



CEO's note



What a year it's been.

At this time of year, one cannot help but reflect. However, it's up to us which route such reflection takes.

In the fruit industry we're honing the art of – after giving it our all – gracefully balancing what we've lost on the swings with what we've gained on the roundabouts.

The whiplash-inducing global events endured by the industry this year included “reciprocal” US tariffs and subsequent selected product exemptions – among them certain citrus and tropical fruit types – a move welcomed by the industry; the expiration of AGOA; and the ripple effects of conflict in the Middle East and ongoing war between Russia and the Ukraine. As Fruit SA Board Chairman Anton Rabe said at the 11th Fruit SA Annual General Meeting in November, “These events, and other regional conflicts, highlight the deep interdependence among nations and expose the fragility of global systems as we have come to know them.”

We have, however, had positive developments in our own backyard. Among the most recent are Stats SA's report of respective Q3 2025 agricultural upticks of 1.1% in gross value and 1.5% in jobs q-to-q. Horticultural and field crops were the drivers in these achievements. And defying a two-year downward trend, the Agbiz/IDC Agribusiness Confidence Index increased by five points to 67 in Q4.

This year also saw the most significant leadership changes made at any given time, since the inception of Fruit SA (read more about these in the rest of the edition).

The global fruit trade is indeed facing a future full of question marks. But we continue to pursue the industry strategy of growing, retaining and optimising our targeted markets, with focus and applied agility.

Join us [here](#) for some visual storytelling, as we reflect on a year of gains, setbacks and unmatched resilience.

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LEADERSHIP

Passing the torch for ongoing growth

This year has brought the most board leadership changes since the establishment of Fruit SA.

The Board bade farewell to Anton Kruger in November, and Justin Chadwick and Vangile Titi-Msumza in March (all of whom retired). In April, Anton Rabe took over as chairman, with Derek Donkin as vice-chairman.

New appointees to the board comprise Piet de Jager, Dr Boitshoko Ntshabele, Jacqueline Maisela and Jenetha Mahlangu. Boitshoko and Piet replaced Justin and Anton (Kruger), respectively.



The Fruit SA Board. Back (from left): Dr Boitshoko Ntshabele, Jenetha Mahlangu and Brent Walsh. Front (from left): Piet de Jager, Dr Nompumelelo Obokoh, Mecia Petersen, Anton Rabe, Jacqueline Maisela and Derek Donkin.

The nine-member board now comprises four women, with five of the directors being people of colour. These changes confirm the commitment of the organisation to equitable representation. You may read more about these leadership developments [here](#).

TRANSFORMATION

Fruit Industry Value Chain Round Table Transformation Working Group Annual Review 2024

For a strategy to come to fruition, its facilitators must stay the course. And that's what the outcomes of Fruit SA members' efforts show in the Fruit Industry Value Chain Round Table (FIVCRT) Transformation Working Group (TWG) Annual Review 2024.

The FIVCRT comprises these working groups: transformation, research and development, trade, resources, and local market. At the core of the TWG lies a laser focus by role-players, on monitoring and reporting transformation progress within industry bodies as well as facilitating collaboration amongst players.

The transformation statistics in the Review reflect a heartening general upward trend in black growers' performance, highlighting consistency in member associations' efforts to build a more inclusive fruit industry (**Figure 1**). This is notwithstanding a decline – in some sub-sectors – in land under production, production, and export volumes.

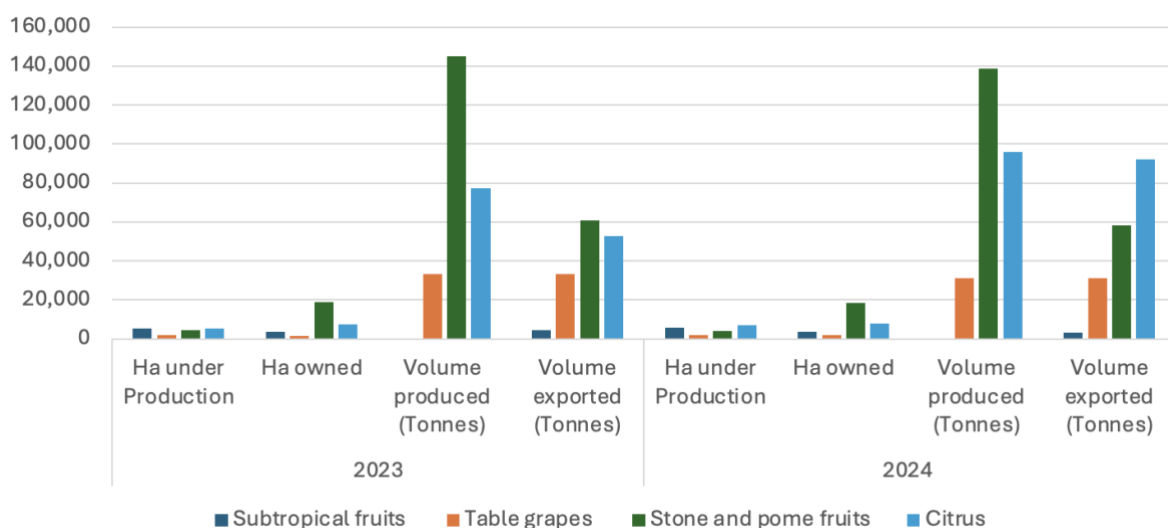


Figure 1: A snapshot of black growers' comparative performance (2023 vs. 2024)

MARKET ACCESS

Milestones that present a picture of hope



In the 2023/4 season, the South African fruit industry exported over 3 million tonnes of fruit to more than 100 destinations, with 43% destined for the EU and Russia, 17% for the Middle East, and 16% for Asia and the Far East. Eleven percent went to the UK, 7% to the US and Canada, and 4% to the rest of Africa. The projected growth for these exports, in the next few years, underscores the need to fast-track efforts around market access and diversification, which has been on the industry agenda for several years. In fact, the opening of new markets for South African fruit in the Far East attests to this priority.

Recently, South Africa signed a trade protocol with China for simultaneous market access for five South African stone-fruit types – a historic win for the industry. Also, apples regained access to Thailand after a 16-year hiatus, and table-grapes gained access to the Philippines.

Another encouraging development that bodes well for the industry is the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on agricultural cooperations by the South African and Vietnamese Ministries of Agriculture in November.

These developments, coupled with interventions by the industry, such as collaboration with entities like the China Agricultural Wholesale Markets Association (CAWA) with whom Fruit SA signed an MoU, further strengthen our position in driving the market access agenda.

These remarkable strides and the ongoing efforts of Fruit SA, other industry role-players and stakeholders, government representatives, and embassies (in and outside South Africa) all serve to stoke the embers of hope for a thriving industry operating on a fiercely competitive global stage.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

At the 11th Fruit SA Annual General Meeting, Fruit SA Board Chairman Anton Rabe highlighted the significant growth in visibility of the Fruit SA brand – locally and abroad – and that the organisation is now widely regarded as a “go to” for the fruit export industry.

The Fruit SA information management and communication portfolio continues to be a strategic focus area. And its key publications are produced with this in mind.

Annual Report

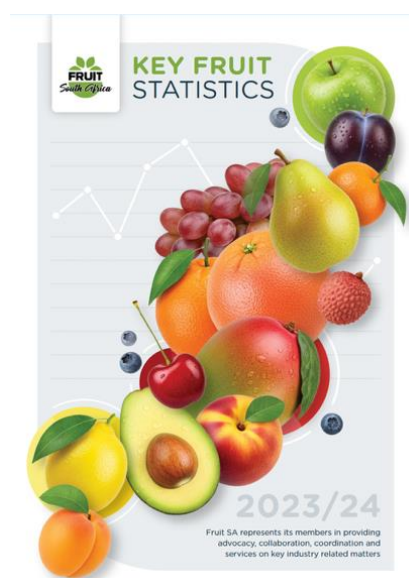
The Fruit SA Annual Report 2024/5 presents the organisation's delivery on its strategic objectives, showing meaningful progress across its priority areas of transformation, market access, and government and stakeholder communication.



Download the annual report on the [here](#).

Key Fruit Statistics Booklet

The latest edition of this publication offers an overview of the 2023/4 season of the South African fruit industry.



The industry trends, patterns and insights depicted in this annual publication give a good glimpse into the industry performance.

Recorded upticks in the total area planted, production, and exports inspire optimism for the road ahead.

Granted, some fruit commodities recorded declines in the area planted due to factors like orchard removals and adverse climatic conditions. Worth noting, however, is that old orchards are being replaced by improved and higher-yielding varieties.

Download the booklet [here](#).