



FROM THE CHAIRMAN'S DESK

From a very cold Malalane in July I greet you all with as many good wishes as possible!

It has been extremely cold country-wide for a good week, after a period of hot weather. This bodes well for a good flowering season. Both the flower trigger mechanisms have been fulfilled, namely several 15 to 20 degree temperature fluctuations and some sustained cold below 20 degrees. Of course these triggers should have initially happened in April/May, which clearly occurred in the Malalane area. So far, the flowering looks very promising, with the start of male flower just starting. This latest

cold spell can only make it better.

These wishes are, in addition to a good flowering season for all, to lend you strength to cope with the latest utterances from our new Minister of land reform et al, in respect of land restitution. I ask you, who in their right mind would contemplate investing in agriculture with such un-business friendly, endless, adhoc proposals? The press, learned people and our representative organisations have already had much to say about this new "plan". Forget about prospective investors, what about those who have ploughed their lives into making food, money and employment, like us? When will the political games stop and the focus switch to making the business of RSA Inc work and successful? Are there not enough warning signs around to dictate that a time for some solid no nonsense productivity is desperately required; if for no other reason but to create employment? My heart goes out to those millions of struggling people without work. The ANC may one day learn that no entrepreneur will ever be forced into crazy business practices, which do not benefit them, their employees and stakeholders. They will always outsmart the bureaucrats.

As a result of the very poorly managed restitution process, the litchi industry has continued to shrink due to failed farms and justifiably panicked owners / investors. Also, predictably many farmers have deserted labour intensive crops like litchis and turned to crops like macadamias, which can easily be mechanised. Litchis properly farmed are more profitable than macs, but macs score very highly on the lack of political interference barometer. Recently I forced a CCMA situation, to see what goes on. Well ... what a joke. There is apparently no shame in scoring 143 out of 144 worst labour legislation practices in the world.

Our declining industry, together with our difficulties in collecting levies from at least 50% of our members, has

forced us to radically cut our operating costs; to restore a decent balance between non value added expenses and research expenditure. An email, from SUBTROP's CEO Derek Donkin, will be sent to you shortly, detailing the changes in services to members. A good plan has been agreed with SUBTROP, and we thank the SUBTROP board and Derek for their accommodation. The SALGA executive was recently humbled, when things were looking fairly bleak, by the offer from our sister associations to assist with funding. We declined this generosity on the grounds that we could not accept such charity in the knowledge that the majority of our members were avoiding levy payments. Bono/Safe, formally Laughing Waters, was expelled from SALGA recently for non-disclosure and non-payment. Further expulsions are in the pipeline as we isolate other derelict "members". One consequence of our cost cutting exercise is that John Spear has stepped down as vice chairman and together with Sakkie Froneman and Regina Cronje will drive our research efforts; what a team ... thank you. Frik Joubert has stepped up to the plate and will take over as vice chairman ... thank you Frik.

Sakkie continues to make excellent progress with our new cultivars ... very exciting. We are looking to fund an upgrade to additional quarantine facilities at the ARC, to accommodate this rapidly growing research project. An update on all our research projects has been posted to our web site and has been published in hard copy form. Thanks to our researchers for the value they are adding to the industry. A meeting has been scheduled to finalise protocols for the irradiation of litchis to the USA. Fifteen years of patient work is finally coming to fruition. We will trial export fruit to the USA this season.

I wish you all a very successful season.

Gavin Hardy

