

FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO (11/23)

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Justin Chadwick 17 March 2023



"Tough times never last, but tough people do" Robert H Shuller

CITRUS LEGEND – JOHN PURCHASE

This past week over 600 delegates met at the CGA Citrus Summit. More about that later. At the Summit the industry recognises those who have contributed to the activities and recognition of CGA, someone who has contributed to the growth, profitability and sustainability of the citrus growing sector, and/or who has aided the southern African industry in being globally competitive.

The first of the three Legends for 2023 is John Purchase.

John Purchase cut his teeth in agricultural research, serving 22 years at the Agricultural Research Council before moving into organized agriculture. Before starting in his working life, he completed a BSc in agriculture at Pretoria University and a PHD at Free State University in 1997.

John has received many accolades over the years – including the Alumnus of the Year from University of the Free State in 2011; the South African Agricultural Writers Association Agriculturist of the Year award in 2012 and Knight of the Order of Agricultural Merit for his service to agriculture and agri-business from the French Government in 2018 – I am not sure if we should address him as Sir Legend.

His ties with the Free State goes back to his birth in the small town of Lindley, and his attendance of South Africa's premier rugby school Grey College where he matriculated in 1976.

It is his years in organized agriculture that marked his contribution to the citrus industry. His appointment to Business Unity South Africa committees and National Economic and Labour Council (NEDLAC) task teams has put John at the forefront where industry meets government and labour. His philosophy is to treat people with dignity and respect – and his ability to do this meant that he was trusted in these circles, and could further the goals of industry. He had immense patience in dealing with others that perhaps did not warrant this dignity and respect; making progress where many with less patience and perseverance would have floundered.

There was never a problem too big or too complex for John – whatever issue the citrus industry, and agriculture as a whole, was dealing with – John found a way to assist. In 2020 and 2021 he served on the CGA COVID Response Committee and found some solutions to fairly unique solutions – such as what to do with stowaways on a vessel when no port would allow the vessel to dock with untested and unvaccinated individuals on board. He put in place government-private processes and platforms that allowed quick resolution to new problems when time was of the essence. He also assisted the CGA Board in developing the Association's strategic plan. His present work on the Agriculture and Agro Processing Master Plan has tested his patience and philosophy to the limit. He has managed to cut through the smoke and dust created by those who break down and disrupt, in order to create a vision and a plan for those who want to build a South Africa for our children.

Although retired, he continues to drive his vision as he stated in a recent interview: "As a country, we face extraordinary challenges, but we must continue to build both social cohesion and the competitiveness of all our agricultural value chains through cultivated and respectful partnerships. A failure to do so will no doubt condemn us to a failed state and dire consequences".

