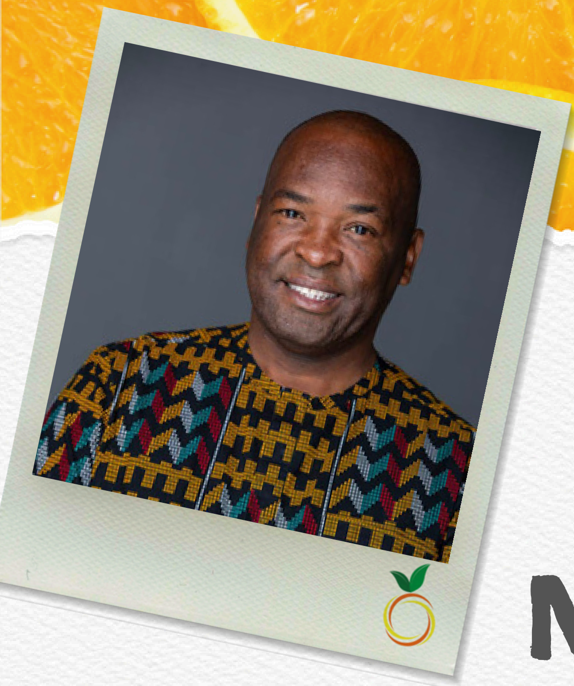
CGA Grower Development Company

August 2025

newsletter



ED'S NOTE

In this issue:

It has been a very busy and productive 2025 for the CGA Grower Development Company (GDC) so far. And the second half of the year will also see some very significant moments for black citrus growers in the country.

In this issue, we highlight some of the strategic partnerships and powerful programmes now shaping the future of black citrus growers in South Africa. From a major new Citrus Development Programme led by Cederberg Tree Nursery, Du Roi Nursery, Firstfruits, and FarmNode to a promising public-private initiative in the Eastern Cape, collaboration continues to be the engine of impact.

These stories represent real investment in black growers in South Africa, through trees, training, technology, and market access. The commitment of our partners is clear, and such continued support will be central to the long-term success of our sector.

Looking ahead, the Citrus Growers Development Chamber will host the 2025 Grower Indaba in Johannesburg in September. The Indaba will align growers and industry partners around a renewed transformation strategy, set priorities for inclusive growth, and elect new leadership to drive the next decade of progress.

This also comes as the GDC is close to celebrating a decade of work. Over the past 10 years, the GDC has worked with more than 120 black citrus growers across the country, helping integrate them into commercial value chains and supporting their journey toward sustainability, compliance, and competitiveness.

Although we sometimes take this work for granted, new Stats SA data confirms that agri-SMMEs are critical for South Africa. Even though smaller enterprises make up a third of the total income earned by agricultural entities in South Africa, they employ over half of the people who work in agriculture in South Africa. These economic anchors in rural South Africa must be developed.

Also in this issue, we share a glimpse into how the GDC team marked Mandela Day—spending time with children at Grace and Mercy Day Care and Child Welfare Tshwane.

As always, we thank our growers, partners, and stakeholders for their continued support. Together, we are growing more than citrus—we're growing communities, opportunities, and a shared future.

MESSAGE FROM THE CGA CEO

As the 2025 citrus season peaks, with millions of cartons of Southern African citrus moving to markets worldwide, one is uniquely aware of the interconnectivity of global trade. An event in one country can affect a market on the other side of the world.

Access to foreign markets has been much in the news lately, especially because of the developments around the US government's stance on trade tariffs. While global trade turmoil and geopolitical shifts undoubtedly create uncertainty, they have also ignited a crucial sense of urgency. Regardless of the outcome of the US tariff turmoil, the entire crisis already showed us that trade offers and counteroffers can be prepared with more speed than we are used to.

Now, faced with the unpredictability of shifting tariffs and trade agreements, countries are accelerating efforts to diversify their partnerships and explore new avenues. We're seeing a push for bilateral agreements outside traditional blocs, renewed urgency in negotiations with emerging markets, and an emphasis on strengthening regional trade ties. The global trade landscape is undoubtedly more complex, but it's also becoming more dynamic and, perhaps, ultimately more robust for having been forced to deal with a crisis.

Every market is important for the CGA. We need to retain and expand all our markets if we are to reach our Vision 260 goal of exporting 260 million 15kg cartons by 2032. This includes the US. But it also includes countries in Asia, for instance. China's initial suggestion of duty-free market access and tariff elimination on a significant range of products from African nations was a welcome development.

Trade efforts in India are also intensifying, and recognising this, the CGA is now pushing forward with a robust promotional campaign in India. Japan and South Korea also offer great opportunities.

Every market we expand, leads to new jobs. Every big trade barrier limiting access, unfortunately often leads to job losses. The citrus industry wants to create jobs, and it can.

South African citrus growers also take immense pride in cultivating high-quality fruit for consumers, whether they are in New York or Beijing, Amsterdam or Moscow. This pride stems from a long-standing tradition of excellence, adherence to rigorous quality and food safety standards, and a commitment to innovation that ensures our citrus consistently meets global expectations. Every perfectly packed carton represents not just a product, but the culmination of dedicated effort and a commitment to delivering an exceptional taste experience to homes around the world.

As the international trade environment is becoming increasingly more complex, industry bodies and government departments must redouble their efforts to keep all trade channels open and create brand new avenues for trade - so that the farmers of South Africa can create jobs.

These are challenging times, but they are also opportunity-filled times.

NEW CITRUS COLLABORATION
STRENGTHENS TRANSFORMATION

A landmark collaboration between four prominent agribusinesses will contribute to a future foundation for black citrus growers in South Africa. Cederberg Tree Nursery, Du Roi Nursery, Firstfruits, and FarmNode have joined forces to launch the Citrus Development Programme, a new initiative designed to support black citrus growers, including land reform beneficiaries, with the tools, expertise, and resources needed to thrive.

With a combined investment of over R4 million, the programme offers a powerful package of subsidised citrus trees, cutting-edge digital farm management tools, and discounted advisory services. The aim is to open the door to meaningful participation in the citrus value chain for emerging and expanding black growers alike.

In a further show of support for transformation, the partners have contributed R500,000 to the CGA Grower Development Company (CGA-GDC). This funding will be used to strengthen ongoing capacity-building and development work being led by CGA-GDC across the industry.

Running from October 2025 to March 2027, the Citrus Development Programme is designed to provide practical, accessible support to approved participants.

Highlights include:

- Over 100,000 citrus trees—including Nadorcott LS, Leanri, Midknight Valencia, and 2PH seedless lemon—offered at 50% discount.
- Free access to FarmNode's intuitive farm management software in the first year, followed by a 50% discount in year two.
- 20% discount on Firstfruits' expert agronomic support in the first year.

Tree supply will be managed by two of the country's leading nurseries: Cederberg Tree Nursery in the Western Cape, certified to supply disease-free trees nationally, and Du Roi Nursery in Limpopo, serving growers in the northern citrus regions.

This collaborative effort is a long-term investment in the future of citrus farming, one that brings together industry experience, innovation, and a shared commitment to transformation. The project aligns with, and supports, the CGA's Vision 260, which aims to grow the hectarage under citrus farming significantly, creating more jobs and increasing South Africa's export capacity.

A BOOST FOR EASTERN CAPE GROWERS

Citrus growers in the Eastern Cape will soon benefit from a new initiative to help increase average citrus yields in the province.

The Eastern Cape Department of Agriculture (ECDoA), the CGA Grower Development Company (GDC), and the Eastern Cape Rural Development Agency (ECRDA) have entered into a strategic Memorandum of Understanding to drive inclusive growth and transformation within the province's citrus industry. This partnership aims to revitalise black-owned citrus farms, expand export market access, develop agro-processing capabilities, and create employment opportunities, particularly for youth and women.

Recognising the citrus sector's potential to support rural development and economic empowerment, the agreement outlines a collaborative framework through which the three parties will pool resources, align efforts, and implement targeted interventions. The agreement prioritises improving productivity, enabling market readiness, and expanding capacity across the citrus value chain.

Key strategic goals include rehabilitating non-fruit bearing orchards by 2027, raising average citrus yields from 25 to 40 tons per hectare by 2029, and equipping black growers with skills and training to participate meaningfully in the industry. Another key goal is to improve access to international markets by supporting black-owned citrus farms in meeting global standards such as those set by Global GAP and the Sustainability Initiative of South Africa (SIZA).

Under the agreement, the Eastern Cape Department of Agriculture will provide technical support, extension services, and facilitate access to provincial and national funding mechanisms, including Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) and Ilima/Letsema. The GDC will focus on mentorship, market access, off-take agreements, and certification support, while also contributing to infrastructure and training initiatives. The Eastern Cape Rural Development Agency will serve as the lead implementing agency, overseeing the operational roll-out of programmes, mobilising funding, and monitoring performance through a structured reporting framework.

The agreement also establishes a Joint Steering Committee (JSC) to guide implementation, ensure accountability, and strengthen coordination between public and private actors in the sector.

"Overall, this exciting agreement reflects a shared commitment to transforming the Eastern Cape citrus industry into a commercially viable, inclusive, and globally competitive sector, anchored in partnership, capacity building, and sustainable rural development," said Lukhanyo Nkombisa, general manager of GDC.

10 YEARS OF THE GDC

DRIVING TRANSFORMATION AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

In a country where rural unemployment remains persistently high, agriculture is more than a source of food or export revenue. It forms the basis of countless livelihoods and keeps rural economic resilient. And when it comes to inclusive job creation in rural South Africa, small to medium agri-enterprises are leading the way.

New data from Stats SA's Agricultural Financial and Production Statistics underscores this point. Large-scale agricultural enterprises (those earning over R35 million annually) accounted for two-thirds of the sector's income last year, but created less than half of its jobs. In contrast, small and medium enterprises contributed just 33.4% of the total income but were responsible for 52.6% of employment in the sector. That's just over half of the jobs in agriculture.

These growers hire locally, train workers on the job, and are deeply embedded in the communities they serve.

For almost 10 years, the CGA Grower Development Company (GDC) has been working to unlock the potential of this critical segment of the citrus industry. Established as the transformation arm of the Citrus Growers' Association, the GDC has helped shape a more inclusive citrus sector by supporting the growth of black citrus growers and integrating them into commercial value chains.

CGA Grower Development Company

CGA Grower Development Company

Today, the GDC works with more than 120 black growers across all major citrus-growing regions. Its model is built on long-term, hands-on partnerships, providing enterprise development, technical training, market access, financing support, and mentorship. The goal is not just to increase the number of black citrus farmers, but to ensure they are successful, export-ready, and sustainable.

This work is not symbolic. It is essential to the future of South Africa's largest agricultural export sector. As the industry expands into new markets and invests in innovation, it must do so in a way that is commercially competitive and broadly inclusive. That means making sure all growers—regardless of size or background—can meet international standards and seize economic opportunities.

Almost a decade in, the GDC's work shows what real transformation looks like: supporting the next generation of black growers to build viable businesses, create jobs, and contribute meaningfully to the economy.

By investing in these growers, we invest in rural South Africa: one farm, one job, and one community at a time.

MANDELA DAY

Citrus trees give abundantly. In the very same spirit, the citrus industry values contribution and care.
The CGA-GDC's offices in Tshwane office visited two local welfare contributors on Mandela Day - Friday, 18 July.
The trip to Grace and Mercy Day Care and Child Welfare Tshwane was a meaningful one for the entire team. We shared citrus, lunch and painted trees with the children - their hands as the leaves.

INDABA

Theme: Inclusivity / Equity / Diversity

CGDC
GROWER **INDABA**
Inclusivity | Equity | Diversity

The 2025 Citrus Growers Development Chamber (CGDC) Grower Indaba will bring together black citrus growers, government, industry partners, and stakeholders from across South Africa to align behind a shared vision for transformation.

Key discussions will include the launch of the updated Transformation Strategy, progress on the Citrus Transformation Fund II, and updates on Vision 260 and Vision 50. The Indaba will also host the election of new GDC leadership, ensuring grower voices continue to shape the future of the industry.

The Grower Indaba is not just a platform for dialogue, it's a catalyst for action, bringing the industry together to build a more competitive, inclusive, and export-ready citrus sector.

11 to 12 September 2025
Birchwood Hotel and Conference Centre,
Johannesburg