



# Australian growers visit South Africa

**Regina Cronje and Barry Christie**  
SUBTROP

Ian and Sandi Groves from Yeppoon on Australia's East Coast came to visit South Africa at the beginning of August 2013. Ian is a former chairman of the Australian Lychee Growers' Association (ALGA) and is still active in promoting the Australian litchi industry. Members of the South African industry first met Ian and Sandi in China at the

International Litchi Conference and national workshops.

Although on holiday, Ian and Sandi were willing to slot in some time for work. They visited the Agricultural Research Council – Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Crops (ARC-ITSC) in Nelspruit, as well as litchi orchards in the Nelspruit and Malelane areas. Gavin Hardy organised a working session with them for our litchi growers at Riverside Farms.

In a comprehensive presentation, Ian

shared his knowledge and experience on litchi farming and its challenges in Australia with the growers. The Australian litchi industry stretches over more than 2 000 km along the East Coast, with the main production areas in the north. Ian and Sandi's farm is near Rockhampton and is run by themselves and their son. They farm with litchis (Souey Tung, Fay Zee Siu, Mauritius, Kway May Pink, Wai Chee, Salathiel, Chacrapat, Erdonlee, Chompogo and Baytanging),



Australian visitors Ian and Sandi Groves visited the ARC-ITSC: the Biotechnology Unit (left) and nursery (right).



Ian Groves presenting at the working session in Malelane (left) and together with Sandi and some of the participating growers (right).



## Boordbestuur • Orchard management

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longan, mangoes, avocado, loquat and carambola. Each litchi cultivar is managed differently according to their growth habits and maturation time.

Both Ian and Sakkie Froneman from the ARC-ITSC discussed attributes of various cultivars, including the ones that will be imported from Australia this year. Ian warned of Erinose mite, which can seriously hamper production, and recommended to take extra precaution with importation of the plant material. Due to the high pest prevalence (parrots, flying foxes, moths and loopers, amongst others) they need to put their litchis under net during fruit growth.

Labour laws in Australia require growers to do extensive training for their workers, especially on safety issues. Annual audits on equipment are done to ensure its safe use. Nevertheless, growers are still careful and attempt to, as far as possible, reduce the risk of workers getting injured – especially falling off ladders. This, together with the pest problems, means that they need to keep their trees small and yearly mechanical post-harvest pruning with selective pruning in winter is standard practice. Litchis are harvested only between 05:00 and 09:00 to maintain fruit quality, as all litchis are marketed fresh without sulphur treatment. Once in the packing shed, fruit are either hydro-cooled (ice water bath where fruit are cooled down to 5°C for 15 minutes) or run over a cold water roller where fruit are sorted and thereafter packed moist in cartons and put in the cold room.

The day was very informative and our growers got some new ideas for their litchi farming. **ST**

### Besproeiingsgids (L/boom/dag)

#### Irrigation chart: (L/tree/day)

Boomspasiëring	Blaar-area (m <sup>2</sup> /ha)	Boord-volwassenheid	Okt	Nov-Des
Tree spacing	Leaf covering area (m <sup>2</sup> /ha)	Orchard maturity (%)	Oct	Nov-Dec
12 x 12 (65 trees/ha)	700	10	54	65
12 x 12 (65 trees/ha)	1750	25	135	162
12 x 12 (65 trees/ha)	3500	50	269	323
12 x 12 (65 trees/ha)	5250	75	404	485
12 x 12 (65 trees/ha)	5600	80	431	517
12 x 12 (65 trees/ha)	6300	90	485	582
12 x 12 (65 trees/ha)	7000	100	538	646
10 x 10 (100 trees/ha)	700	10	35	42
10 x 10 (100 trees/ha)	1750	25	88	105
10 x 10 (100 trees/ha)	3500	50	175	210
10 x 10 (100 trees/ha)	5250	75	263	315
10 x 10 (100 trees/ha)	5600	80	280	336
10 x 10 (100 trees/ha)	6300	90	315	378
10 x 10 (100 trees/ha)	7000	100	350	420
12 x 6 (139 trees/ha)	700	10	25	30
12 x 6 (139 trees/ha)	1750	25	63	76
12 x 6 (139 trees/ha)	3500	50	126	151
12 x 6 (139 trees/ha)	5250	75	189	227
12 x 6 (139 trees/ha)	5600	80	201	242
12 x 6 (139 trees/ha)	6300	90	227	272
12 x 6 (139 trees/ha)	7000	100	252	302
9 x 6 (185 trees/ha)	700	10	19	23
9 x 6 (185 trees/ha)	1750	25	47	57
9 x 6 (185 trees/ha)	3500	50	95	114
9 x 6 (185 trees/ha)	5250	75	142	170
9 x 6 (185 trees/ha)	5600	80	151	182
9 x 6 (185 trees/ha)	6300	90	170	204
9 x 6 (185 trees/ha)	7000	100	189	227
10 x 5 (200 trees/ha)	700	10	18	21
10 x 5 (200 trees/ha)	1750	25	44	53
10 x 5 (200 trees/ha)	3500	50	88	105
10 x 5 (200 trees/ha)	5250	75	131	158
10 x 5 (200 trees/ha)	5600	80	140	168
10 x 5 (200 trees/ha)	6300	90	158	189
10 x 5 (200 trees/ha)	7000	100	175	210