

ED'S NOTE

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Global and local landscapes are shifting, and uncertainties are rippling through many industries. The citrus industry also finds itself in the middle of rapidly changing realities. We face trade and tariff uncertainty, a changing climate, local economic pressures, new and uncharted terrain in our national political landscape – it is a time of change and disruption

In such times of turmoil, the need for accelerated transformation and inclusivity moves beyond being a desirable goal - it becomes essential for resilience, stability, and future prosperity.

Inclusivity isn't a luxury. It is a necessity. It injects dynamism and robustness. Broadening ownership and participation brings in fresh talent, new ideas, and different approaches to problem-solving. Empowering previously marginalized communities creates more resilient local economies, while fostering stability within the workforce and the broader society that the industry depends on. The goal is a truly inclusive value chain where diverse skills contribute to navigating challenges and identifying new opportunities amidst all the turbulence.

This newsletter comes as citrus export season officially kicks off. The CGA Grower Development Company (CGA-GDC) takes immense pride in the fact that millions of cartons of citrus produced by our black growers will be enjoyed in markets across the world - from China to the US, from the Middle East to the European Union.

As the industry faces a new season, during a time of unprecedented change, we highlight in the principles that will keep us anchored. You can read about the CGA-GDC's priorities for the months ahead, about how citrus is leading the way in inclusive economic participation, about inspiring projects like Ikamva Lethu and Kopano Citrus, and about key take-aways from the recent Citrus Summit.

While some changes are daunting, others are reason to celebrate. The appointment of Dr Boitshoko Ntshabele as the CEO of the CGA ushers in a new chapter for our industry. It is with a heavy heart that we say goodbye to Justin Chadwick, the former CEO, who has helped make the citrus industry one of the most transformed sectors in South African agriculture. But we also look forward to how Dr Ntshabele will build upon what has come before.

So, it is at the start of a new season, in more ways than one, that we offer you a perspective on our transforming sector.

MESSAGE FROM THE CGA CEO



In the past few weeks, I've had the privilege of traversing the citrus-producing regions of our country to meet citrus growers. Although I come from an agricultural background, and already know many people in the citrus industry, it has been truly enlightening to meet other men and women who dedicate their lives to cultivating the world-class fruit we export. Their deep connection to the land is palpable. I've walked through orchards where generations of knowledge have been worked into the soil, and I've walked through new orchards where upcoming growers are building enterprises for future generations.

In every region, I've encountered growers who are not only masters of their craft but also forward-thinkers, constantly seeking new ways to improve quality, adopt sustainable practices, and navigate the challenges of the global market. From implementing cutting-edge irrigation techniques to pioneering biological pest control methods, their commitment to excellence is evident.

In talks with growers, market access remains a topic of serious interest, as it should. The CGA remains focussed on retaining existing markets and expanding into new territories. While there is tariff uncertainty regarding the US market, there is a clear argument to be made for the mutually beneficial nature of SA-US citrus exports – an argument representatives of the South African government will be making in Washington DC.

Of course, the EU's unscientific CBS and FCM measures also remain a market access issue, and one that is being addressed through a World Trade Organisation dispute settlement process that we hope will be resolved before the 2026 season.

And markets such as China, Japan and India hold immense promise, but here phytosanitary obstacles and high tariffs also are holding back growth.

Increased citrus exports can be a powerful driver of inclusive growth by stimulating economic activity across the value chain, creating jobs in farming, processing, logistics, and related sectors. This expansion can also benefit historically disadvantaged communities through targeted development initiatives, skills training programs, and the empowerment of black farmers to continue to participate in and profit from the export market.

My encounters with South Africa's citrus growers have filled me with optimism for the future. Their expertise, their passion, and their unwavering commitment to quality form the bedrock of our industry. I have also experienced the expertise, passion and commitment of those who work hard to broaden access to markets, and to open new markets. Ultimately, expanding market access for export produce requires a concerted and collaborative effort between government and farmers. Governments play a crucial role in negotiating favourable trade agreements, streamlining export processes, and providing essential infrastructure and support services. Farmers, on the other hand, bring invaluable expertise in production, quality control, and sustainable farming practices. By working in tandem, they can identify and capitalize on new market opportunities, overcome trade barriers, and ensure that South African produce continues to meet international standards.

This partnership should be underpinned by open communication, mutual trust, and a shared vision for a thriving agricultural sector. Through this collaborative approach, South Africa can unlock the full potential of its export produce, drive economic growth, and create a more prosperous future for all.

NEW YEAR, RENEWED FOCUS ON EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE GDC

The CGA Grower Development Company (CGA-GDC) is setting its sights on a transformative 2025, with a renewed commitment to enabling black farmers to access opportunities in the citrus industry. By prioritising meaningful farm-level interventions, enhancing existing research collaborations, and strengthening mentorship programs, the GDC aims to create a more inclusive and sustainable agricultural sector.

Driving Change at the Farm Level

At the heart of the 2025 focus is a commitment to projects that make a tangible difference at the farm level. This means shifting from broad-based strategies to targeted initiatives that provide direct support to black-owned farms. From improving access to resources to enhancing productivity, the GDC aims to ensure that black farmers are not just participating in the industry but are thriving within it.

Collaboration with Research Institutions

To enhance knowledge-sharing and innovation, the GDC will ensure that our existing working relationship with CGA group companies such as Citrus Research International (CRI) deliver results for our black growers. Better collaboration helps us address many challenges faced by black citrus farmers, as well develop scientifically backed solutions that improve yields, sustainability, and resilience to climate change.

*The CGA-GDC recently held
a Strategic Session in Johannesburg*





Data-Driven Due Diligence

Ensuring that initiatives are grounded in solid research, the GDC will prioritise due diligence with accurate and comprehensive data collection. Knowing what is happening at farm level will help the GDC make better decisions and target future interventions for maximum impact. This level of data awareness will also allow us to allocate resources more effectively, and ensure the right interventions reach the right growers. With reliable data, we will also be able to track the progress of our interventions.

Tailored Development Plans

Recognising that a one-size-fits-all approach is ineffective, the GDC will design individualised development plans for identified black-owned farms. We hope that such personalised roadmaps will be able to consider the unique challenges, goals, and opportunities of each farm, thereby ensuring that support mechanisms are aligned with their specific needs.

Developing a Sustainable Funding Framework

Access to funding remains a significant barrier for black farmers. To address this, the GDC will develop a funding framework that facilitates access to financial support, investment, and grants. This framework will not only provide immediate assistance but also create a long-term model for financial sustainability.

Leadership in Transformation

The GDC is committed to taking its leadership role in transformation at the CGA board level seriously. The GDC gives black farmers the forum for their voices to be heard.

The GDC's focus for 2025 will be to be the most effective advocate and impact partner for South Africa's black citrus growers. We believe our focus areas for 2025 will allow us to make the maximum impact at farm level and thereby be a catalyst for real and lasting transformation.



**CGA
Grower
Development
Company**





CITRUS LEADING THE WAY

IN TRANSFORMATION AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

In a recent newsletter, President Cyril Ramaphosa spoke about the critical role of agriculture in South Africa's economy, highlighting its contribution to food security and exports. He said that in 2024, agricultural exports reached a record \$13.7 billion (almost R250 billion). President Ramaphosa underscored the importance of creating a diverse and inclusive agricultural sector that reflects the nation's demographics and ensures equitable land ownership.

The citrus industry has been a leader in agriculture – both in terms of our industry's success in exporting our produce, but also in increasing the economic participation of black growers.

In the 2024 season, South African citrus growers packed 164.5 million 15kg cartons of citrus for export. The South African citrus industry also leads the way in transformation. Of all the produce sectors in agriculture, citrus leads the way with the highest level of inclusive participation.

President Ramaphosa stated that achieving sustainable agriculture requires addressing issues of equity and inclusion in farming and land ownership. He emphasized that it is in the interests of all South Africans to have an agricultural sector that is representative and inclusive, contributing to economic growth and food security.

The government's vision aligns closely with the GDC's 2025 mandate, which focuses on enabling black farmers to access equitable opportunities. The GDC's initiatives directly support the President's call for transformation in agriculture.

The Department of Agriculture (formerly DALRRD) has recently reaffirmed their commitment to the National Extension Support Services, which focusses on support and training for farmers. Since its founding, the GDC has led the way in this arena, showing how close partnerships between industry bodies and farmers can serve the needs of black farmers.

The GDC can provide its growers with access to advanced agricultural techniques, climate-smart practices, and digital tools – also because the GDC is part of the same network of companies within CGA that serve the whole citrus industry.

President Ramaphosa's recent call for inclusive agricultural growth reinforces the GDC's objectives. We have a shared commitment to fostering a diverse, inclusive, and economically robust agricultural sector in South Africa.





IKAMVA LETHU AND KOPANO CITRUS TARGETED INTERVENTIONS CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESSFUL BLACK-OWNED FARMING COLLECTIVES

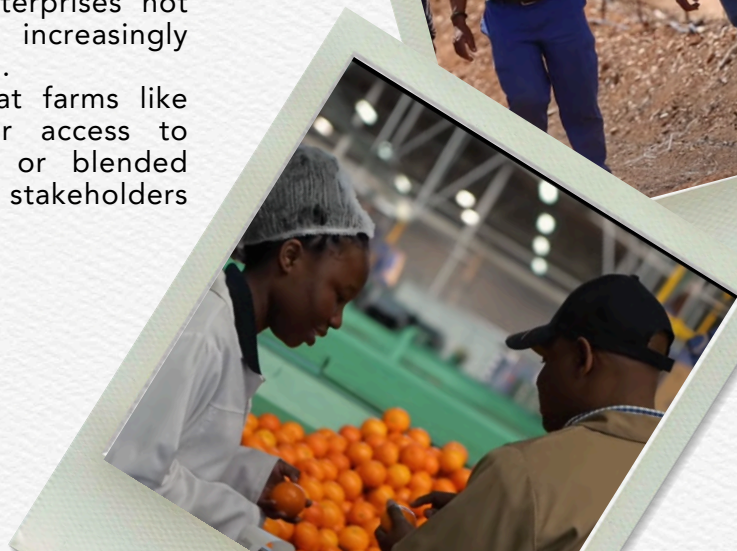
One of South Africa's most significant empowerment farms, Ikamva Lethu, located in the Sundays River Valley, exemplifies the power of collective action. Established in 2015, this initiative was spearheaded by the Sundays River Citrus Company (SRCC) and backed by 17 local producers who collectively financed its development. The goal was clear: to empower farm employees and integrate black farmers into the commercial citrus industry.

Each participating farmer established a trust to ensure that their permanent employees benefited directly from the farm's success. In addition to financial support from the Economic Transformation of Black Citrus Growers (ETBCG) programme, Ikamva Lethu aligns with the broader industry transformation strategy. The project has received extensive backing from the GDC, which focused on enterprise development, and the Citrus Academy, which played a key role in human capital development.

This model exemplifies how the citrus industry pulls together skills and resources from various fields to support and develop black-owned citrus farms. The result is a collective of experience and mentorship that black-owned farms can call upon in every aspect of citrus farming.

The GDC provided technical and administrative support, ensuring that these enterprises not only survive but thrive in an increasingly competitive agricultural landscape.

This support network means that farms like Ikamva Lethu also have better access to funding through loans, grants, or blended finance from banks and other stakeholders such as the Jobs Fund.





The GDC plays a crucial role in facilitating these partnerships by assisting with data collection, funding applications, follow-ups, and ongoing monitoring. The impact of this intervention has been substantial, with massive job creation accompanying the expansion of new hectareage. Currently employing 60 people, Ikamva Lethu plans to increase this number to 115 as the farm grows to a total of 586 hectares by the end of 2026.

Another shining example of the citrus industry's targeted intervention is Kopano Citrus, a 30-hectare farm in Marble Hall, Limpopo. Kopano is a unique initiative, founded in 2009 by seven individuals with disabilities under the Kopano Disabled Primary Cooperative.

In 2016, the Limpopo government, alongside local citrus farmers, joined forces to support Kopano, forming a joint venture that has since become a beacon of inclusive agriculture.

The ETBCG programme was initiated in 2019 by the Citrus Growers Association (CGA) in partnership with entities such as the Jobs Fund, Land Bank, Department of Agriculture, AgriSETA, LIMA Rural Development Foundation, and First National Bank. It supports and empowers black citrus growers in South Africa. Successes like Ikamva Lethu and Kopano show what can be done when industry and government work together to empower black South African farmers.



Find out more about these amazing projects in these videos on YouTube:

[Ikamva Lethu](#)

[Kopano Citrus](#)



UNLOCKING THE FUTURE OF SOUTH AFRICAN CITRUS KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE CITRUS SUMMIT 2025

As the 2025 citrus export season has arrived, the South African citrus industry finds itself at a pivotal moment. The recently concluded Citrus Summit in Gqeberha brought together many key stakeholders in the citrus industry to assess the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Among the central themes discussed were equitable access to markets, economic opportunities for emerging growers, and the urgent need for logistical and climate resilience.

South Africa's citrus sector is a powerhouse, supporting over 140,000 on-farm jobs and more across the value chain. In 2024, the country exported just over 164 million 15kg cartons of citrus. With new plantings maturing, projections suggest that, if properly supported, citrus exports could grow to 260 million cartons by 2032, potentially creating 100,000 additional jobs.

However, unlocking this potential requires addressing fundamental obstacles, including market access barriers, infrastructure inefficiencies, and ensuring that emerging black growers have equal opportunities to thrive.

While South Africa's citrus industry remains one of the country's most significant agricultural success stories, inclusive participation remains a focus. At the summit, Minister of Agriculture John Steenhuisen reaffirmed that transformation is key to the sector's sustainability.

The European Union (EU), South Africa's largest citrus export destination, continues to impose phytosanitary restrictions that cost local growers an estimated R3.7 billion per year — disproportionately affecting emerging black farmers more due to compliance costs.





To create more opportunities for black citrus growers, industry leaders also called for a greater focus on mentorship programs, research-driven solutions, and funding support that aligns with development goals. Port and rail inefficiencies continue to remain a major concern. The Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy (BFAP) estimates that poor logistics cost the citrus industry R5.2 billion in 2024 alone. At the summit, Transnet's Michelle Phillips shared updates on Transnet's commitment to not repeat the delays of previous years that cost the citrus industry some export opportunities. Despite Transnet's R3.4 billion commitment to equipment acquisitions across eight terminals, implementing private sector participation has been slow and needs expediting. While South Africa has avoided the extreme weather events that crippled citrus production in other citrus-producing areas of the world, local climate challenges persist. Warmer, drier conditions are affecting fruit sizes, while floods and cold snaps have impacted specific regions. The Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) continues to invest R180 million annually in research, with climate adaptation strategies forming a key part of these efforts. From securing flood-resistant roads to promoting water-efficient farming practices, resilience planning is critical for future growth. This research is available to black growers through the GDC's work. The Citrus Summit made it clear that transformation is not just about compliance but about securing the industry's future. Emerging growers need structured mentorship, access to funding, and support to overcome logistical and market access hurdles. Investment in research, infrastructure, and policy advocacy will be crucial in ensuring that South Africa's citrus industry remains competitive, inclusive, and sustainable.

