

South African fruit industry loses key diplomat and trade expert Deon Joubert

By [Fred Meintjes](#) | 25 November 2025

Industry veteran who served as Citrus Growers' Association envoy to the EU and played pivotal role in country's agricultural deregulation, has died



Deon Joubert

The South African fruit industry, and particularly the citrus industry, has lost one of its key diplomats in the passing of Deon Joubert.

Joubert's family confirmed his death this morning (25 November) after he failed to recover from surgery last week.

Fruit growers and marketers from around the country have paid tribute to a man described as a key member of the South African fruit fraternity.

“His understanding of the corridors of power in Brussels, his extensive network in Europe, his understanding of the shipping and port environment, his ability to conjure up market access strategies and his ability to convince people were instrumental in the continued growth of exports to the European Union,” said Justin Chadwick, who earlier this year retired as chief executive of the South African Citrus Growers’ Association (CGA).

CGA chairman Gerrit van der Merwe described the news of Joubert’s passing as “incredibly sad”.

“It was so unexpected and we will need time to digest the loss,” he said.

Citrus sources also noted that Joubert worked tirelessly to try and avoid the new tariff barriers applied by the US.

In the deciduous industry, he is remembered for playing a crucial role as South Africa’s agricultural and trade representative in the US and the European Union.

In the 1990s he returned to South Africa to play a key part in preparation for the deregulation of the South African deciduous and citrus industries under the new democracy’s agricultural minister Derek Hanekom.

He was also responsible for the winding up of the Deciduous Fruit Board and the unlocking of assets for the deciduous industry.

At Unifruco and Capespan he headed logistics functions before eventually founding an independent logistics company which still plays a key role in the deciduous and citrus export businesses.

Over time, Joubert moved closer to the citrus industry, where he eventually became the CGA’s official envoy to the European Union with the task of resolving the Citrus Black Spot dispute, resulting in the issue moving towards its final stages in a panel at the WTO.

“He knew everything about regulations and the ways things work in Brussels and at times it was his knowledge and personal friendship with EU institutions and the fruit growing industries of Europe which helped to resolved difficult situations,” commented a former colleague.

Joubert recently told Fruitnet that he was pleased with the growers of Europe and South African growers moving closer together and tackling common problems.

He did not mince his words about the inability of South African government circles to move more quickly to resolve trade problems.

“He became more than a colleague; he became a friend,” said Chadwick. “We travelled extensively together and he never tired and was always thinking of the next step.

“When the then Chairman of CGA (Pieter Nortje) told me that the CGA needed to employ Deon Joubert, I was extremely hesitant,” Chadwick continued.

“I did not know Deon well, and he seemed quite brash and, dare I say, arrogant. Nevertheless, the CGA needed somebody who could assist in understanding the EU and the way they work.

“Deon’s clear explanation and rationale resulted in complete buy in from growers when difficult decisions had to be taken,” he pointed out. “He became something of a ‘Mr Fix It’ – not only for the citrus industry, but across the entire agricultural spectrum.”

Chadwick added that Joubert always arrived with a loud “Hello Boeta”, or “Hello Young Man” on the trade floor and in meetings.

“When Deon arrived everybody knew he was there,” he concluded.

EUROFRUIT

