

Newsletter

July/August 2019



Thokozile Didiza, Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (Image: African News Agency)

On 29 May, President Ramaphosa, having consulted more extensively than before, finally emerged with his later-than-expected cabinet announcement for the sixth administration. The president was sure to highlight during his announcement, his awareness of South Africans' notably raised expectations.

In this vein, the president went on to declare that the cabinet members' performance – individually and collectively – would be closely monitored against specific outcomes.

The appointment of Thokozile Didiza as the new Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development has been largely met with positivity. But the minister and her two deputy ministers, Sdumo Dlamini and Mcebisi Skwatsha, have been allotted a sizeable portfolio that holds significant expectation. Riddled with climatic and economic challenges, the agricultural sector looks to Minister Didiza for policy direction and implementation.

Production in the fruit industry has grown. While this progression is positive, it's redundant without government's active support with the negotiation and utilisation of trade opportunities. Greater market access can then flow from this. Our industry and the agricultural sector, at large also hold great potential for job creation, but a conducive climate and robust collaboration with government are critical.

As an industry, we understand and believe in the power of bona fide collaboration, especially with government. Therefore, we hope to join hands with the minister and her team, to take the industry forward to a positive growth trajectory.

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President Cyril Ramaphosa (Image: City Press)

POLITICS

State of the Nation for sixth administration

President Cyril Ramaphosa delivered his State of the Nation Address (Sona) on 20 June as a president whose mandate had changed from being SA's caretaker president to that of bearing the responsibility of 57 million South Africans.

The president has successfully wooed many South Africans with his charisma. But now, his administration has entered an era where South Africans' heightened expectations demand clear targets and decisive action. Not to mention the fast approaching deadline for implementation of the Vision 2030 goals.

Highlighting his vision for prioritising of the development of cross-border value chains in agro-processing within the SADC, the president also drew attention to the need for enhanced ease of doing business. Young people also got extensive mention in the president's address and of particular interest to the fruit industry is government's plans for the development of programmes to ensure their economic inclusion and work-readiness.

The industry was also pleased to hear about government's plans to reconfigure its departments to improve efficiencies; and its vision for SA to become a country that can feed itself and harnesses the latest advances in smart agriculture.

The president's objectives were largely viewed with a jaundiced eye and labeled as extremely ambitious and hardly attainable. But with the will and focus of his administration, the resultant support of South Africans and the buy-in of the investment community, government can make significant strides over the medium to long term.



Liz Fortuin flanked by her team of farmworkers (Hortgro)

TRANSFORMATION

Maximising opportunities

Forty-one year old Liz Fortuin was born at Ou Stasie, a farm that produces peaches, pears, nectarines and plums. It's located outside the town of Wolseley.

A change in personal circumstances led to Liz quitting school and starting work as a 17 year-old, as a general worker on the farm. It was a means to an end. Supervisor, Edward Adams instilled discipline in the young Liz that would stand her in such good stead later on.

Just after she turned 20, Werner du Plessis joined Ou Stasie as general manager. It's then that Liz's life changed, for the better. Seeing untapped potential in Liz, Werner promoted her to supervisor of the sapling team she'd been a part of. He then enrolled her for an NQF1 (National Qualifications Framework) qualification. Through Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), Liz also enrolled to repeat her grade 11, followed by matric.

Her successful completion of her NQF1 prompted another promotion, to first-ever forewoman at Ou Stasie. She was now boss lady, and therefore, a threat to the mainly male team. Having navigated the gender challenges and won over her teammates, today Liz is a forewoman in charge of three teams of 14 men each.

She passed her matric with an exemption at the age of 38. It may be 20 years later than her peers, but she understands that it's never too late to get an education.

How differently things could've panned out had Liz given up on her future, or refused the kick-start she was so generously offered by Werner. Maybe one day, as she keeps expanding her personal growth in fruit farming, she'll end up with her own patch of land.

Liz didn't pursue her original dream of becoming a nurse and she may not have tackled her intended law studies, but she's the first lady of Ou Stasie, and thriving. As long as she can help other people to be more than they had envisaged, it's all good.

Let's take courage from Liz's gusto, in the knowledge that virtually everything we put our minds to is indeed attainable. (Adapted from "The First Lady Of Ou Stasie" by Gerit Rautenbach, SAFJ June/ July 2019).

FPEF transforming the industry through value chain training



FPEF Harvest to Home Training Manual (Image: FPEF)

This year the Fresh Produce Exporters Forum (FPEF) Top of the Class (TOC) fruit export value chain training programme celebrates 15 years! It's seen 878 industry employees and emerging farmers successfully completing the programme.

Andries van Wyngaardt, the Group CEO of the African Reality Trust (Letaba Estates) in Tzaneen had this to say about the programme; "Attendees were a mixed group from various levels within the company and the exposure across the entire team from top management through to on-the-ground operations, assisted in breaking the stereotypical approach of training certain levels in isolation to others. It also opened communication and trust barriers that are naturally in place in a hierarchy. The training itself exposed ART to a broader spectrum of the fruit industry and the value in this proved exceptional. Alongside this industry approach, the experiential knowledge of the facilitator and the depth of information in the training material were a 'killer combination' that clearly illustrated the links of the supply chain and how they all contribute to the greater good of the company and industry." The group completed the programme in March 2019.

This SETA accredited programme provides training on the fruit export value chain from field to fork, covering topics like quality management, cold storage and the cold chain, fruit production, picking and packing, road, rail and sea freight, logistics and freight forwarding, the consumer and export markets, and exporters and their role in the value chain. TOC is a critical training resource for employees on fruit farms, in packhouses and within export companies, as well as for emerging farmers and exporters. The course is targeted at junior to middle management, but also serves as an excellent platform for senior management to share their experience and knowledge with their teams. Aimed at improving participants' knowledge in their own area of responsibility, the programme also facilitates a holistic view of them and an understanding of the impact of their actions upstream and downstream within the value chain.

The training handbook, which includes a DVD with a narrated overview of the value chain, is available for purchase from the FPEF at a cost of R460, including VAT.

For more information on the TOC programme, please contact Johannes Brand (johannes@fpf.co.za).

Empowering emerging fynbos entrepreneurs



Emerging fynbos entrepreneurs (Image: Hortgro)

Cape Flora SA is serious about empowering small-scale fynbos entrepreneurs. They put their money where their mouths are through a continued quest for innovative ways to help these entrepreneurs realise their business dreams.

Linking these business owners with strong networks – mainly through engaging information sessions – is integral to Cape Flora SA's empowerment strategy, says Jacky Goliath. She's the organisation's director responsible for their transformation portfolio.

Through a needs survey conducted during the session, the need for business skills development was highlighted, which Cape Flora SA addressed with a business training session presented by business coach, Basil Myners, in September last year.

Testimonials

From aspiring producers:-

(Adapted from "Cape Flora invests in emerging businesses" by Glenneis Kriel, SAFJ June/ July 2019)

"With Gerhard's guidance, we planted 2 ha of proteas in September and intend to plant another 4 ha this year," says **Theo Adams**, a farmer near Harold who received a funded consultation with industry expert Dr. Gerhard Malan.

Elizabeth Hartzenberg, who's now been inspired to grow her business, says: "I bought a farm near Hopefield in 2015 and initially made ends meet through small-scale pig production. My interest in fynbos was sparked when I met a flower entrepreneur. Attending Cape Flora's first information session and seeing the workings of the supply chain made me realise that I could succeed in this business."



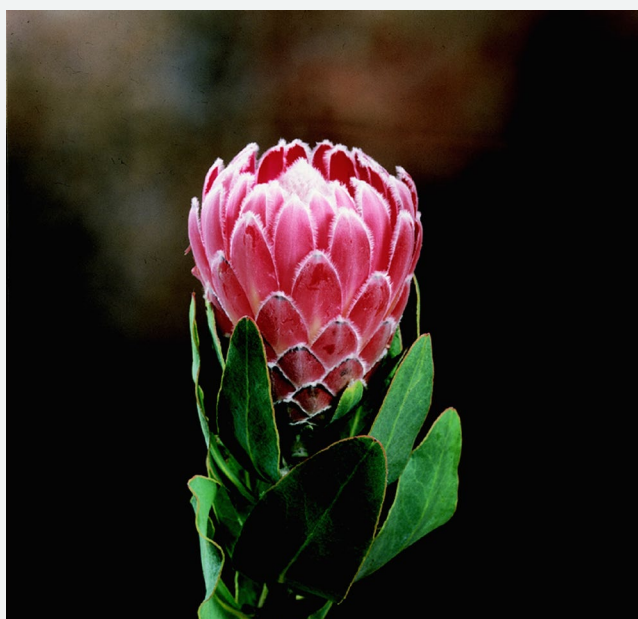
INDUSTRY NEWS

From 'wild' harvesters:-

For **Loretta Afrikaner** from TJ Agulhas Flowers, the business training once again highlighted the impact of sustainable harvesting on the viability of a flower picking business. *"One of the first things I did when I got home after the session, was to run through the fynbos industry's code of best practices for wild harvesters with my staff, to ensure we were all on the same page. Fynbos is our main source of income. We'd be out of jobs without flowers to pick."* Relishing the efficiency that comes from the R25 000 pruning shears supplied by Cape Flora SA, Loretta confirms, *"These Felco shears, which are way too expensive to buy out of my own pocket, allow my team to work much faster and more efficiently."*

Leslie-Ann Pieters from Pieters' Flowers (who received R27 000 worth of shears and machines from Cape Flora SA) really values the business training she was given: *"These information sessions are great. If you have an oversupply of a product, for example, someone may be able to buy the product to add value to their existing offering. This way, we are helping each other grow."*

She met a Chinese exporter in November via Cape Flora SA, through whom she is now selling flowers on the Chinese market. *"The fynbos has been received well in China."*



King protea (Image: Hortgro)



Left: Mashudu Silimela (DAFF attaché to the People's Republic of China) and Mpho Hlahla (SA Consul General). (Image: DAFF)

Citrus Growers' Association (CGA)

On 10 June the Baltic Summer reefer carrying 5 200 tons of citrus from SA arrived in Shanghai Port, having left Durban's Maydon Wharf Port on 6 May. On arrival in Shanghai, the reefer was cleared on both a sanitary and phytosanitary level.

Mpho Hlahla (SA Consul General) and Mashudu Silimela (DAFF attaché to the People's Republic of China) were part of the delegation that welcomed the vessel. Mr Silimela, along with the team in Plant Health and Inspection Services Directorates were instrumental in successfully negotiating the use of break bulk vessels. The Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Thokoza Didiza was congratulatory of the team's great feat.

This break-through signals industry growth, as well as the potential for increased job creation; and – importantly – reduced port congestion.



Baltic Summer reefer arrives in Shanghai carrying SA's first break bulk fruit consignment, (Image: DAFF)



SATI reaches 125-year milestone



Longevity doesn't come easily in agriculture; and if you reach a milestone of 125 years – like our colleagues in the table grape industry have done –, a celebration is certainly in order.

The South African Table Grape Industry: 125 Years in Pursuit of Excellence is a beacon of the success of the SA Table Grape Industry (SATI), over the last 125 years.

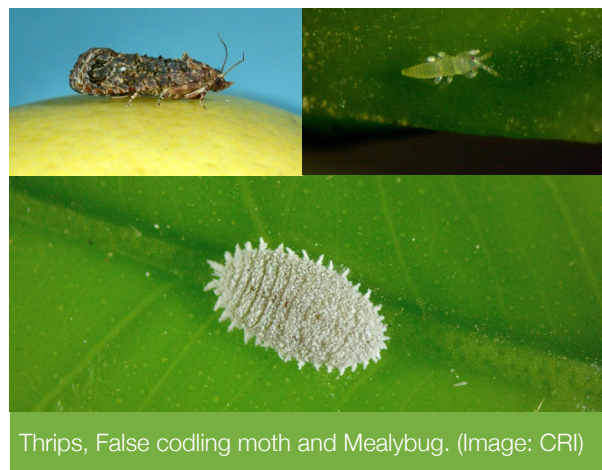
The book, authored by fruit industry journalist Fred Meintjies, was launched on 23 May at SATI's AGM in De Doorns, in the Hex River Region.

Attendees at this signature event included table grape producers from across the country and affiliates like the SAPO Trust, Fruit SA and Culdevco; as well as representatives from the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC), Perishable Produce Export Control Board (PPECB), The Agricultural Research Council Nietvoorbij and the Fresh Produce Exporters Forum (FPEF).

In his speech when launching the book, SATI CEO Willem Bestbier highlighted the significance of this milestone for the industry. He also quoted Marcus Garvey, a late 19th century activist and Pan-Africanist: "A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots." It's not a formal history book, Willem said, but rather one about the stories and the people who have shaped, crafted and grafted the history. He went on to underscore the aptness of the timing of the launch, saying: "It is befitting that we launch the book this year, an extremely difficult and challenging year. This is the time to have a good look again at where we come from, the hard work and courage of those before us."

Also speaking at the function was Prof Eltie Links, former SA Ambassador to the European Union (EU) and Luxembourg. He was appointed by former President Nelson Mandela as the chief negotiator of the SA EU trade agreement, which paved the way for the audience of table grape producers to benefit from the trade agreement.

Copies of the book are available from the SATI office: +27 (0)21 863 0366. Written orders can also be placed via info@satgi.co.za



Thrips, False codling moth and Mealybug. (Image: CRI)

Scouts in orchards?

Scouting (aka the Scout Movement) is focussed on the outdoors and survival skills, with the aim of encouraging young people to become productive members of society. The Scouts are instantly recognisable in their uniform, which defies countries' prevailing differences in social standing.

But the difference between the conventional Scouts and their fruit-industry namesakes couldn't be bigger.

While it's not clear what the preferred garb for our citrus scouts is, their charge is clear: driving pest management.

The growing overall size of citrus plantings in southern Africa has necessitated the recruitment of dedicated pest scouts, to assist with monitoring in orchards and to gather valuable data. This data can be evaluated in accordance with intervention guidelines and suggested thresholds; and can assist managers in making sound decisions regarding pest management.

Pest scouts – essentially the manager's eyes in the orchard – have become invaluable in the pest management journey. Yet, they're often highly underrated. Because of scouts' significant role, it's critical that they're reliable, vigilant, physically fit and well incentivised.

So, the next time you spot a scout in an orchard, do give an approving nod. (Adapted from "CRI Presents Training workshops for Citrus Scouts" by CRI's Wayne Mommsen, SAFJ June/ July 2019)



This bag was manufactured from resins derived from renewable organic sources. When composted it will recondition the soil. The very soil that created it. It comes from nature and returns to nature. Superior Packaging Industries (Pty) Ltd - South Africa



The compostable resins used in this product meet the following international standards EN 13432 / ASTM D 6400

Biodegradable packaging (Image: Hortgro)

Plastic, the struggle is real

Bryce MacIntyre of Kaap Agri, a packaging representative from the Packhouse Action Group (PAG) is spearheading a cross-industry work group, to investigate the effects of using plastic, with a view to developing a strategy that will direct the industry towards reduced plastic use.

This proactive step is in line with other international initiatives to reduce the use of plastic throughout the value chain.

On the one hand, the use of plastic improves shelf life and food safety, thereby reducing food waste; on the other, it perpetuates pollution. This paradox has necessitated the introduction of smart alternatives by the industry.

For the past twenty years retailers have tried to remove, replace, reduce and recycle plastics. Some retailers even have coupon systems to encourage consumers to recycle plastics. Though they've made headway, we have a long way to go.

As an industry, what can we do?

On the bright side, industry has indicated its commitment to effecting change, but changes have to be practical and financially viable for everyone.

It's going to require a bit more than trying to stop our use of plastic dead in its tracks. A holistic view of the whole value chain is what's needed – it's not just retailers, consumers, industries or governments, it's everyone.

Options include re-designing packaging material to use less plastic; and producing biodegradable and compostable plastic.

As for packaging alternatives, limiting the use of filler such as calcium can help facilitate the course of the recycling chain.

Other possibilities are:

- Switching to clamshell punnets only, instead of a non-recyclable open plastic punnet with a heat seal flow-wrap on top.
- Using netting in packaging, such as net fruit bags, or netting on one side of a bag.

Ongoing education is invaluable in this context.

Ultimately, the solution has to achieve a balance between cost-effectiveness and demonstrated environmental awareness. (Adapted from "Industry initiates 'plastics task team' " by Elise-Marie Steenkamp, SAFJ June/ July 2019).



Enviro friendly products. (Image: Hortgro)



CEO's *note*

Our colleagues from the Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) – along with DAFF – have managed to successfully negotiate bulk shipment. Hearty congratulations to them. Seeing the first reefer of bulk SA citrus arriving in Shanghai on 10 May marks a momentous achievement for our industry!

The industry's efforts to find answers to our logistical challenges in SA have included exploring the alternative of rail transfer. In June Dutch consortium, The Flying Swans group engaged in talks with SA, to strengthen logistical ties between the two countries. Though much discussion still lies ahead, the signing of an MoU between Transnet, The Flying Swans group and us holds great promise for enhanced efficiencies.

During his last Sona, President Ramaphosa committed to finalising a comprehensive and transformative land reform programme; and substantially expanding the agriculture and agro-processing sector by supporting key value chains and products, developing new markets and reducing our reliance on agricultural imports. He also confirmed an allocation of R3.9 billion to the Land Bank to support black commercial farmers, over the medium term budget period. We look forward to the implementation of these plans.

The industry and political analysts alike were largely pleased with the announcement of Thokoziwe Didiza as the new Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development. During the announcement of SA's first cabinet of gender parity,



Konanani Liphadzi (2nd from right) signs the MoU

Minister Didiza was allocated this comprehensive portfolio during a time of unprecedented challenges within the agricultural sector.

Therefore, we look forward to harnessing her extensive knowledge of the sector and her widely lauded pragmatism, through meaningful collaboration. The minister has held ministerial posts in Public Works (2006-2008), and Agriculture and Land Affairs (1999-2006); and has served as Deputy Minister of Agriculture (1994-1999).

The savings theme of July resonates with us in the fruit industry – and the broader agricultural sector – because for us the topic reaches beyond, to priorities like water conservation and, importantly, to the environment. But in the vein of the theme, may National Savings Month propel you to continue to nurture a healthy relationship with your finances.

Events that are also of significance for the industry during this period are Mandela Day, on which I hope you get to spend time doing something worthwhile; Agri's Got Talent, whereby finalists will be vying for the coveted winner's title during a glitzy event; Women's Day that presents an opportunity for our women to bask in the knowledge of their unique attributes; and, of course, the Female Entrepreneur Awards, at which our winning female growers will be announced. We wish all our industry champions well during these two signature events – we're super-proud of how far they've already come.