

Every cash cow has its limits

The fruit industry is a proven creator of sustainable jobs, earning substantial amounts in foreign exchange and developing communities in regions where fruit is grown. By Justin Chadwick (CEO, CGA)

A drive through any fruit growing region is a pleasant experience, there is a sense that the community takes pride in the region and that the circular economy is working to the benefit of all. It is not industry alone that ensures these benefits – the destiny of the fruit industries is indelibly linked with the competence and capacity of government and value chain partners. The fruit industry is almost entirely dependent on the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) for market access. It is DALRRD that negotiates new market access, and government that initiates discussions on optimising market access conditions, and addresses any changes suggested by the trading partners. Therefore, it is important that the platforms developed by industry and government operate effectively and efficiently. Over the years these platforms have been carefully crafted, terms of reference have been deliberated and composition fine-tuned, to ensure all aspects of market access are addressed.

In many cases composition goes beyond DALRRD, to include dtic, DIRCO and government assignees and agencies. One of the consequences of COVID-19 (or maybe it had been festering before 2020) is increased signs that trading partners are protecting their domestic fruit producers. What is extremely

concerning is that, despite these trading partners being signatories to the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), new protectionist measures have scant regard for science. Now, more than ever, we need a strong relationship between DALRRD and the industry to realise the promise of continued growth that the fruit industries hold.

Another consequence of COVID-19 are the restrictions on travel. Before the pandemic exporters would pay receivers multiple annual visits all around the world, which bode well for closer trade relations and growing trust. Remotely having to contextualise the mayhem that ensued during the July 2021 riots in KZN and Gauteng and the subsequent cyber attack on Transnet, was a challenge. Therefore, receivers were largely in the dark, and markets were difficult.

On the bright side, the perishable products sector has just met in Berlin in April. And like me, the last time many within the sector travelled abroad was for Fruit Logistica 2020. We had all been looking forward to the



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energy, camaraderie and rekindling of friendships this year.

On the logistics front, we continue to seek a glimmer of hope for 2022. On-going meetings with Transnet's top management indicate that finding a resolution is being prioritised.

But every cash cow has its limits. For the fruit industry to remain sustainable and competitive, a concerted collective effort is required. 🍌



PLASTICS

the writing is on the wall for polluters

The future of plastic is about to change irreversibly, now that UN member states have endorsed a resolution to develop an international, legally binding treaty on plastic pollution that will address the full life cycle of plastic, including production, design and disposal. By Catherine Milward-Bridges

On 2 March, in a watershed multilateral cooperative move, heads of state, ministers of environment, and other representatives from 175 nations signed a historic resolution to address plastic pollution, at the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5) in Nairobi. This is after the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) had dubbed the current international legal framework on plastic, "a patchwork".

The new resolution holds nations, businesses and society accountable in eliminating plastic pollution from our environments. And the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) established through it, will begin its work later in 2022 with a view to having the full content of a draft global, legally binding agreement by the end of 2024.

At the end of 2022 UNEP will host a forum that is open to all stakeholders, in conjunction with the first session of INC. Participants will share knowledge, as well as best practices in different parts of the world.

So yes, everybody who produces or consumes plastic is about to be affected in the most significant way by the proposed plastics treaty and its ramifications. And the fruit industry is more focused than ever on taking its compliance cues from the SA

Plastics Pact that has its ear to the ground to relay critical updates, and to give guidance in terms of best practice.

The UNEA Publication Packet – a briefing that encapsulates the requirements to ensure the success of the plastics treaty – has suggested these three goals for it:

- 1. Reducing the total quantity of plastic produced.** The world has seen an alarming 100% increase in plastic production every 15 - 20 years. Along with it, the volume of plastic waste generated continues to climb. National Action Plans are what will enable countries to choose their own policy instruments to scale back production and meet globally-agreed-upon goals.
- 2. Improving circularity in plastic.** Plastic's most notable quality is its durability. Yet

it is treated as a disposable material, with very little plastic currently being recycled. Improved circularity will result in elimination of toxic additives and fillers, avoiding polymers like PVC entirely.

3. Eliminating plastic pollution in the environment. Reduced levels of plastic production need to be pursued on the back of established waste management guidelines that are sound.

With committed implementation by world leaders, the plastics treaty could prove to be the long-awaited catalyst to curtailing plastic pollution, once and for all.

Nevertheless, the writing is on the wall when it comes to plastic production and usage, as pressure continues to mount around the world for meaningful participation in a circular economy for plastics. 🍌

What is a treaty?

According to the Vienna Convention On The Laws of Treaties, a treaty is an international written agreement concluded by member states, and governed by international law.



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