

FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO (16/19)

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Justin Chadwick 19 April 2019

“Easy is not an option.... No days off. Never quit. Be fearless. Talent you have naturally; skill is only developed by hours and hours of work” Usain Bolt

CITRUS LEGEND – THE LATE GERRIT VAN DER MERWE

This legend will always be remembered for a twinkle in his eye and a can do attitude. When a challenge arose he did not only approach it, but ran towards it in order to sort it out.

This legend should have been called “Mr Collaboration” – he firmly believed that doing things together was better than doing things alone – and he had the leadership ability and perseverance to make others believe it. He was a founder member of Citrus South Africa – a grower organization that sought to bring discipline into a deregulated environment.

This legend is viewed as the father of South African citrus exports to the USA. He played a leading role in gaining original access. Once access was gained he realized the strength in working together – as a founder member and Chairman of what is now known as Summer Citrus.

In the early years he interacted closely with the Australian industry (at that time the only other southern hemisphere citrus producing country with US access) in order to promote responsible and orderly marketing into the USA. He travelled extensively to and through the USA, ensuring that the US program delivers what the buyers expect and what the growers demand. Under his watch South African volumes to the USA have increased from 200 000 cartons in 1998, to close to 4 million today. During times of crisis this legend kept a calm head, working on solutions that many had either not thought of, or deemed impossible. For this legend nothing was impossible.

I am doubtful that any citrus family has the provenance of this legend – his family have farmed on their farm since 1750. They now farm on 900 hectares of citrus orchards. With a doctrine of inclusivity, the farm is focused on job creation and community upliftment – workers are looked after from an educational, medical and social point of view. Through his Fairtrade accreditation, and from his own resources, this legend has supported those associated with his farming ventures. His farming venture earned him the Agriwriters Farmer of the Year award in 2010.

This legend opened his doors and his home to everybody – and all who visited felt truly welcomed. He was extremely proud of his farming venture, and of his children who joined him on the farm. He was a doting grandfather and loving husband to Lizette. He is well remembered for his sayings – “Moenie ‘n goeie storie met feite opmors nie” or “Jy gaan eendag net so dom wees soos ek” and “Ons bly eers stil en kyk wat hull ons aanbied”. These sayings and many more depict a man with an irrepressible sense of humor, a love for all and a great adventurer. This Legend died doing what he loved most – exploring Africa.

This Citrus Legend is the late Gerrit van der Merwe.

AGRI'S GOT TALENT

CGA is a proud sponsor of Agri's Got Talent 2019! In its 6th year, the singing competition & life skills programme for agricultural workers in fruit and wine industries is an excellent opportunity to showcase employees, and for them to shine! Let's show them Team Citrus can sing!

Details on how to enter will be sent out to all growers shortly, and I encourage you all to print out the material and make it available to all interested in participating.'

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