

FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."
- Benjamin Franklin

THE IMPORTANCE OF BIOSECURITY AND EXPORT-LED GROWTH IN AGRICULTURE

The focus of the Minister of Agriculture to resolve the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreak is something that, although a crisis, offers opportunity to make the concern with biosecurity front and centre in our sector.

I listened closely when the Minister, in a presentation to parliament this past week, expressed frustration with non-compliance to movement controls – where animals are moved out of disease management zones (subject to FMD infection and implemented controls) to free areas and risking the further spread of the disease.

This is a great opportunity for us in citrus to observe and learn, as we could also in the future be affected by a harmful disease: Asian Citrus Greening, also known as HuangLongBing (HLB). The Minister underscored why biosecurity is one of the seven priorities of the Department of Agriculture (DoA), something that deserves complete support.

Biosecurity is generally considered to be the responsibility of everyone – literally everyone in the country – but much more important is border control, especially against the illegal migration and unintended entry of pests and diseases. Uncontrolled trade and the movement of goods smuggled across borders also risk the entry of infectious material, and this may include plant material or trees.

Agriculture has contributed immensely to the country's economy through exports and biosecurity is the very basis on which goods are moved: trade between countries is premised on the exporting country meeting sanitary and phytosanitary requirements of the importing country. Sound biosecurity practices give trade firmer assurance and thus wider access for exports.

Biosecurity should also underpin entire farm operations and farmers have a primary responsibility in this area.

Going back to HLB, the disease has decimated citrus production in parts of the USA, and it is also posing serious challenges in South America. The biggest challenge with biosecurity often stems from a lackadaisical approach where the general belief is that the disease is far away – and thus far from a problem – and yet farms receive guests and goods from elsewhere in the world.

Last year's National Biosecurity Summit was an important event for South Africa. It sought to bring all stakeholders together and strengthen our efforts – with improved communication and coordination. Fundamentally, all citizens need to be informed of their role in ensuring biosecurity. It is a year later and perhaps time to reflect on outcomes realised there. How much have we implemented and what still needs to be done? Unless we focus on better alignment, we remain dangerously exposed, to the detriment of agriculture as we know it, the creator of jobs and livelihoods in rural South Africa – a critical engine in growing our economy.

Several years back the CGA importantly tasked the CRI with the responsibility for managing citrus industry biosecurity. We should be grateful for work undertaken by the Biosecurity Division of the CRI, and we should continue supporting its leading role in protecting growers against pest and disease incursions, working jointly with DoA and other stakeholders. Compliance with biosecurity standards is part of growing our industry and our economy.

CGA GROWER ROADSHOWS

During the week of **3-5 March**, the second week of roadshows will commence with Boitshoko and his team visiting the **Boland** and **Western Cape**, and **Northern Cape** regions, and Paul and his team visiting **Patensie**, **Sundays River Valley**, and **Eastern Cape Midlands** regions. It will be **KZN's** turn on **11 March**. Kindly RSVP to Tanya (tanya@cga.co.za) to ensure you are catered for.

CITRUS MARKETING FORUM (CMF)

Please take note of the upcoming **Citrus Marketing Forum (CMF)** that will be taking place on **24 March 2026** at **Protea Hotel Technopark, Stellenbosch** starting at **10h00**. **In-person attendance is encouraged** to allow for meaningful engagement and discussion on current market and industry matters. To assist with planning and catering, please **RSVP to Claudia Walklett** (claudia@fpf.co.za) by **17 March**. Should you be unable to travel, a hybrid option will be available – please contact **Portia Magwaza** (portia@cga.co.za) for the link.

INTERESTING FACTS

The SIT programme on FCM, based out of Citrusdal, was developed through a joint research project between the CRI, International Atomic Energy Agency, and the United States Department of Agriculture from 2001 to 2006, leading to the formation of XSIT in 2006.

CGA GROUP INFO

CITRUS MARKETING FORUM (CMF)

Date: Tuesday, 24 March

Time: 10h00

Venue: Protea Hotel, Technopark, Stellenbosch (In-person) – RSVP to Claudia Walklett (claudia@fpf.co.za)

Hybrid option: Contact Portia Magwaza (portia@cga.co.za) for the link