



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Centre of Excellence Strengthens Pest Monitoring

[Stellenbosch] – February 21, 2025 – The fight against invasive pests has just intensified with the launch of the groundbreaking Centre of Excellence for Pest Monitoring. This initiative by the South African deciduous fruit industry organisation, Hortgro, aims to safeguard the industry's future and ensure a competitive edge for its producers.

With the increasing threat posed by invasive pests such as the Oriental fruit fly, Polyphagous Shot Hole Borer (PSHB), and spotted wing Drosophila (SWD), the new initiative aims to strengthen pest surveillance, early detection, and intervention strategies. The Centre will leverage the expertise and infrastructure of FruitFly Africa (FFA), a leading entity in pest monitoring that has been instrumental in tracking and controlling harmful pests since 2001.

Hortgro Executive Director Anton Rabe emphasized the critical need for proactive pest management:

"We must understand where pests occur and where they don't, as this directly influences crop protection strategies and practices. Catching an invasive pest as soon as it arrives may allow its eradication before it establishes, buying us crucial time to develop management strategies."

A Coordinated Effort to Protect South Africa's Fruit Industry

FruitFly Africa operates over 6,000 pest monitoring traps across major deciduous fruit production areas. The Centre of Excellence will expand this reach, focusing on key pests that threaten the apple, pear, and stone fruit sectors but potentially also berries, wine, and table grapes.

Key components of the initiative include:

- Early Warning Systems—Strengthening the monitoring network to detect new pest threats as soon as they emerge.
- Surveillance Expansion—Increasing focus on potentially high-risk pests like the Polyphagous Shot Hole Borer and spotted wing Drosophila, which have been detected in South Africa.
- Integrated Pest Management—Enhancing biological control measures, including the sterile insect technique, which in 2023/24 entailed the weekly production of up to 65 million sterile Mediterranean fruit flies during the summer programme to reduce pest populations.
- Industry Collaboration—Enabling cross-sector cooperation, ensuring pest management expertise can benefit a wider range of agricultural industries.

In the above initiatives, the Centre of Excellence collaborates with the Department of Agriculture and other stakeholders at the national and provincial levels.

The launch of the Centre of Excellence signals a bold step towards ensuring the resilience and international competitiveness of South Africa's deciduous fruit industry, reinforcing its position as a global leader in sustainable pest management.

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