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Newsletter | Jul-Aug 2024



CEO's Note

It's the tail end of Women's Month and I'd like to grab the opportunity to salute all the women in the agriculture sector for the impact they have made, where they are. I would also like to congratulate the women who made South Africa so proud in the Paris Olympic Games that ended on the 11th.

On 13 August the Stats SA QLFS confirmed the Q2 2024 unemployment rate as 33.5%, with only 16.7 million South Africans now employed. This indicates a quarterly unemployment rate increase of 0.6% since Q1 2024, and a 0.9% y/y increase from 32.6% in Q2 2023. With its current total on-farm jobs at nearly 325 000, the fresh fruit industry of South Africa is hardly resting on its laurels. Instead, industry associations continue to create economic opportunities for eligible candidates through various targeted initiatives. However, ramped-up collaboration in public-private partnerships remains a critical need.

Against the backdrop of the newly-formed Government of National Unity, the political developments referenced in this iteration stand to impact the fresh fruit industry to varying degrees. Hence, we're keeping our ear to the ground.

Lastly, attending the 2024 BFAP Baseline event and the IFPA Conference in August, once again gave Fruit SA great opportunities for representation, and to network with peers and stakeholders.

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TRANSFORMATION

The inspiring story of Elize Boer



Elize Boer Photo: SATI

“It has always been my desire to own a farm,” reflects Elize.

In 26 years she had progressed from general worker to general manager, managing altogether 51 ha of table grapes. Then she set her sights on Roode Zand Farm in the Western Cape, which was derelict and had been liquidated. But it had good soil, access to water, and a packhouse.

Elize reached an agreement with Robin Johnson – a black, first-generation table-grape grower – to buy Roode Zand Farm. Robin owned a farm but needed his own packhouse. So, he would lease the land and other buildings at Roode Zand to Elize, earning him an additional income. And she would gain access to land and water in the form of a long-term lease. She could then start fundraising against the lease. After 22 months of jumping through many hoops, the duo managed to secure finance.

Looking back, they commend SATI for their consistent, multi-tiered support during this gruelling process. They also thank Hortfin, Agrico, their peers, and some of their key suppliers.

It’s stories like Elize’s that continue to reinforce the importance of providing the right support and tools for first-generation growers. You may read the complete article on page 38 [here](#).

MARKET ACCESS

The Seventh Administration –

dawn of a new era for the industry market access agenda

By Mono Mashaba (Specialist Consultant: Market Development)

From a market access perspective, we as industry role-players look forward to working with relevant ministers in the Seventh Administration, to accelerate the momentum of implementing the Fruit SA strategy to gain, retain and optimise market access for fruit.



Agriculture Minister John Steenhuisen PHOTO: Food for Mzansi

In his maiden Budget Vote speech on 16 July 2024, Agriculture Minister John Steenhuisen welcomed the split of the Department of Agriculture (DoA) from the portfolio of land reform and rural development. This will ensure a greater agricultural focus on food security, biosecurity, and market access, he said. The fruit industry also favours this development, for a more focused approach to rigorously pursue the industry agenda. Among other important points, the minister encouraged leveraging the existing cooperative frameworks of AGOA and the EU Trade Agreement, as well as to open new markets on the African continent, India, the Middle East, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and China to support growers' trade goals.

Fruit SA is looking forward to using the existing engagement forums with the DoA to strengthen the current partnership. This should accelerate market access in the prioritised countries and enable the minister to achieve set objectives. [Here](#) is a summary video of the minister's Budget Vote speech.

G20 Brazil Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty



At this key event, Minister Steenhuisen advocated for investment in agriculture as a vehicle for sustainable development (including local food production). He also lauded South Africa's AAMP as a successful process "that demonstrates a collective social compact to rebuild the South African agricultural and agro-processing economy." The industry looks forward to the outcomes of this discourse where the minister engaged his US and EU colleagues regarding related market access challenges that have been pending for years. This lag has had a significant impact on growth within the industry and its ability to continue its sizeable contribution to the South African GDP.

Fruit SA is ready to provide Minister Steenhuisen and the DoA with the requisite support to ensure productive engagements for increased global market share, and widespread economic impact.

African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA):



Trade, Industry, and Competition Minister Parks Tau PHOTO: Jacaranda FM

In his briefing on the outcome of the AGOA Forum renewal talks Trade, Industry and Competition Minister Parks Tau expressed optimism that the outcome of the US elections is unlikely to negatively impact the Act. He has since also [confirmed](#) that South Africa is “no longer at risk of being removed from AGOA”. And the minister hopes for AGOA enhancements that will support the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement.

AGOA is a critical vehicle for South African trade in the US and it augments the country’s competitive advantage over South America. South Africa exports citrus, pome and stone fruit, table grapes, and litchis to the US.

Regarding the BRICS+ Trade Ministers Meeting, the minister remarked on its success in advancing future trade relations for South Africa. This is good news, given the trade potential for South African fresh fruit within BRICS+.

INDUSTRY

Strict EU import measures warrant mediation



Following strict import measures imposed on South Africa by the EU regarding citrus black spot, South Africa has submitted two requests to the World Trade Organization (WTO) for mediation panels, for a sensible resolution in the current dispute. The measures relate to import restrictions imposed by the EU to control the spread of citrus black spot and false codling moth.

Mainly, South African concerns centre around a lack of scientific evidence, as well as inconsistencies in EU claims.

South Africa being the second-largest citrus exporter in the world, [cabinet](#) has expressed its concerns about the economic impact of these stringent restrictions on local citrus exports. The restrictions are crippling SA's local economy, says Minister in the Presidency Khumbudzo Ntshavheni.

The EU is a critical market for all fruit, not just citrus. But developments such as these emphasise the importance of pursuing alternative fresh fruit export markets more aggressively.

First shipment of South African avocados to Japan



The first container of world-class South African Hass avocados has reached Japan, having been shipped from the Durban Port. This exciting industry development followed a protocol agreement between South Africa and Japan earlier this year.

The future looks bright for this subsector of the industry i.t.o. accessing new markets in the East, including China, Japan and now also India.

In the media

Please scroll to “[coverage](#)” to view relevant media.

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