

## ***Foreword***

**J Toerien**

It is an honour to present the 20th Yearbook of SAAGA. Paging through earlier editions one finds a wealth of information that was gathered and produced by many dedicated research workers.

In 1973 the first Research Committee was formed to deal with many problems such as low yields, dying trees and disastrous fruit quality on the European Markets.

Prof. Kotzé was appointed in 1977 as Research Coordinator and organized the first Research Symposium. Dr. Joe Darvas solved many pathological problems. The most important was the discovery of phosphorous injections for the control of *Phytophthora*. This remains the greatest contribution of research to the Avocado World.

The high standard of research led to the hosting of the First World Avocado Congress in 1987. International cooperation followed and the flow of information improved considerably.

Research costs to the producer are low and projects were highly subsidised by institutions. The actual cost benefit to the producers was such that it would have been impossible to produce avocados economically without the research contributions of the past 20 years. As for the future, there are many challenges that will have to be addressed and be changed into opportunities:

- Research funding will have to become more realistically funded. The producer will have to make a bigger contribution.
- The producer will have to become more involved in the activities of SAAGA. The attitude will have to be: 'What can I do for the Avocado Industry?', instead of 'What can the Industry do for me?'
- Market orientation will have to change and the total marketing should become more customer orientated. Development in the ready-to-eat technology will open new horizons.
- Promotion and advertising will have to succeed in creating a bigger demand for avocados.
- International co-operation will become a reality and common projects will have to create a larger customer basis.
- New markets will have to be found and serviced.

I am sure that the challenges are in the hands of good leaders. Your involvement and support will determine the destiny of the South African Avocado industry.