

Battaglio partners with SRCC

Joint company will boost citrus production and job creation in South Africa's Sunday's River Valley

Italy's Battaglio and South Africa's Sundays River Citrus Company (SRCC) have launched a new fruit production partnership in the Sundays River Valley.

The two have established a new company, Agricola Sundays, which is now nearing the completion of a majority investment in a group of farms in the Sundays River Valley.

It is also well on its way to acquiring shares in a greenfield enterprise that will hold considerable empowerment shares.

"This is an enormous opportunity for SRCC and Battaglio to contribute to the development of citrus in our valley and we are really excited that a company of the stature of Battaglio will join the Sundays River family," says Hannes de Waal, CEO of SRCC.

Battaglio, which was founded in Turin in 1972, has expanded its operations in the fruit and vegetable sector and now sells over 160,000 tonnes of produce, including citrus, apples and pears, and bananas, under brands that are recognised by both the trade and consumers.

A joint statement said that while it was best known for its warehouses in Turin and Rome in Italy, Battaglio had never restricted its operations.

The investment in South Africa follows previous ones in Italy with Agricola Don Camillo, which specialises in the cultivation of melons, watermelons, and pumpkins.

The group has also invested in Colombia's Valle del Cauca region with Agricola Persea, which specialises in the cultivation of Hass Avocados, and in Argentina, with Battaglio Argentina.

SRCC was founded in 1924 and is a leading exporter of citrus from South Africa, and a prominent lemon exporter. "However, in this valley, SRCC and its shareholders grow high-quality navels, Valencias, and various Late Mandarin varieties as well," the group outlined.

In recent years, SRCC has expanded its farming operations through joint ventures with its shareholders as part of a backward integration strategy.

SRCC and 17 of its producers are well on their way to completing Ikamva Lethu, a 560ha Broad-Based Empowerment Project with 60 per cent black shareholders, all of whom are packhouse and farm employees in the valley.

The parties said that they shared common value systems and had enormous respect for one another, with Battaglio believing it could further strengthen SRCC's empowerment drive.

"Battaglio is excited to make a contribution to the citrus industry in South Africa as it will help to create jobs and add value to the life of many people," confirmed president Luca Battaglio.

The companies would still operate independently, they said, with SRCC continuing to supply many Italian companies with citrus.

Battaglio said that it was a preferred receiver of fruit from several reputable, high-quality South African fruit and watermelons exporters, and would continue to add value to these professional firms.

Enjoyed this free article from Eurofruit Magazine and its team of editors? Don't miss out on even more in-depth analysis, plus all the latest news from the fresh produce business. Subscribe now to Eurofruit Magazine.