

FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO (13/24)

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Justin Chadwick 29 March 2024



“A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way” John Maxwell

NEW LEADERSHIP AT CITRUS GROWERS' ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

The Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA) is proud to welcome Gerrit van der Merwe as the new Chairman of its Board for a two-year term.

Gerrit van der Merwe is the Managing Director of ALG Estates (ALG) and has been in this position for the last 6 years. ALG is situated in Citrusdal and comprises a number of citrus farms with a proud history. Van der Merwe's family has been farming on the upper reaches of the Olifants River Valley for eight generations. Van der Merwe himself started doing holiday work on his father's farm at the tender age of eight – cementing a lifelong passion for citrus.

Van der Merwe has worked in the citrus industry in the United States after his studies in accounting. He returned in 2008 to join the team at ALG.

Commenting on his new role as Chairman, Van der Merwe said: "Being part of a family agribusiness, I feel a great responsibility of stewardship. You must aim to leave an endeavour in a better state than how it was entrusted to you. Not just in terms of finances and assets, but also in terms of improving it by focusing on the wider community. A citrus farm, just like the citrus industry, is made up out of a collection of hard-working people, people who believe in contributing to the South African economy through working the land. It is one of my goals to make citrus more community-centred and hopefully contribute in that way."

Van der Merwe added that this sense of community and unity was on display in July last year when a devastating flood caused damage of near R500 million to growers in the Citrusdal valley. All role-players came together to rebuild and look towards the future.

The CGA Board comprises 23 directors. The directors represent 15 different grower regions, with 2 directors representing emerging farmers in the Southern and Northern regions, a director of government relations and a director who heads up the finance and risk review committee.

CGA CEO Justin Chadwick congratulated Van der Merwe on his appointment: "He brings a lot of energy and enormous experience to this essential role. He knows the business of citrus through and through. His leadership will be appreciated. This is a critical and decisive time for South African citrus. The industry made huge investments in plantings a few years ago and we are seeing crop sizes increase accordingly. Projections show we can, if all role-players work together, export an additional 100 million 15kg cartons of citrus within the next eight years. This can create 100 000 new jobs and generate billions in foreign earnings. But there are challenges that need to be addressed urgently for us to achieve this goal."

Van der Merwe highlighted poor logistics and market access as the two challenges that concerns him currently. "Our rail network and ports need to be much more efficient and unfair EU trade regulations need to be fought. These two obstacles are standing in the industry's way. As Chairman I have a team of dedicated and talented CGA board members behind me. We are all focused on ways in which we can work with government to make sure the industry will firstly retain and then increase jobs and revenue."

The outgoing Chairman, Hannes de Waal, from the Sunday's River Valley in the Eastern Cape, will now become one of the two Vice Chairmen, as is normal in the board leadership's rotational structure. De Waal's fellow Vice Chairman will be Jan-Louis Pretorius, from Letsitele in Limpopo.

The CGA Board also added another member to the Executive Committee, with Andries van Wyngaardt joining Gerrit, Jan Louis, Hannes, Cornel van der Merwe, George Hall and Piet Engelbrecht on this committee.

THE CGA GROUP (CRI, RIVER BIOSCIENCE, XSIT, CGA CULTIVAR COMPANY, CGA GROWER DEVELOPMENT COMPANY & CITRUS ACADEMY) ARE SUPPORTED BY AND WORK FOR THE CITRUS GROWERS' ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA