

Phillip Dempsey Serving the citrus industry

Phillip Dempsey shares highlights from his illustrious career in the citrus industry with Louise Brodie.

He's responsible for industry affairs in the fruit production and export company, Southern Fruit Growers (SFG) in the Eastern Cape. For ten years, Phillip has served as the Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) of Southern Africa board member for the Patensie district, in the Eastern Cape.

He's also chairman of the Citrus Academy.



fruit journal
DIE JOERNAAL VIR DIE VRUGTEBEDRYF IN SUID-AFRIKA

How did you get involved in the citrus industry?

I grew up in East London and attended Grens High School. After school I registered for a B. Agric. degree at Saasveld Agricultural College in George (today, the institution forms part of the Nelson Mandela University). After graduating, I completed a master's degree in Sustainable Agriculture (M.S.A.) part-time through the University of the Orange Free State.

My working career kicked off at Saffraan Farm in the Patensie district, getting to know the practical and management side of citrus and vegetable production. The farm owner was Petrus du Preez, who was also chairman of Patensie Sitrus Beperk (PSB) at that stage. My five-year tenure there proved invaluable for my career.

I then moved on to UAP, a chemical advisory company for growers, where I stayed for one year, before joining SFG in 2002. There, I was exposed to the operations and systems of fruit packhouses and quality control, and later progressed to managing the citrus supply programmes for our clients. In addition, I also started a local marketing business which has expanded into a commercial business, servicing local supermarkets in SA, as well as businesses with clients beyond our borders.

Currently, I am focussing more on the local marketing side, supporting SFG with industry related information. I'm also assisting them, along with local growers, with the establishment of a cultivar company, Citrigene.

Your voluntary industry responsibilities require a considerable investment of time, not to mention commitment. What motivates your involvement with these organisations?

Strategic development planning is critical to the success of our industry, especially during the next five years. Therefore, the responsibility that comes with serving on these boards is certainly warranted.

My exposure to, and involvement in the planning process keeps me positive and motivates me to be a part of making a difference and keeping the citrus industry sustainable, also for our new and upcoming farmers.

My involvement is also an effective way of gaining a clear understanding of the various aspects of the citrus industry, as well as the challenges that growers and other industry stakeholders face within the citrus production and marketing environment.

Experiencing first-hand the challenges that the CGA board is presented with, and how the board strategically addresses these on behalf of the growers, is remarkable. Armed with the relevant information, the CGA board is then able to anticipate challenges and to tackle them accordingly.

By assisting growers with these industry challenges, they (the growers) can then focus fully on maximising their production and quality.

THE LAST WORD

The Citrus Academy plays a significant role in building capacity within the industry, and its positive impact certainly shows. How would you say this dynamic institution stays so focussed?

The Citrus Academy is tasked with addressing specific human resource capacity challenges facing the South African citrus industry. It achieves this mission by creating and enabling an environment for skills development within the industry. Currently, radical changes are affecting the working environment and the ever-changing climatic conditions demand a paradigm shift in terms of a suitable way forward.

In this vein, information is key in ensuring that growers are better equipped to manage risks and uncertainty. Therefore, part of the Citrus Academy's focus is to facilitate the spread of vital information within the industry through suitable short courses. These include helping to grow learners' understanding of how essential components of the citrus value chain systems align with the framework of the broader citrus industry.

What are your thoughts about the future of the South African citrus industry, particularly from an Eastern Cape perspective?

We cannot change the fact that volumes are increasing year on year, and that the timeframes are getting progressively shorter with reference to increasing volumes per year. The Eastern Cape plays a significant role in this development, with an increase in plantings and investments in the region. Water availability and security will play an important role in the sustainability of future production of citrus in the Eastern Province, as well as giving it a competitive edge. This year climate challenges (warmer winters) and logistical issues caused difficulties of their own within the value chain, right through to the client.

Upliftment within our citrus value chain, with reference to employees and upcoming farmers, as well as sustainable investment in infrastructure within the industry will play a very important role. For the successful investment and development of the citrus industry in the Eastern Cape, the region will need to adhere to financial and socio-economic disciplines to make this a reality.

fruit journal
DIE JOERNAAL VIR DIE VRUGTEBEDRYF IN SUID-AFRIKA

Biological Control

Mealybug
Red scale
Thrips
Red spider mite



SenTri tex

WHAT WE DO

-  Supply of beneficial insects
-  Technical support throughout season
-  Scout training on farm level
-  Provide an integrated program
-  Determine pest infestation
-  Determine timing of releases
-  Supply IPM certificate
-  Free delivery

SUSTAINABLE

LOCALLY PRODUCED

NATURALLY
OCCURRING

INSECTICIDE FREE



for more information contact Brahm Jonker
+27 (0) 82 077 5940 // brahmj@icloud.com

www.sentritex.co.za