SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE IN SOUTH AFRICA

news

APRIL 2015

FSA & ETHICAL STEERING GROUP TALK ABOUT THE FUTURE OF SIZA

FSA and ESG talk about the future of SIZA

Members of the Fruit South Africa (FSA) Board and the Ethical Trade Steering Group (ESG) met on Wednesday 15th April 2015 to talk about the future direction of the SIZA initiative. This engagement had been called by the ESG to ensure, in particular, alignment regarding the day-to-day management and resources of the SIZA programme and the overall strategy set by FSA. This was the first combined meeting of both groups. Gaps in communication were acknowledged and apologised for, issues were raised, considered and solutions suggested. The discussions were frank and overall positive, highlighting the need for more direct and clear communication and consultation with all stakeholders.

In that vein, FSA and the ESG agreed to communicate the following actions going forward:

1) A SIZA Management Team - made up of members of the ESG and the FSA Board – has been established and will meet on a regular basis (bi-weekly at first). The first meeting has already taken place on 20th April 2015.
2) It was agreed that while it remained a FSA Board obligation to ensure SIZA becomes a self-sustaining and viable programme (and are being held to account for the investment made in SIZA to date by FSA members) SIZA should operate with more independence from FSA (e.g. as a separate company). The first task given to the SIZA Management Team was to design a process to take SIZA from its current position within FSA to a point where it is a stand-alone entity. This new entity would house both the ethical trade standards and environmental standards that are currently in development. A proposed way forward for the overall structure of SIZA can be expected in the next few weeks.
3) FSA acknowledged the important role of the multi-stakeholder ESG and the value of the inputs and contributions by a wide-range of parties. The terms of reference for the ESG (or equivalent body) will be formalized as part of the process of looking at the SIZA structure.
4) The second task of the SIZA Management Team will be to ensure coordination and communication around the parallel processes of designing the SIZA structure for the future (as above) and the appointment of a SIZA manager, a position recently advertised.
5) Colleen Chennells', incumbent manager for the SIZA programme, contract ends in June 2015. Fortunately Colleen has indicated she is keen to play a role in building SIZA beyond June and arrangements are being made how to ensure that happens. The exact role Colleen will play partly

depends on the appointment and attributes of a new manager, but SIZA is very grateful to Colleen for making herself available going forward.

6) The priority of getting the SIZA data platform up and running was highlighted. It is good to be able to report Phase I of the development is complete and new members can now register via the SIZA website (www.siza.co.za) and complete their self-assessment questionnaires (SAQ) on line with an off-line SAQ option. Phase II (audit and Corrective Action Plan reporting, and uploading SAQ and Audit report data for current members) is well underway and will be completed by end-July 2015. The overall timelines for the development have been a bit delayed mainly due to time needed to conduct testing of the system with real (busy!) fruit growers and adding extra data security features. The development project team have otherwise been very happy with progress on the data platform, and the quality of the work being done, and are excited about switching that functionality on shortly.
7) There is a need to urgently address a capacity issue arising due to temporary manual processes in place while the data platform is in development. The SIZA Management Team is dealing with these problems and proposing appropriate solutions.
8) SIZA and WIETA are involved in a process focused on achieving mutual recognition of audits between the two programmes. SIZA and WIETA will complete a 'share and compare' process on the GSCP platform by end-April. This will allow for an independent and internationally recognised benchmarking process of the two standards and audit processes. In addition, independent shadow audits will be conducted on both SIZA and WIETA audits and a report submitted reviewing the quality of the audits. This will be completed by mid-May. The programmes aim to conclude the mutual recognition process by end-May and a communication will be sent out to stakeholders in this regard.

In conclusion SIZA stakeholders have demonstrated the passion not only to make the SIZA programme work – but to make it the best in the world!