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Association launches citrus farming programme for high school learners

25TH JANUARY 2024 BY: [SCHALK BURGER](#) - CREAMER MEDIA SENIOR DEPUTY EDITOR



Industry organisation the Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA) has launched a Citrus

Secondary programme qualification in citrus production at 16 schools in South Africa.

The programme is facilitated over two years and is aimed at Grade 10 and 11 learners. The modules are timed to coincide with the citrus production cycle, and learners are introduced to topics such as enterprise planning, irrigation, financial management, pest management and plant manipulation.

The programme is fully curriculum-aligned and can be used as part of the school subject Agricultural Management Practices, or

it can be implemented as an extramural activity through which learners can attain a valuable qualification, the CGA says.

"The qualification opens a path into an industry that can offer so many opportunities. It addresses a challenge that many school-leavers unfortunately face: having few marketable skills while not having access to tertiary education," comments Citrus Academy GM **Jacomien de Klerk**.

The Citrus Secondary programme also supports the goal of continuing the transformation of the citrus industry, and creating a whole new, passionate generation of entrants into the sector, she adds.

The programme was pioneered by the Citrus Academy and provides an opportunity for learners to achieve a recognised plant production qualification while at school. It is offered by schools in citrus-producing regions.

Sixteen schools will implement the programme in Patensie, Kirkwood and Fort Beaufort, in the Eastern Cape; Umzimkulu, in KwaZulu-Natal; Hoedspruit, N'wamitwa and Tzaneen, in Limpopo; Kakamas, in the Northern Cape; and Bonnievale and Riversdal, in the Western Cape.

The programme was piloted in two schools in the Sunday's River Valley and one in Humansdorp in 2023.

"While we learned a lot about how to make the programme work practically during the pilot phase, we also discovered that there is an immense interest in and need for this type of qualification. In one school, registrations doubled as things progressed," nonprofit Sundays River Valley Collaborative community development coordinator **Theo Bezuidenhout** points out.

"The programme is about recalibrating the current education system, and working with the local community and local government, so that the system can have a systemic effect on things like employment prospects," he says.

The Citrus Secondary programme has the potential to make a significant contribution to growing local skills pools to meet the demand for skilled workers.

Further, the CGA's Citrus Academy will provide the programme's content, assessment and administration using the Academy's e-learning platform. Through it, learners can also access supporting information, videos and sound clips, and engage with interactive material.

The citrus industry in South Africa exported 165.1-million 15 kg cartons for delivery to global markets in 2023. It sustains 140 000 livelihoods on farm level and brings in more than R30-billion a year in export revenue.

Projections indicate the industry can grow by a further 100 000 jobs in the next eight years if all role-players work together to secure increased market access and improved export logistics, the CGA says. 🇷🇺

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