

Gerrit van der Merwe appointed as new CGA chairman

By [Fred Meintjes](#) | 25 March 2024

Citrus Growers' Association announces the election of a new chairman, who will guide the South African citrus industry for the next two years

It has been announced that Gerrit van der Merwe is taking over as chairman of the South African Citrus Growers' Association (CGA).

Van der Merwe is managing director of citrus grower-exporter ALG Estates (ALG), based in Citrusdal in the Western Cape.

CGA chief executive Justin Chadwick welcomed Van der Merwe's appointment.



Gerrit van der Merwe

"He brings a lot of energy and enormous experience to this essential role," he said. "He knows the business of citrus through and through. His leadership will be appreciated."

Chadwick confirmed that this was a "critical and decisive" time for South African citrus.

"The industry made huge investments in plantings a few years ago and we are seeing crop sizes increase accordingly," he continued.

"Projections show we can, if all role-players work together, export an additional 100m 15kg cartons of citrus within the next eight years. This can create 100,000 new jobs and generate billions in foreign earnings.

"But there are challenges that need to be addressed urgently for us to achieve this goal," he added.

Reacting to his appointment, Van der Merwe highlighted poor logistics and market access as two key challenges.

"Our rail network and ports need to be much more efficient and unfair EU trade regulations need to be fought," he said. "These two obstacles are standing in the industry's way."

EUROFRUIT a team of dedicated and talented CGA board members behind me. We are all focused on ways in which we can work with government to make sure the industry will firstly retain and then increase jobs and revenue.”

Outgoing CGA chairman Hannes de Waal, from the Sunday's River Valley in the Eastern Cape, will now become one of the two vice-chairmen at the CGA.

The other is Jan-Louis Pretorius, from Letsitele in Limpopo in the north of South Africa.

Eight generations of citrus farming

Van der Merwe's family has been farming on the upper reaches of the Olifants River Valley near Citrusdal for eight generations.

The well-known Van der Merwe brothers, Gerrit, All and Lieben, consolidated and expanded the family's citrus growing interests during several decades stretching from the 1990s.

Van Der Merwe succeeded his father, the late Gerrit van der Merwe, at the head of the family business.

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ALG is not only a leading South African grower but also a well-respected exporter – and the Van der Merwe family played a leading role in developing the very successful South African summer citrus business in the United States.

Van der Merwe said that being part of a family agribusiness, he felt a great responsibility of stewardship.

“You must aim to leave an endeavour in a better state than how it was entrusted to you,” he said. “Not just in terms of finances and assets, but also in terms of improving it by focusing on the wider community.”

He noted that a citrus farm, just like the industry, is made up out of a collection of hard-working people, people who believe in contributing to the South African economy through working the land.

“It is one of my goals to make citrus more community-centred and hopefully contribute in that way.”

This sense of community and unity was on display in July last year when a devastating flood caused damage of nearly R500m to growers in the Citrusdal Valley.

“All role-players came together to rebuild and look towards the future,” Van der Merwe added.