

Succession stories in the citrus industry

MOUTON CITRUS



Left to right: Abraham Mouton, Director of Marketing; Carel Mouton, Director of Production; Johan Mouton, CEO; and Madelé Mouton, Head of Corporate Responsibility



The name Mouton Citrus hardly tells the full story of how this family-owned business has transformed itself over the past few decades. By Gloria Weare (adapted from Louise Brodie)

Mouton Citrus, located in Citrusdal in the Western Cape, has developed new local and international partnerships to remain at the forefront of agri production and marketing in SA.

In terms of empowerment shareholding, Mouton Holdings – and therefore, its main operating arm, Mouton Citrus – with 48% empowerment shareholding, is one of the most empowered commercial fruit producers

in SA. "By including broad-based inclusive, black institutional and black entrepreneurial empowerment, we have aligned ourselves with the requirements for the future of South Africa," says Executive Chairman Johan Mouton.

"Our sole purpose is to create and grow a profitable, sustainable, competitive and empowered company based on sound business principles. We are well established as a leading producer-packer-exporter of quality citrus and rooibos tea, with the ability to grow from this base through alliances and joint ventures," he continues.

It is not surprising that the core values of the group include concepts such as integrity, excellence, commitment, respect and stewardship, and that the group has such a strong empowerment focus.

Through its long track record of people development, these values have become embedded in the group mantra and have contributed significantly to the company's tremendous success.

The fact that both Boet Mouton, Director: Packing and Marketing and brother CP Mouton, Director: Production and Development, play such key roles in the future of Mouton Citrus speaks of a clear company succession strategy from one generation to the next.

"We need to consider succession not only in terms of management control, but continuously, for the wider stakeholders in the business," says CP Mouton. "This includes our employees who are shareholders, as well as the broader community in our area. Through skills development and training we empower people who work for us. This provides them with the opportunity to earn more generous salaries, as well as to become involved in decision-making within the business. This opportunity for growth has been embraced by many of our employees, and it has an impact on the future for their dependents as well as on the community."

If you look deeper, you find that the strategy of growth is built on competitive advantage, by undertaking the right acquisitions or renting farms with a turnaround strategy, development of new generation orchards and the application of best practice and technology. Mouton Citrus also partners with high quality growers, to increase market supply and integrate operations into the value chain by unlocking packing, juicing and global supply chain efficiencies.

"Key to our future is how to design business management structures to continuously grow the business, to create enough scope. And how to enable the incorporation of young, fresh talent," says Boet Mouton. There is a focus on drawing top class people to enable the business to grow and flourish.

Mouton Citrus provides opportunity and prosperity for much more than just the Mouton family and shareholders. "My father (Johan Mouton) always strived to be more than just a citrus farmer. He believes strongly in custodianship for generations to come, by having a strategic focus on balancing corporate and family governance. This is what drives us." 🍊