CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2018
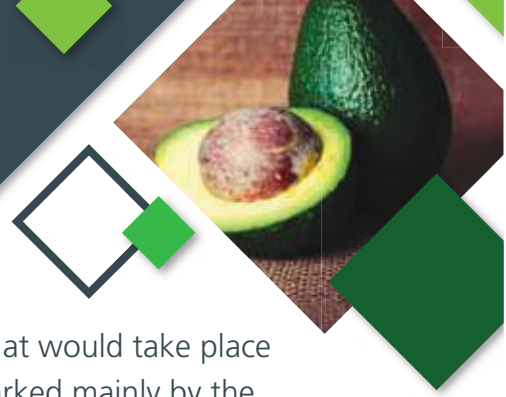
A short while ago I could have hardly imagined the changes that would take place within the South African Avocado Growers' Asscociation, sparked mainly by the exit of SAMAC from within the Subtrop umbrella.

SAMAC was officially no longer a part of Subtrop as of the 1st of March 2018. The departure of SAMAC, the second largest contributor to the Subtrop budget, has given us as SAAGA the opportunity to strategise and focus on issues that will ultimately have an impact on our industry and the welfare our members.

Shortly after SAMAC announced its withdrawal, the SAAGA Board held a strategic planning session. Key industry role players were invited to attend this session. A strategic framework was laid out and key focus areas were identified, these being:
• Market access
• market development
• technical development and
• transformation.

As this strategic framework evolved it became evident that market access be given our utmost attention, and resources. The Board has agreed that staffing, research and related management inputs all funnel towards market access and related activities. This focus will remain in place until we are satisfied that market access into targeted countries has been achieved.

As we are a relatively small industry, it is imperative that we utilise our limited resources wisely. We cannot expect to be effective as an association if we attempt to spread ourselves too thinly on the ground, whilst trying to cover a multitude of bases. Our success as an association will lie with our ability to be flexible and adapt to required objectives that are important to our industry.

Work being done to gain market access into the U.S.A. has been frustrating, and has taken longer than we had hoped. We are dealing with a multi-faceted challenge that requires inputs from numerous government departments, both locally and abroad. We have however made some progress and continue to give our utmost attention to this project.

We also continue to work on access into Japan, China and more recently India.

With regards to staff related matters, a number of key Subtrop personal have resigned during the last 12 months. We were sad to bid farewell to Gerhard Nortjé, Hanna-Let Rautenbach, Jaques Landman, Elsje Joubert and Bonnie Buthelezi. On behalf of SAAGA I thank them for their outstanding contributions, and we wish them all the very best for the future.

Due to our restructure and focus on market access, we unfortunately have had to terminate the services of our Overseas Technical Officer, Richard Nelson. We thank Richard for his long-standing service to our Association.

With the growth that is forecast within our industry over the next few years, access into new markets becomes even more critical. The Board has agreed that a market access steering committee be elected in order to assist SAAGA in achieving related goals in an efficient and professional manner.

We currently find ourselves operating within an exciting and fast developing sector. The appetite for growth in avocado production is extremely encouraging. We now more than ever need to function as a stable and mature role-player within the South African avocado industry.

I urge our production regions to institute strong platforms by utilising their study groups to channel communications through to their regional Directors, and ultimately to the Board. Area technical committees need to actively highlight research requirements and needs that influence production throughout the various regions.

I would like to thank the Subtrop staff for the tremendous effort that they have put in over the last 12 months. Their dedication has been key in making SAAGA the success it is today.

I would also like to thank the Board, who voluntarily give up their time, in order to ensure the best interests of our growers are at the forefront of SAAGA's agenda.

Lastly to our members: SAAGA is ultimately a grower's association, its strength and ultimate success lie with each one of us. To this end, I thank each grower for your loyal and continued support.

Athol Currie