 attendees and was over in a day. This year, 600 attendees are expected from 15+ countries, it is now a 2 day conference with an integrated expo.

"The event has really become an anchoring footprint for the Southern African fresh produce supply chain," explains Richard Owen, Vice President of Global Business Development with PMA.



"The main purpose of the conference is to make sure business connections happen across the supply chain, to make sure the buyer and seller come together in a format which makes sense to them, be it a retailer looking for a new grower, a packaging company selling a product to a grower or retailer or wholesaler, a seed company selling to a farmer. We try to provide the atmosphere for all of that to happen."



The PMA team also looks at the latest in trends and tells delegates about what is happening in the fresh produce industry, both in Africa and globally. That is why there is such a mix of speakers. Its all about new ideas and how Southern Africa is positioned in the marketplace and how can they learn from what is being done around the world.

The theme of the Fresh Connections is similar to previous years, "Taking Fresh to the Next Level" putting the spotlight on

the Fresh Produce Industry and all the innovative and new opportunities which go with it. The objective of the conference and tradeshow objective is to continue to grow and from an educational point of view: How to reach and understand this growing consumer market in Africa? How can people take advantage of this? There will be speakers present with practical experience on this subject.



Access to buyers

"Suppliers from developing countries in Africa can gain access to buyers at the PMA. "Many South African-headquartered retailers have stores in other African countries. For example, Shoprite has locations in 14 countries in Africa," states Richard. "They are looking to source products locally as much as they can. At Fresh Connections people can also learn about innovative new technologies from around the world, packaging materials, seeds as well as consumer trends. We also have sessions built around how to access the African middle class which growing very quickly."

Africa

Exports from South Africa into African countries have seen an increase in recent years, none more than apples. 5 years ago only 4% of South African apples went into the African continent, now it is over 40%, making it the biggest export market for apples. There is also a potential for other South African products.



Six out of 10 of the world's fastest growing cities are in Africa and South Africa is no longer the number one economy in Africa, it is now Nigeria, and Kenya is also a very fast growing economy and may overtake South Africa in the next few years.

When investing in a country the political situation is important, but according to Richard you can never really totally prepare for that. "You have political situations and currency. Political influences in a country can affect how long it takes to move produce across a border, which can be a problem when you are dealing with fresh produce. You can't plan for that, but one of the things Fresh Connections can do is help people share experiences, 'What do you do if you produce gets stopped at the border?, How can you prepare for that? Is there an alternative way to go to market? Or can we work collectively to resolve some of these issues?'"

Global Trends

CEO Bryan Silbermann will be back again talking about the global trends he sees across the industry, together with Peter Arnold, Managing Director at Mass Fresh, (the African arm of Walmart). Bryan will speak about what he sees from a global perspective and Peter will comment on the on Southern African market.



Dave Corsi, Vice President/Produce & Floral, Wegmans, US, will also be giving a presentation. Wegmans is considered to be one of top supermarkets in the world because of their innovative displays and pricing models. This should be well received especially with the exporters in South Africa who move products into the States.

Asia

There will be a session concentrating on South East Asia - specifically India, Indonesia and Malaysia. There are many opportunities in those countries for exporters from South Africa. The session includes speakers who have experience growing and developing South African brands there.

Another session will be dedicated to China. People are experienced at reaching the 1st tier cities in China, but what happens when you need to move to the next frontier, tier 2 and tier 3 cities?

Traditional markets

There will various sessions on European markets. These will be integrated into several global presentations including that of Bryan Silbermann. Europe will also be integrated in sessions about technology and innovation.

Logistics

Logistics are a huge part in the success of growing markets in African and one session will focus wholly on logistics in Africa. Speakers who have a history in building coldstores and in the trucking industry will talk about the challenges they are seeing and also how some companies are building their distribution systems to get around the problem.



Wholesale Markets

Wholesale markets in Africa and South Africa are a key way to reach the informal market place. In South Africa they are reinventing the wholesale markets to make sure they are able to compete with the retailers in terms of producers selling to them. There will be a session built around strategies these fresh produce markets are using to reach new customers.

Latest news

Richard confirmed that Ramachandran Ottaoathu, the CEO of Choppies, an innovative and fast growing retailer in southern Africa will be on the speaker's list.

"There will be something in the program for everyone who wants to learn about the fresh produce market in Southern Africa and around the world," concludes Richard.

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