

FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO

"Don't pass up something that's attractive today because you think you will find something better tomorrow." (Warren Buffet)

VULNERABILITY OF THE SMALL-SCALE CITRUS FARMERS

The South African agricultural sector has over the years contributed considerably to economic growth through exports and related foreign revenue, while also ensuring meaningful transformation and inclusivity. The Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan (AAMP) was developed to further expand on this, helping ensure greater participation and growth of small holder farmers. Central to the AAMP is the role of exports in driving growth in agriculture, and with the growth, facilitate inclusiveness.

I am writing about this topic in this particular week as we all ponder the potential impact of the recent events in the Middle East. South African growers are not significant recipients of funding from government when compared to their counterparts, especially in developed countries where some level of farmer support continues to exist to cushion them against 'external shocks.' We all have read of transfers in the US and EU to their farmers when events have threatened agriculture there.

The CGA's Grower Development Company is tasked with supporting emergent small holder citrus farmers who, considering the potential of realising Vision 260, has a very important role to play. One wonders what the impact of rising costs could be in the future on not just all growers, but also the small-scale and emerging farmers who are more exposed to external shocks.

The strengthening dollar and supply-side challenges affecting Brent crude pricing are expected to drive a rise in the diesel price, rumoured to constitute up to 15% of on-farm costs. Disrupting the flow of oil can also impact the price of fertilizers. Shipping costs are on the up, and should the current events persist, can climb even more.

Small-scale growers are increasingly feeling the strain, as many of the farms they operate lack the productivity needed to absorb rising input costs. Any further cost pressures risk pushing these farmers into financial difficulty – and, in some cases, out of production. Such losses would undermine sector-wide transformation efforts and stall the broader progress of South African agriculture.

This is perhaps a space that should be occupied by government, their development institutions, and partners. The Department of Agriculture, through its grant facilities, could consider cushioning small-scale growers to a certain extent.

We look forward to the Agriculture Minister's policy and funding speech (the budget vote) in the near future. Maybe a safety net of sorts is a possibility for growers facing the current adversities.

As the 2026 season officially starts in a few weeks, we will focus our efforts on ensuring access to market intelligence and rapid communication platforms, all to help guide the flow of fruit towards markets.

Together, we've built an industry known for its agility and excellence – and together, we can continue to thrive in a world that has grown extremely complicated.

CITRUS MARKETING FORUM (CMF)

Please take note of the upcoming **Citrus Marketing Forum (CMF)** that will be taking place on **24 March 2026** at **Protea Hotel Technopark, Stellenbosch** starting at **10h00**. **In-person attendance is encouraged** to allow for meaningful engagement and discussion on current market and industry matters. To assist with planning and catering, please **RSVP to Claudia Walklett (claudia@fpf.co.za) by 17 March**. Should you be unable to travel, a hybrid option will be available – please contact **Portia Magwaza (portia@cga.co.za)** for the link.

INTERESTING FACTS

The unique and remarkably complex aroma and smell of citrus fruits are due to a complex mixture of hundreds of volatile organic compounds primarily in the peel. This scent is a key adaptation to attract animals for seed dispersal and nowadays used in perfumes and cosmetics.

CGA GROUP INFO CITRUS MARKETING FORUM (CMF)

Date: Tuesday, 24 March

Time: 10h00

Venue: Protea Hotel, Technopark, Stellenbosch (In-person) – RSVP to Claudia Walklett (claudia@fpf.co.za)

Hybrid option: Contact Portia Magwaza (portia@cga.co.za) for the link