



I HAD AN APPLE FARM IN AFRICA...AND A PLAN

Standing on a hill in Mpumalanga, overlooking the rolling green valleys of Zwelihle near Amersfoort, it's hard not to think of Karen Blixen's famous line: "I had a farm in Africa."

But for businessman and entrepreneur Vusi Khanyile, founder of Afrikan Farms, apple farming in Zwelihle, in the Daggakraal hills, is not a romantic notion or a leap of faith. It is a carefully researched, long-term business decision — and one that offers valuable lessons for new entrants to South Africa's deciduous fruit industry. [Read here>>](#)



HORTFIN & UK GOV ENTERS "GREEN" BLENDED FINANCE AGREEMENT

A pioneering blended finance partnership between the UK Government, South African development financiers, industry bodies and implementing agencies is demonstrating how collaboration can unlock commercial opportunities for farmers in Mpumalanga, helping to build alternative economic pathways as the region undergoes its energy transition. [Read here >>](#)

HISTORIC SHIPMENT OF STONE FRUIT TO CHINA

The first full container of South African stone fruit bound for the People's Republic of China was dispatched last week from the Freshness First Packhouse in Franschhoek, marking a milestone for the country's deciduous fruit industry. [Read here >>](#)



CROP ESTIMATES REVISED | POME REGIONS BATTERED BY HAIL AND STORM

The 2026 pome fruit harvest and export season started on a positive note, but this momentum was disrupted in Week 6 when a severe hail and windstorm affected parts of the Langkloof and Ceres regions.

[Read here >>](#)

US Tariff Developments – Implications for South African Pome & Stone Fruit Exporters (February 2026)

In February 2026, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled 6–3 against the Trump Administration's reciprocal tariffs imposed under IEEPA, effectively ending those measures.

[Read here >>](#)

VRUGTEBOERE MOET HELP OM BYE TE BESKERM

Die volhoubaarheid en winsgewendheid van die vrugtebedryf is direk afhanklik van gesonde bye en verantwoordelike bestuiwingspraktyke. Met 'n jaarliks toename in die aanvraag na bestuiwing, is dit noodsaaklik dat vrugteboere die belangrikheid van bye verstaan en aktief bydra tot hul beskerming. [Read here >>](#)



SUSTAINABILITY AUDIT SURVEY

The International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group, has contracted BDO LLP to conduct a market and stakeholder assessment in South Africa. The objective of the study is to develop a practical, market-informed understanding of how existing certifications and buyer requirements operate in practice, and how they can be more effectively leveraged to deliver value for producers, buyers, and financial institutions in South Africa. [Read here >>](#)

THE VALUE OF THE INFORMAL STONE FRUIT MARKETING CAMPAIGN

The market development campaigns for stone fruit and pome fruit are designed to drive sustainable demand, increase awareness, and grow consumption of South African produce, while supporting long-term industry growth across key domestic and international markets. [Read here >>](#)

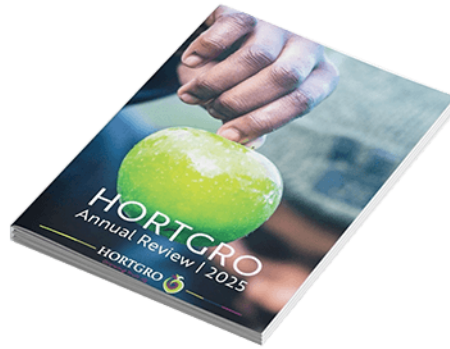


ONE FARM FOOD WASTE PROJECT | MEANINGFUL IMPACT

The One Farm, food waste project, is a practical, impact-driven initiative to reduce food loss and waste across the agricultural value chain while improving food security in vulnerable communities.

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Upcoming events

Hortgro Technical Symposium
25 MONDAY – 29 FRIDAY May 2026

Symposium Days
25, 26, 27 May (Lord Charles Hotel, Somerset West)

Pome Field Day
28 May (EGVV)

Stone Fruit Seminar & Orchard Walk
29 May (Simondium)

Growing Forward in a Changing World

HORTGRO
Growing Fruit IQ



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AGT is a platform empowering agricultural workers in the fruit and wine industries to showcase their singing talents, develop life skills, and make a lasting impact on their communities.



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Water

Water has been top of mind in recent weeks, with the crisis centred on the Johannesburg metro, but also affecting the broader Gauteng area and many – too many! – other towns and even rural areas. The main reason is neglect and the lack of maintenance of infrastructure. This reflects the failure of mostly local government in such areas, but also points to deep-rooted policy gaps and a lack of accountability.

Water is also a hot topic in our industry. We all remember the zero-day scenario in the Cape Metro some years ago, with a similar situation simmering in the PE/Gqeberha area. The danger is that both Metros, despite promises and plans to the contrary, have not done nearly enough to develop alternative water sources, such as desalination (both conveniently located next to the ocean), recycling, and/or groundwater.

For me, it remains mind-boggling that perfectly clean and drinkable water is flushed down toilets every day. The least that could be done is to recycle such water for alternative uses, such as irrigation.

Be that as it may, as an agri-sector, we need to ensure that these issues are flagged at the highest levels, as it is just too easy to “gap” some of the rural water allocated for agricultural production for

the metros. The impact on jobs and the livelihoods of rural communities will be severe and needs to be objected to as aggressively as we can.

It is therefore a prerequisite that agriculture do everything in its power to ensure effective and efficient water use across our production, packing and processing activities.

For this reason, water and water availability have been identified as a top risk for our industry in the Vision of the Future process conducted a few years ago. Since then, our Science and Sustainability team has been developing a water use strategy with this in mind.

What can and should we do proactively to reduce the risk of running out of water and to ensure that we use this resource as efficiently as possible?

Quoting the final paragraph of the strategy document: *“The status-quo assessment made it clear that water’s centrality to the sector demands both coordinated collective action and innovation. By actively engaging in water planning, advocating for stronger institutions, adopting more sustainable water practices, diversifying sources, and improving water use efficiency, the deciduous fruit industry can enhance resilience, reduce risk, and secure its future amid increasing environmental and climatic pressures.”*

We could plan to live without electricity or adapt our lives to load-shedding schedules. But we cannot live without water! This strategy will be shared with our producer councils in mid-March, after which it will be communicated to the industry at large.

Until next time
Anton

Water is the driving force of all nature - Leonardo Da Vinci

When the well is dry, we know the value of water - Benjamin Franklin

Thousands have lived without love, not one without water – H. Auden

→ HORTGRO UPCOMING EVENTS

- Hortgro Tegniëse Simposium met Kern- en Steenvrug-Velddae, 25 - 29 Mei 2026

→ HORTGRO PUBLICATIONS

Timely Hints

- [March 2026](#)

Fresh Notes

- [Restrictions on the Use of Plant Protection Products on Deciduous fruit for 2025/26](#)
- [227 | Feedback of a Packhouse Action Group \(PAG\) meeting held in November 2025](#)
- [226 | Restrictions on PPP \(October 2025\)](#)
- [225 | Feedback of a Packhouse Action Group \(PAG\) meeting held in July 2025](#)

Hortgro News

- [All previous issues](#)

Fruit South Africa

- [Transformation Summary](#)

Fresh Quarterly

- [September Issue 30](#)
- [December Issue 31](#)

→ HORTGRO SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER PLATFORMS

- **Stone Fruit Disorder Guide.** Find it [here](#).
- **Hortgro Science Research Library.** Find it [here](#).
- **Hortgro Science Climate Change App.** Find it [here](#).
- **Post-harvest Website.** Find it [here](#).
- **Phyto Application.** Find it [here](#).
- **PSHB.** Find it [here](#).
- **Fresh Quarterly.** Find it [here](#).

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