

FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO (24/25)

Boitshoko Ntshabele, 13 June 2025

"The surest way to corrupt a youth is to instruct him to hold in higher esteem those who think alike than those who think differently." Friedrich Nietzsche



INFUSION OF YOUTH A CRITICAL INGREDIENT FOR CGA SUSTAINABILITY

In my travels crisscrossing the country to visit with citrus growers and getting to know the various production regions, I have been heartened by the presence of young farmers and youth in our sessions. Their presence stands in contrast to the bleak national statistic that even though youth (ages 15 to 34) make up more than a third of the population, unemployment within this group ranges between 40-50%. In addition, reports suggest the average age of South African farmers is around 57, highlighting one of the key challenges facing the Agricultural sector both globally and locally – the ageing farmer population. There are several factors that drive this but amongst others cited is the lack of development in rural areas, and the lack of vibrancy in rural towns to meet needs of young people and couples. Other challenges include lack of access to well-developed healthcare facilities, which in turn is tied to the lack of adequately trained doctors and specialists. Young people leave the rural hinterland to go attend tertiary education institutions, and many of them struggle to trek back home after concluding their studies. My own anecdotal assessment suggests that we as citrus growers of Southern Africa are on the right trajectory in terms of the inclusion of youth and youth development. However, more needs to be done to encourage young people into agriculture. At the development segment of the CGA Summit in March this year, I was encouraged by the fact that we have had young people who have gone through the Citrus Academy and who are now holding various positions of responsibility within the citrus industry. I also observed the presence of young growers in our midst.

In a recent discussion with stakeholders, I was asked about CGA's targeting of youth and its youth development programmes. For over 20 years, the Citrus Academy Bursary Fund has invested in more than 1,100 bursaries to almost four hundred students which gave them opportunities to gain experience from the best in the industry. The Citrus Secondary programme enables school leavers with matric to join the industry, allowing young people to build rewarding careers in the citrus industry. Maintaining ways for young people to join the industry is critical for our long-term sustainability, especially onramps to paths where young people can work with and learn from those with knowledge and experience. This is one of the best investments the CGA can make.

Agriculture is increasingly competitive, and ensuring that youth continue to join the industry is key to improving South Africa's position in these stakes. Food security is directly tied to productive agriculture, which in turn, depends on a thriving trade environment - one that encourages exports and generates the foreign earnings necessary for reinvestment and growth. Young people are known to be more amenable to adopt new practices, accept the need for incorporating changes in the way that work is undertaken, which bodes well for innovation and development of farms. This Sunday, we honour the fathers who laid strong foundations through their hard work and wisdom. On Monday, Youth Day, let us celebrate the next generation and give them the opportunities to build on the legacy.

PACKED AND SHIPPED TABLE

End of Week 23 Million 15 kg Cartons	Packed	Packed	Packed	Shipped	Shipped	Original Estimate	Latest Prediction	Final Packed	Vision 260
SOURCE: PPECB/AGRIHUB	2023	2024	2025	2024	2025	2025	2025	2024	2025
Grapefruit	9.7 m	10.2 m	10.2 m	8.1 m	8.8 m	15.3 m	15.1 m	14.4 m	16.8 m
Lemons	20.2 m	18.5 m	21.1 m	15.4 m	19.2 m	32.9 m	34.1 m	34.7 m	41.5 m
Mandarins	13.4 m	13.1 m	15.2 m	9.4 m	11.9 m	44.9 m	45.3 m	41.6 m	43.9 m
Navels	8.1 m	7.9 m	8.0 m	3.5 m	5.3 m	26.1 m	26.0 m	25.1 m	21.7 m
Valencia	1.2 m	0.7 m	1.6 m	-	0.6 m	52.0 m	52.0 m	48.8 m	58.0 m
Total	52.6 m	50.4 m	56.1 m	36.4 m	45.8 m	171.1 m	172.5 m	164.6 m	181.9 m

THE CGA GROUP (CRI, RIVER BIOSCIENCE, XSIT, CGA CULTIVAR COMPANY, CGA GROWER DEVELOPMENT COMPANY & CITRUS ACADEMY) ARE SUPPORTED BY AND WORK FOR THE CITRUS GROWERS' OF SOUTHERN AFRICA