

YOUTH BRING ZEST TO CITRUS INDUSTRY

Through its Citrus Academy, the Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) is putting its money where its mouth is when it comes to integrating much-needed young minds into the citrus industry (and by extension, into the South African economy).

By Candice Burgin

Zama Njili and Bahle Kweba, two enthusiastic beneficiaries of the sought-after Citrus Academy Bursary Fund, shared with the *SA Fruit Journal* what their experience of the industry has been like.

Established in 2005, the Citrus Academy is mandated by the CGA to respond to the industry's transformation needs, alongside the CGA Grower Development Company (CGA-GDC). To date, the academy has awarded 908 bursaries to 324 students.



Zama Njili

"Before exploiting the opportunities offered by the Citrus Academy, ensure that you are where your heart desires to be, then striving for excellence and performing well will not take much effort," says Zama Njili who obtained her MSc degree through the Citrus Academy Bursary Fund.

Q Where's home?

A In Cala in the Eastern Cape, but I'm currently based in Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth).

Q What is your current role in the citrus industry?

A I'm an Extension Officer, assisting growers with production and technical advice. I also do research transfer to the farmers, for implementation.

Q Growing up, what was your view of the agricultural sector? Has that changed at all?

A I grew up in a family of small stock and beef farming, which was our main source of income. Then, I viewed farming as a hobby, but began to realise that it's actually a source of food, and presents business opportunities worth pursuing.

Q What do you like most about being in the fruit industry, and why?

A I like being part of the process. It gives me great pleasure being able to contribute to citrus production through advising growers, and technology transfer. This improves the quality and yields of our citrus fruit, which is excelling in worldwide export.

Q What has been your experience of youth integration into the fruit industry, and collaboration between the youth and older industry role-players?

A Working in the industry has been beneficial in terms of all the experience I have obtained thus far. The older role-players have more knowledge and experience, which they can transfer to the youth. This helps to further establish skills development in the sector, enabling the youth to later improve systems, introduce the latest technology, and make necessary improvements that would benefit the citrus industry. I view this integration as an effective "succession plan" that will ultimately sustain the industry at large.

Q Do you think that the youth is still largely misinformed around the myriad career opportunities within agriculture? How can the citrus industry change that?

A It's in the process of changing. Previously, the agricultural sector was perceived as suited for old people and uneducated individuals. But now, the youth is gradually realising that the sector has various career opportunities, also from observing other youths who are thriving in the sector.

**Bahle Kweba****Bahle Kweba**

"It is extremely exciting to be part of the fruit industry and as the industry transitions, it is my hope that it will continue to invest in the youth like it's done with me."

Q Where's home?

A In Ashton, in the Western Cape.

Q What is your current role in the citrus industry?

A Production Manager at Indigo Fruit Farming.

Q As a beneficiary of the Citrus Academy Bursary Fund, please elaborate as to how it has helped propel you towards the actualisation of your career goals.

A The Citrus Academy Bursary Fund made a huge difference in both preparing me and gaining me access into the citrus industry – landing me my first job. Their workshops and conferences exposed me to knowledge and ideas that have shaped me and built my career goals.

Q What drew you to the fruit industry?

A The excitement of planting a small tree and cultivating it to bear an

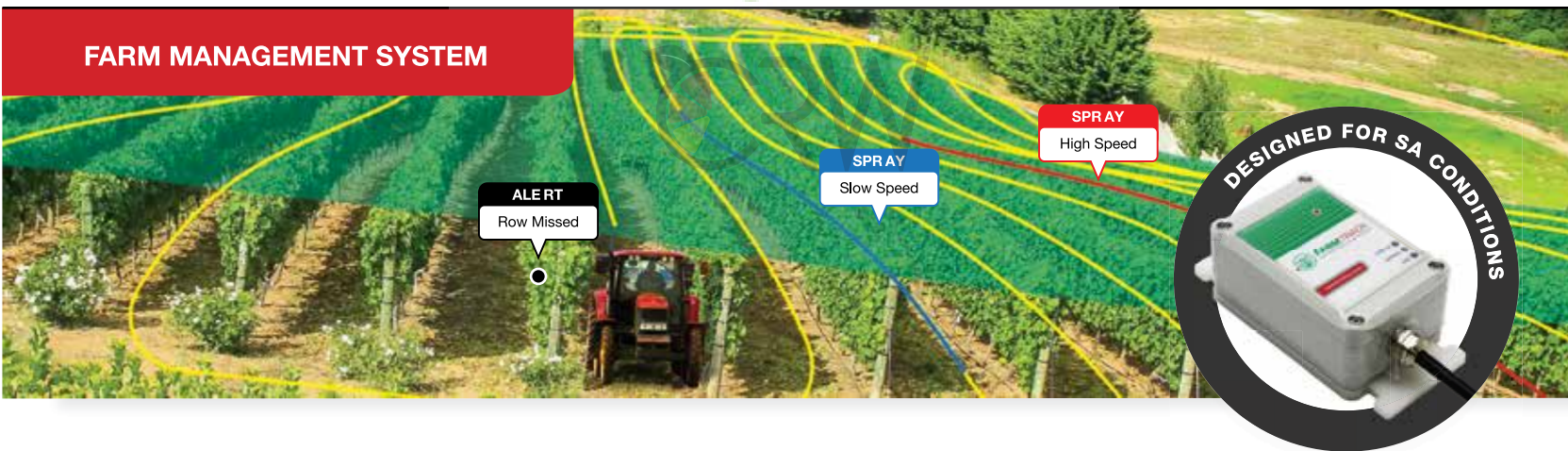
amazing fruit crop, which can be sold in various export markets.

Q What do you like most about being in the fruit industry?

A The idea of knowing my hard work will be feeding not only fellow South Africans, but the international community. I also like the new challenges that come with every season.

Q Tell us about how you've experienced the integration of the youth into the fruit industry. Is there effective collaboration between the youth and older industry role-players?

A Upon entering the industry, the youth do experience a bit of a wake-up call. But the success of the fruit industry definitely lies in the hands of the youth, and the industry's investment in them.

FARM MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Monitor and Manage your Farm *with GPS Precision.*

SPEAK TO US TODAY!

Take control of your farm
with FarmTrack.

Tel: 021 880 1163

Monitor spraying activity

Receive daily reports

Calculate driver productivity

Detect missed rows

Track fuel and water refills

WWW.FARMTRACK.CO.ZA



FARMTRACK
Your Precision Aid in Crop Production