

“Action is the foundational key to all success” Pablo Picasso

INEFFICIENT LOGISTICS

The CGA released last week the report of an independent study by the Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy (BFAP) which found that the combined direct and indirect cost of inefficient logistics to the citrus industry was a staggering R5.27 billion in the 2024 season alone. This represents a debilitating loss of foreign revenue to the country and a setback to creating desperately needed jobs. Gerrit van der Merwe, Chairperson of the CGA and a grower in Citrusdal said that quantifying the damage is an important first step and that in a certain sense South Africa has gotten used to the destruction of value that has been happening on a greater or lesser scale over the last few years. He went further and expressed the view that the growers and their rural communities who feel the impact directly are incredibly frustrated. The CGA hoped that in releasing this report it will provide the Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana with more evidence of the negative impact inefficient logistics have on the economy hopefully leading him to prioritise South Africa's logistics crisis in the upcoming budget speech. The budget speech has since been postponed to the 12th March 2025 and the CGA looks forward to see how the Minister responds to the call made by the President to address the crisis at key SOE's.

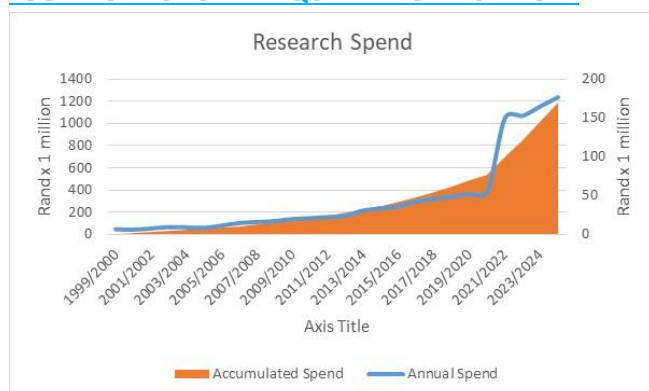
CELEBRATING RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

Last week the CGA Directors held their Board meeting in Nelspruit, allowing them to join industry leaders, citrus researchers and invited guests in reflecting on 50 years of citrus research excellence. It was just over fifty years ago that Dennis Solomon donated a piece of land on which the present research facilities were erected in Nelspruit. The foundations of citrus research excellence can be traced back to 1927 when the South African Citrus Cooperative Citrus Exchange (SACCE) appointed the first part-time industry technical adviser. In 1949 the Citrus Research Committee was formed to coordinate citrus research. The first citrus researcher posts were established in 1953 and the first researchers were housed at the Citrus and Subtropical Fruit Research Institute – now known as ARC Tropical and Subtropical Crops. In 1973 SACCE-built the industry's own research centre – the Outspan Citrus Centre (OCC) – and launched the South African Citrus Improvement Scheme. The foresight of industry leaders of the time ensured that the southern African citrus industry is built on the bedrock of sound science and healthy trees. In 2001 the research and technical operations of OCC were transferred from Capespan to Citrus Research International, and in 2002 the operations of the Outspan Foundation Block followed, with the facilities being renamed the Citrus Research Centre and the Citrus Foundation Block. In 2018 the industry ownership of these facilities was secured in a sale of the properties from Capespan to the Citrus Research Trust.

Guests at the celebration of 50 years of citrus research excellence reminisced about the past, with MC Pretorius officiating the event and speeches from Vaughan Hattingh, Marc Solomon, Kallie Schoeman, Piet Smit, Gerrit van der Merwe, Paul Fourie, Louis von Broembsen, Jock Danckwerts, Abraham van Rooyen and Thys du Toit, reminding us of the milestones and those who had put all the building blocks in place.

Special mention must be made of those who have been responsible for the Citrus Research Centre from 1974 to 2024: Doug Stanton (1974-1984); Louis von Broembsen (1984-1987); Etienne Rabe (1987-1992); Malvern Georgala (1992-1994); John Bower (1994-1999); Vaughan Hattingh (1999-2001) and Tim Grout (2001-2024).

LOOKING BACK OVER A QUARTER OF A CENTURY



Employing the world's leading citriculturists and giving them the best tools to do their work takes a considerable investment. Since 2000, growers have invested almost R1.2 billion in research. Starting in 2000 with just R6.5 million per year. In 2021 growers took a progressive and enlightened decision to triple the annual research spend.