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Newsletter | May-Jun 2024

CEO's Note

Please click on the image below for a quick “hello”.



At this midpoint of the year, in Youth Month, we're reminded of the waning employability of the South African youth. Thus, at a time like this, suited mitigatory actions should be top-of-mind for every leader in South Africa.

Stats SA confirms the national and youth Q1 2024 unemployment rates as 32.9% and 45.5% respectively. How do we change this trajectory?

These telling numbers necessitate joint ramped-up actions by the government and the private sector, to get South Africans into jobs. In that vein, the fresh fruit industry continues its efforts to create opportunities for our young people to become active participants in the South African economy. My attendance of the Subtrop Transformation Summit last month is the most recent reminder of this (more details below).

Regarding economic activity, South Africa is fortunate to have the cold Atlantic Ocean on one side and the warm Indian Ocean on the other. With this, coupled with a Mediterranean and a subtropical climate, we have the lion's share when it comes to favourable climatic conditions to cultivate world-class fruit. And there has never been a better time to maximise this opportunity to maintain and expand our market share internationally, where our fruit is certainly favoured. But we need the impetus of a growing collaboration with government to increase our global market share through effective trade negotiations.

Lastly, the industry said goodbye to SATI CEO AJ Griesel at the end of May. I've enjoyed working with AJ on the Fruit SA board and I wish him many more adventures in his career.

TRANSFORMATION

Notwithstanding related challenges and setbacks, focused transformation efforts do pay dividends. But to be taken seriously, transformation must have measurable targets and demonstrate a commitment to economic development.

Fresh fruit farm hectares under black ownership increased from 24 435 in 2021 to 32 521 in 2022, and the number of hectares under fruit production by black growers increased from 16 077 in 2021 to 16 346 in 2022. The volume of fruit produced by black growers grew from 362 893 tonnes in 2021 to 563 384 tonnes in 2022.

The fruit industry objective is to be fully transformed by 2038 with Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) growers contributing 30% of fruit, 30% of exports, and 15% ownership across the value chain.

Subtrop Transformation Summit, 23 May 2024



Pictured: Top, Vhembe growers sharing their experiences. Lutendo Nevondo (left), Gilbert Nefale, and Ntamiseni Mankhili. Above, Fhumulani Ratshitanga and Ntamiseni Mankhili (mango grower).

The Subtrop Transformation Summit gave great insight into transformation dynamics in the subtropical fruit subsector.

The event presented an opportunity for engagement on the topics of funding and development, sustainable land reform, as well as dialogue with emerging growers, says Fhumulani. "I am delighted to have attended the Subtrop Transformation Summit '24. The opportunity to engage with emerging growers was particularly fruitful. We explored ways to support their growth and to ensure a more equitable and sustainable subtropical fruit industry. As for the youth, I was inspired by the success of some work placement initiatives that are crucial in bridging the gap between education and industry. I left the summit feeling hopeful and equipped with knowledge to drive positive change in our industry."

Citrus Growers' Association Grower Development Company (CGA-GDC) financial boost



Pictured: Akho Skenjana, Senior Manager (left) and Ayanda Wakaba, CEO (right). They're both from the ECDC. Middle: Lukhanyo Nkombisa, Managing Director, CGA-GDC.

Photo: bizcommunity.com

In April the industry welcomed confirmation of the R1.2 million funding agreement between the Citrus Growers' Association Grower Development Company (CGA-GDC) and the Eastern Cape Development Corporation (ECDC) “to enhance the commercial prospects of black citrus producers in the Eastern Cape”.

MARKET ACCESS

Biosecurity needs all hands on deck

The world observed International Day for Biodiversity on 22 May.

Protecting our rich biodiversity – internationally and locally – demands concentrated biosecurity efforts, with all hands on deck. Hence, there is a growing focus on enhanced biosecurity throughout the fresh fruit industry, using biocontrol methods like integrated pest management (IPM). These efforts are critical, not only to support our local sustainability strategies but also to retain South Africa's trade in fiercely competitive international markets where strict regulations apply.



Pictured: Gerrit van der Merwe, Board Chairperson, CGA (left); Dr Mogale Sebopetsa, Head of Department, WCDoA; Dr Ivan Meyer, Provincial Minister of Agriculture, Western Cape; Justin Chadwick, CEO, CGA; and Lukhanyo Nkombisa, Managing Director, CGA-GDC.

Photo: WCDoA

In the context of focused biosecurity efforts, the [news](#) of a R2 million payment by the Western Cape Department of Agriculture (WCDoA) towards the [CGA](#) Sterile Insect Technique Programme, to help combat false codling moth, is an inspiring boost for industry sustainability.

Consumer trends



Evolving consumer preferences are having an increasing impact on global market dynamics. But these leanings often centre around misinformation, with significant ramifications for industries like the fresh produce trade.

Having observed World Food Safety Day on 7 June, it seems apt to reference a related article by Paula Bester and Paul Hardman (both from the CGA), on page 36 of the [SA Fruit Journal Oct/Nov '23](#). They

delve into the critical topic of consumer food safety perceptions, shining the spotlight on consumers' possible "lack of scientific knowledge and reasoning". For example, there seems to be a distinct disconnect between consumers' perception of "high-risk" food, and reality. "The lack of easy-to-understand scientific information or misconceptions around food safety may create anxiety in consumers and may lead to unhealthy consumption patterns, like avoiding fruits and vegetables."

Staying on consumption, earlier this year the latest Freshfel Europe Consumption Monitor indicated a decrease in average fruit and vegetable consumption in the EU to 350 g/day/capita in 2022 ("a 5% decline from 2021 and almost 3% below the average of the previous five years"). The document mainly attributes this shift to a reduction in purchasing power, caused by an ailing economy. This marks a disheartening regression from the upward trend in fruit and vegetable consumption that was sparked during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Though this declining fresh produce consumption trend pertains to the EU, overall per capita consumption of fruit and vegetables warrants more focused efforts to start an upward trajectory. Hence, there's an opportunity within the fresh produce trade – globally and locally – to collaborate in educating the consumer on the real benefits of fresh produce consumption.

INDUSTRY

Representing Fruit SA at relevant events, Fhumulani finds that it not only provides greater insight into subsector dynamics (and those of various stakeholders), but it also presents much-needed opportunities for relationship-building and engagement. See her comments below.

Agbiz Congress, 5–7 June 2024



Having attended the Agbiz Congress on 6–7 June, Fhumulani had this to say: “The solutions-driven theme made for an engaging session, with expert speakers tackling pertinent – and even poignant – topics like “growth in a changing global landscape”; and “geopolitics, trade, and foreign relations.”

Hortgro Awards, 31 May 2024



This [Hortgro Awards](#) recognises champions in the agricultural and the deciduous fruit environment, in the categories of the OSH Reinecke Frontrunner Award, 1662 Hortgro Industry Award, Hortgro Transformation Award, Daan Strydom Science & Technical Award, Hortgro Chairperson’s Award, and the Izethelo: Hortgro Media Award.

“Learning about the award recipients’ contribution to the deciduous fruit sector and the broader fruit industry was particularly inspiring. Their stories were those of excellence, dedication, and collaboration – ultimately, making a difference.”

Berries ZA Technical & Trade Symposium, 30 – 31 May 2024



Kicking off with a compelling deep dive into pest management on Day 1, the [Berries ZA Technical & Trade Symposium](#) presented delegates with a good dose of technical and trade content. “The importance of science in the success of the industry cannot be over-emphasised. Also heartening to witness, were the fruits of collaborative efforts between the Western Cape Department of Agriculture and the fruit industry.”

IFPA (International Fresh Produce Association) Fresh Solutions, 28 May 2024



Pictured: Ndinannyi Mudzunga, (left) and Fhumulani Ratshitanga

At the Bryanston iteration of IFPA Fresh Solutions events, the content informed delegates on the topics of packaging and food safety. “These matters are crucial in the face of ever-increasing developments around sustainable packaging and the role of packaging within food safety.”

Nampo, 14–17 May 2024



Photo: *Farmer's Weekly*

Themed “Agriculture in a Digital Age”, Nampo 2024 was a memorable experience that provided yet another platform for engaging with key stakeholders. “It showcased what focused collaborative efforts in agriculture can produce, and how the sector has successfully embraced innovation for greater impact.”

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