

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HORTGRO Appoints Jacques du Preez as New Chief Executive Officer

Industry veteran steps up as founding leader, Anton Rabe retires after decades of distinguished service

HORTGRO, the leading statutory body representing South Africa's deciduous fruit producers, today announced the appointment of Jacques du Preez as its new Chief Executive Officer, effective 1 August 2026. Du Preez succeeds Anton Rabe (Hortgro Executive Director), who is retiring after a distinguished career that helped shape the South African deciduous fruit industry into one of the country's most competitive agricultural export sectors. Rabe led the industry through several turbulent periods, including its 1997 deregulation.

A Seasoned Industry Leader

Du Preez brings more than 20 years' expertise in South African agriculture, specialising in market access, trade policy, and market development in the deciduous fruit industry. In his current role as General Manager, Trade & Markets, at HORTGRO, he has been at the forefront of international market-

access negotiations, phytosanitary compliance, logistics, and the opening of strategic export destinations worldwide.

His appointment as CEO marks a natural progression for an executive who has already demonstrated leadership as an industry spokesperson, a trusted liaison with government departments, and an active participant in national and international forums.

"I am deeply honoured to assume this leadership role at such a pivotal moment for our industry. HORTGRO's strength lies in the trust and collaboration among growers, government, and our international partners. It will be difficult to step into Anton's shoes. He is a true legend of the industry, but I look forward to building on his remarkable legacy and pursuing new opportunities for South Africa's deciduous fruit sector on the global stage."

— Jacques du Preez, incoming CEO, HORTGRO

Academic Background & Expertise

Du Preez is an alumnus of the University of Stellenbosch and the University of the Free State, where he completed his undergraduate studies with agricultural economics and horticulture as his primary subjects. He subsequently obtained an Honours degree in Agricultural Economics from the University of the Free State. His academic foundation, combined with two decades of hands-on industry experience, positions him uniquely to lead HORTGRO into its next chapter.

Throughout his career, Du Preez has earned recognition for his expertise in regulatory and phytosanitary affairs, export strategy, and



multi-stakeholder coordination — capabilities that will be central to his mandate as CEO.

Tribute to Outgoing Executive Director Anton Rabe

The HORTGRO Board of Directors expressed its heartfelt gratitude to Anton Rabe for his extraordinary contribution to the organisation and to the broader South African deciduous fruit industry. Under his leadership, HORTGRO grew into a respected and influential body, advancing the interests of fruit producers across research, market development, and industry advocacy. Rabe will support Du Preez with the transition to the new dispensation until at least mid-2027 and will continue to support industry activities at a strategic level for a period. Details regarding this involvement will be clarified and agreed upon over the next 6 months.

“Anton’s vision, dedication, and passion for this industry have left an indelible mark on South African agriculture. We wish him well in retirement and are confident that Jacques is the ideal person to carry this work forward,” said Nicholas Dicey, HORTGRO’s Board Chairperson.

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About HORTGRO

HORTGRO is the statutory body representing producers of deciduous fruit in South Africa, including apples, pears, and stone fruit (peaches, nectarines, apricots, plums, prunes, cherries). The organisation drives research and technology, market access, and industry transformation and development to ensure the long-term competitiveness and sustainability of the South African deciduous fruit industry in global markets. Visit us [Home Page - Hortgro](#)

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