

The background of the cover features a large, dark metal adjustable wrench on the right side, oriented vertically with its head at the top. On the left side, there is a vertical plant stem with several green buds and small leaves. The overall theme is agriculture and industry.

HORTGRO

Growing Fruit IQ



New Roots

an industry in transition

Volume 10 - October 2025

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leaders and managers
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The Root Map

These are tomorrow's leaders and managers

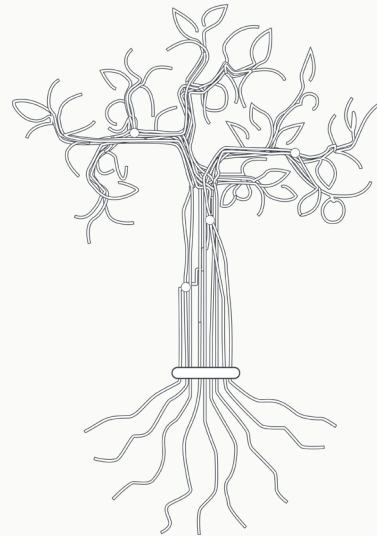
Foreword by Astrid Arendse,
Hortgro's Human Resources and
Learning and Development Manager

As Human Resources Manager at Hortgro, Astrid is responsible for human resources for Hortgro and a few associated organisations and manages the Learning and Development Department to address industry training needs. She is a qualified skills development facilitator and registered with various Seta's including the Agriseta.

Learning and development is an essential part of the success of any business. The more you invest, the higher the return.

Agri-businesses operate in an ever-changing environment and are no longer based on traditional practices only, but have to continuously adapt to climate smart practices, technological innovations and global market requirements to name a few. To do so, we require skilled, motivated, informed and future thinking employees to get the job done efficiently and effectively.

The need to invest in the training and development of employees is a must to grow the industry. Right training initiatives offer the ability to change, adapt and renew processes and procedures.



Training people not only helps cultivate crops, but also confidence, change, capacity and a greater understanding of agriculture as a whole. Upskilling and reskilling our industry is a team effort and we are thankful for partnerships with the Agriseta, the WCDoA and the Jobs Fund.

Another important part of people development is mentorships, where transfer of knowledge, growth, guidance, encouragement and the support to businesses and individuals are vital. As Inga Dlumane mentions in his inspiring story, in a football match, every player needs a great coach. For us in agriculture, a great mentor, who believes in the potential of the business and the individual and who walks with their mentee to facilitate opportunities to learn and grow, is a catalyst for transformation.

Over the last few weeks I had the privilege to spend time with interns, talented agri-workers and young leaders. The certification ceremony of young leaders, who completed the Hortgro Production Management course facilitated by Mazars, and listening to these managers and the type of leaders they want to be, was inspiring. Their passion continues to amaze me.

Interns, who are part of the Hortgro Intern/Mentorship programme took part in an industry tour and their excitement of being part of the agricultural industry is contagious. These are the leaders and managers of tomorrow and it is our responsibility to invest in their development.

Again this year with Agri's Got Talent, we were blessed with amazingly talented agricultural workers singing their hearts out at the AGT finals in Stellenbosch, but what stood out was the sense of community and heart that these top 10 finalists and the operational team had for one another and for our industry. Their growth, confidence, pride, discipline and desire for growth are awe-inspiring.

Even the smallest training initiative has a big impact on all involved. We all have a responsibility to create opportunities to learn and develop, and when done right, it not only motivates and uplifts employees, but directly impacts on the bottom line.



A special Certificate of Appreciation for Mariette Kotze

We are super proud of Mariette Kotze, General Manager of Industry Support Services at Hortgro, for receiving a special Certificate of Appreciation from the Western Cape Department of Agriculture.

It formed part of the WCDoA Female Entrepreneur Awards and Women's Day Celebrations. Congratulations Mariette, and thank you for everything you do for the SA deciduous fruit industry.



"It is both a privilege and honour to be recognised by the WCDoA for the role I have played, and will continue to play, in the industry," Mariette commented. "Our work often happens behind the scenes, serving as a catalyst and working in close partnership with the Department to drive growth and inclusivity. Ultimately, however, our true measure of success lies in the performance of our growers. Knowing that I have contributed to that success is deeply rewarding, both personally and professionally. This recognition highlights the importance of public-private partnerships and the tangible impact such collaborations can achieve. Above all, it underscores that this has always been, and will remain, a team effort."

Afrikan Farms on the Prohyta course

Prophyta is a prominent research institution based in South Africa, specialising in the field of plant sciences and horticulture. The organisation is dedicated to advancing knowledge and understanding of plant physiology, particularly in relation to dormancy and growth patterns under varying environmental conditions.

Prophyta engages in studies that explore the complexities of plant development and collaborates with various academic and research entities,

fostering a multidisciplinary approach to solving challenges faced by the horticultural industry.

For Sibongeleni Mathenjwa and Nonhlanhla Dlamini, both orchard managers at Afrikan Farms in Mpumalanga, August 2025 was a milestone. It was not only their first time attending the Prophyta pome- and stone-fruit short course in Grabouw it was also the very first time that emerging producers from Mpumalanga had participated in the programme.



Over 10 days, they joined a diverse group of horticulturists, consultants, soil and irrigation specialists, and post-harvest experts to deepen their knowledge of fruit production. For them, the course was more than just theory; it was a chance to connect what they were learning directly to the apple orchards they manage back home.

Two lessons in particular stood out for them:

Mulching

"We saw how much difference mulching can make," they explained. "It's not only about saving water but also improving soil health, reducing weeds naturally, and even protecting the trees from sunburn. These are things we can start applying straight away in our orchards."

Summer pruning

"We had only tried it once before in our Royal Gala block. Now we understand

why it's so important to make it part of our routine every season. Better light, better colour, better fruit and healthier trees overall."

Both participants describe the course as an eye-opening experience that gave them the confidence to take their orchard management to the next level.

"We are grateful to Afrikan Farms, the Jobs Fund and Hortgro for making this possible. The knowledge we gained is going to help us improve quality, plan better for expansion, and manage our orchards more sustainably."

For emerging producers like Sibongeleni and Nonhlahla, the course was more than just training it was a step forward in building the technical expertise needed to grow both fruit and futures in Mpumalanga.



Community workshops improve skills and self-confidence



The Koue Bokkeveld Opleidingsentrum (KBOS) again made a precious contribution to community development in the Witzenberg district with their practical Handyman/Woman workshops.

This initiative began in 2024 and was born out of frustrations in the community about common household problems costing an arm and a leg. The question was simple: “Why don’t we learn to fix these problems ourselves?”

Edna Nigrini, the KBOS manager of social and youth development, started organising. The workshops, presented by Bruce Arries of Bronaar, quickly became popular. In 2025 the format was expanded to two sessions - one focusing on repairs inside and the other on the outside.

For an affordable R130 per person for both sessions, participants learnt practical skills like fixing a tap, installing

a basin, adapting a Geyser’s temperature and even how to identify a burnt-out element.

Edna says the attendance was excellent: 58 and 60 people respectively took part in the first and second sessions, of which the majority were women. A total of 60 participants completed the 2025 session which included 48 from the 2024 session.

Apart from helping participants to learn to save money, the biggest value of the course is the sense of empowerment it creates, says Edna: It is so powerful to know you can fix your door’s lock yourself, and not having to rely on someone else. She also emphasises

the importance the confidence and pride that it brings to households.

Kids see that mom can do things herself!

Landi Kahlmeyer, community development officer of KBOS added that there is a big need to offer similar courses on farms, empowering someone in every household to do basic repairs – an important step to save money and improve living conditions.

Joy van Biljon, another supporter of the project, sees this as proof of how farm workers' attitudes have changed over the years from a feeling of dependence and helplessness to active participation and problem solving. "The attendance of these workshops is clear proof that farm workers are thinking differently about their circumstances," she said.



"It's a sign of a healthy civil society and a positive antipode to the tragic images of dilapidated farmhouses."

The new handyman and -women were full of praise about this initiative. One woman said she was going to ask her manager to offer something similar on their farm to ensure household repairs can be done in-house and affordable.

The Handyman/Woman workshops is an inspiring example of how information sharing and skills development can empower communities – one tap, one lock, one household at a time.

THIRTY
Sept 2025

FRESH
QUARTERLY

FOR THE DECIDUOUS FRUIT GROWER

HORTGRO

2025
HORTGRO
SCIENCE

Postharvest
Symposium

webinar:

Sustainable Agriculture
and Carbon Footprinting

Register for the next webinar,
29 October, 12:00-12:45



Quick identification guide for key phytosanitary pests of South African deciduous fruit



Compiled and edited by Dr Shelley Johnson, HORTGRO Research Associate (Phytosanitary Entomology and Market Access), Department of Conservation Ecology and Entomology, Stellenbosch University

Pests

Fruit damage

Thanks are expressed for all photographic contributions (see individual photo credits) and to the following persons for content and editorial contributions/review: Dr Marelize de Villiers, Dr Caro Kapp, Prof Pia Addison, Dr Minette Karsten, Dr Nanike Esterhuizen, Dr Gulu Bekker, Zion Jodamus and Liana De Araujo.



Hortgro Postharvest

Postharvest supports and enhances the processes throughout the supply chain critical to ensuring that intrinsic product quality is maintained and that a quality product is available to the end-consumer in local and distant global markets.

Postharvest covers producers, packhouses, marketing coordination, logistics and shipping, receivers/wholesalers and end-consumers.

Packhouse Action Group

Pome Handling Protocols

Stone Handling Protocols

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HORTGRO ASSISTANCE WITH PCO APPLICATIONS

Technical Roots -

Access to free online resources and training



In an effort to assist producers with applications for pest control operator licences, Hortgro will offer a collective courier service. If you would like to make use of this service, please do the following:

Download the correct application form (dated April 2025) and complete it.

Download it here: <https://www.hortgro.co.za/wp-content/uploads/docs/2025/04/PCO-Application-Form-2025.pdf>.

Make the payment of R 3 141.00 and add the Proof of Payment to your application.

Please send the completed application form, along with all the required documents, to Hortgro.

Hortgro will courier applications to the Registrar's office in Pretoria. Applications will be processed collectively on a weekly basis and will be followed up on via a track-and-trace system. We will try our best to hold the department accountable.

For any questions, contact Elouise at learn@hortgro.co.za

Producers may also utilise the training platforms offered by Citrus Academy and GrainSA, as well as private groups that provide a similar service.

Please note that Hortgro representatives are in continuous consultation with other industry organisations, including Agbiz, Fruit SA, and government officials, to find solutions for some of the application problems.

Find additional information here:

[JULY UPDATE: Pest Control Operator Applications - Hortgro](#)

[Fresh Notes 222 \(April 2025\)](#)

Playing ball without football

Inga was born 31 years ago in the Eastern Cape in the town, Elliot, that is now known as Khowa. There, he had a good upbringing and schooling, where he developed an immense love for the game of football. Not only did he adore the game, he was seriously good at it. However, Khowa is a rural town, and farming is a massive part of the environment. It intrigued Inga the same way football did. So after matric he enrolled at CPUT, studying the National Agricultural Diploma, followed by Btech Agriculture. And there he also played his beloved football, becoming captain of CPUT after one semester, winning a variety of leagues.

In his third year he had to get an internship in what is known as Work Integrated Learning, where a student ends up on a farm, packhouse or one of the many elements forming the value chain of the production process.

He met with Lona Odendaal, who facilitates the Hortgro Intern/Mentorship Programme. The interview went well and afterwards he made a beeline for the possibility of an internship at Nooitgedacht, a pristine Dutoit Agri farm in the Koue Bokkeveld.

"I wanted to do my internship there because it was one of the very best learning possibilities, but the area also had a very active football community," Inga explains. However, before he could don his togs, he was informed by Nooitgedacht's management that he will be promoted to production manager. "So walking to the football field that Sunday after this announcement, I was looking at all the other guys also on their way. I realised that I'd soon be their superior in the working field and there would be an awkwardness for them to have me as an equal on the football field. Sometimes relationships out of work can have a negative influence on your relationships in the workplace. Being their production manager they might feel I should be

their captain on the football pitch as well, but there might be another better captain amongst their own who will then lose out. That's not fair."

It was a hard call for him to make, as football has been part of his life from a very young age. He lived for it. "It's the one thing I've always known, I've always played football," he says. What makes it even more intense is that his coach at CPUU urged him to go for trials in professional football. In his heart he knew he would make it to the professional level, but he decided against it. He chose to pursue a career in agriculture. Although he would have made a lot more money playing pro football, the issue is that it would have been a much shorter career. He was 19 at the time at CPUU, so let's say a playing career of 10, maybe 12 years was possible (if he didn't get seriously injured), and what then? Restarting his agri studies with a 12 year backlog?

"I still love football, love watching it, but my first love now is farming. If I apply myself, I can keep on scoring for a long, long time. My dream is to live and learn. A lot like in football, I want to be better than I was yesterday. Strategy, practise, new techniques. Farming is also a team sport."

It is clear that Inga sees life as a big football match. To be able to play well, you need talent, yes, but more importantly a good coach. So for him to do well in farming he needed good mentors. When he started his internship at



Nooitgedacht in 2015, Arno Marais was his first mentor that awakened the passion in him. To broaden Inga's horizons he was posted to Excelsior, another Du Toit farm near Worcester. Three years later he was called back to Nooitgedacht and worked under the watchful eye of Johan Visser, the new estate manager who is still his mentor today.

"Inga now manages 125 ha here as production manager and he progresses with leaps and bounds. He is an absolute team player, and although he is modest and comes across as an introvert, he really knows how to work with people," Johan explains. **"If you put 10 people from all walks of life, colour, creed and background in a room, and Inga joins them, it takes no time for him to get them chatting away like old friends.** He can have a sensible conversation with anyone, you can send

him anywhere and the people will like him. He always has a good presence," Johan concludes.

Should you ask Inga if he, as a production manager, is now also mentoring the workers in his team he will just say "I am trying my best". Modest? Never! "I am passing the information of what I've learnt on, and that will grow. I am just doing exactly what was done to me and try to improve where I feel I can."

Ten years ago, Inga made a decision to swap football for farming. Yet, in reality, the two have much in common. You need to be focused. You need to have strategy. You need to be hands-on, thinking a few steps ahead. It's a team sport. And you need to score.

Goal after goal after goal. The best of all is that with farming, you can play ball for a lot longer.



Hortgro Skills Accelerator Project



The Hortgro Skills Accelerator Project (HSAP), in partnership with the Jobs Fund, is designed to enhance the capacity of the agricultural sector through three key components: capacity building/business coaching, interns/graduate placement, and business development support.

This project addresses the limited and critical technical and financial business support needs for emerging deciduous fruit producers through a tailored capacity building approach. The identified constraints are solved by providing comprehensive business coaching programmes tailored for the needs of the businesses.

The second component of the project provides comprehensive support towards graduates and the internship placements programme through provision of stipends to unlock barriers to placement (mainly due to lack of accommodation, transport or stipends).

For the placement programme, the support includes provision of the needed resources unique to each placement, including rental of accommodation, transport and/or stipends in cases where placement opportunities are available but lack comprehensive resources to support the individual. A total of 46 students has been assisted to date through the programme.

The anticipated medium- to long-term outcomes include improved and sustainable businesses, development within each agri-preneur's business capabilities, upskilled graduates with practical workplace experiences and increased employability. The business development support entails supporting new entrants and existing emerging deciduous fruit farmers with resources for entry to the industry or expansion of existing operations. This includes completion of business plans and whole farm plans as well as facilitation of access to finance through

available funding institutions. Through tailored coaching, training, and mentorship, agripreneurs gain the skills to make informed decisions, access finance, and use effective management tools.

Bringing farming entities onto the HSAP is done according to strict criteria meeting the objectives of the project. The first step in the process after bringing the farm onto the HSAP is conducting a needs analysis.

The objective of the needs analysis is to identify the development gaps or challenges on each specific farming entity.

The objective of the process is to identify possible interventions which will contribute to the objective of the Hortgro Skills Accelerator initiative, i.e., to enhance the business skills and financial

literacy of farmers and agripreneurs and by providing comprehensive business coaching programmes tailored for the needs of the businesses.

The needs analysis is based on four main criteria:

- Technical assessment
- Institutional analysis
- Financial assessment
- Economic, and socio-economic impact.

The needs analysis report then forms the road-map to implementation on each individual farming entity.

Currently close to 30 fruit farming entities located in the Western and Eastern Cape as well as non-traditional growing areas such as the Free State, Mpumalanga and Limpopo, have been brought onto the HSAP.

This initiative is a partnership between Hortgro and the Jobs Fund. The Jobs Fund co-funding enabled the implementation of the programme at a larger scale due to increased resources.



La Vouere Stone Fruit

receives the 2025 Hortgro Transformation Award

The Hortgro Transformation Award gives recognition to any person(s)/group(s) that made an impact in the transformation sphere of the deciduous fruit industry value chain and showed exceptional performance and commitment.

The primary purpose of this reward is to:

- Motivate people/groups that work in the transformation sphere of the deciduous fruit industry to commit themselves to performing above expectations continuously.
- To recognise people/groups in the deciduous (pome/stone) value chain as examples for their peers.
- To promote the interests of, and work together with other deciduous fruit stakeholders and value chain players.
- To enhance the image, profile, and products of the deciduous fruit industry in general.



The 2025 Hortgro Transformation Award goes to La Vouere Stone Fruit (Pty) Ltd and its shareholders – a partnership formed in 2015. La Vouere as the majority shareholder (60%) – Raymond and Mary Koopstad, and Verdun Estates (40%) – Georgie Hewit and Peter Wolfaardt.

A true reflection of what is possible with public-private partnerships, with Government and industry creating an enabling environment and the shareholders making the magic happen at the grassroots level with a much broader impact beyond the farm gate.

Several critical elements stand out and have contributed to the success. Willing, able and passionate partners that flourished because of their differences with mutual respect, trust, accountability and responsibility as the cornerstones of the partnership.

Structure follows strategy – it all started with a strategic decision, supported by the proper structures to support the business across all disciplines, from planning to implementation. Shared decision-making at both operational and strategic levels, which also implies sharing in the risks and rewards. It's a business decision based on commercial principles.

Stick with what you know – there is no replacement for getting the basics right, including suitability, adaptability, product and cultivar choices, coupled with strong market demand and sound marketing options.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the partnership, and what a becoming way to celebrate this achievement. It's about hard work, sleepless nights, dedication, transparency and trust equaling respect.



Agriculture places hope, pride and dignity in the spotlight

The final of Agri's Got Talent 2025 at Nooitgedacht near Stellenbosch filled the agri-industry with pride and emotion, as 10 agricultural workers from the fruit and wine industries across South Africa showcased their talents on stage.

This unique singing competition, the only one of its kind in the country, provides a platform for agricultural workers to showcase their musical talent but also offers hope, pride, and dignity to farmworkers and everyone working in agriculture.

The highlight of the evening was when Jenedine Jantjies from Patensie in the Eastern Cape was crowned overall winner. Jantjies, a childminder on Endulini citrus farm, captivated the judges and audience with her raw talent and sincere interpretations of "This is me" and "One and only".

She stepped onto the stage without any family or friends present to support her saying she wanted to prove something to the people back home. Although she initially did not want to take part in the competition, a friend "forced" her to.



"I love all music and don't just stick to one genre," Jantjies said before the final. **"My dream is to one day record my own music and to inspire young people in my community to chase their dreams."**

Jantjies believes that God has a purpose for everything, including her life. "There is a reason why I am part of this competition: for the exposure and opportunity to represent my community. I am extremely grateful."

Clayton Mentoor, a seasonal worker in the pome fruit industry at Kromco near Grabouw, earned a well-deserved second place. Mentoor's musical heritage runs deep – his mother, Claudine Fielander, was one of the AGT Top 10 in 2016.

Third place was awarded to Mervin Williams of DGB near Wellington, proudly representing the wine industry.

Additionally, Sandeline Mouers of Boplaas 1743, Simondium, received the special award for the best performance in an indigenous language, sponsored by the Afrikaanse Taalraad (Afrikaans Language Council). Her rendition of "Vergeet my nie" (Forget me not) had the audience on their feet.

According to Thea van Zyl, project manager of Agri's Got Talent, the significance of the competition extends well beyond the stage. During the training week, participants share their stories – often filled with sadness and pain. But the moment they realise they have



been chosen as part of the Top 10, it brings hope. It shows them that good things can indeed happen, and that their lives and voices matter. This positivity is carried back to their families and the wider agricultural community.

With every note and story, the finalists demonstrated that Agri's Got Talent is more than just a contest – it is a tribute

to people, their dignity, and the power of music at the centre of South African agriculture.

AGT is sponsored by Hortgro, the Citrus Growers' Association, the South African Table Grape Industry, SA Wine, and the Western Cape Department of Agriculture, with additional support from FruitFly Africa and Culdevco.



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