

# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2023



Clive Garrett

On 16 February 2023 the markets in Europe looked considerably better than they did in 2022. The excessive late season fruit from Morocco, Chile, Israel, and especially Spain have thankfully not materialised in 2023. The expected 2022 export crop of 15,5 million cartons landed up being 16 million cartons. We are now forecasting a crop of 17 million cartons for the 2023 season. Despite all the new plantings, our crop size has been rather stagnant over the last few years. A large part of this “stagnation” is due to hail which seems to be becoming more prevalent in the avocado producing regions of South Africa.

**SAAGA is working closely** with the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) together with Prokon to ensure that avocados entering South Africa from other countries have the necessary phytosanitary certificates and meet our quality standards.

The issue of multiple accreditations is also being addressed by SAAGA. SAAGA is working with Fruit South Africa to see if the number of audits facing producers can be reduced or consolidated.

In terms of transformation the 1 ha project is ongoing and it was planned to have trees planted before the end of February 2023. One of our members has donated 20 000 trees which will be planted by 10 farmers in Venda before year end.

A study group in Venda was held in January 2023, educating growers about minimum maturity levels and informing them that they could use Amondel Pakkers for maturity testing. SAAGA continues as an industry partner of RecruitAgri, which is an organisation that provides a year of practical training to new agricultural graduates to enable them to enter junior management positions on farms.

SAAGA is in the process of converting from a voluntary association to a non-profit company. This is simply to strengthen the governance of SAAGA and to put it on a much stronger legal footing. A non-profit company is governed by the Company Law whereas an association is governed by its constitution, which does not have nearly the same legal standing as company law. Further details in this regard will be conveyed to members.

Regarding market access, SAAGA has been hard at work, doing everything in its power to promote access. We have employed a consultant – Chris Kevy – to drive market access into the USA. The major stumbling block here remains the issue of the importation of pork into South Africa. Chris has met with a number of role players in South Africa, including large producers, exporters, Fruit South Africa's market access specialist, and previous SA agricultural

attachés to the USA. Chris has formulated a plan of action and SAAGA will continue to provide him with all the support he needs.

The other three large markets SAAGA is concentrating on are China, Japan and India. Regarding China, they have proposed methyl bromide fumigation as a phytosanitary treatment. We have accepted this proposal. The next step is for China to do a verification visit which was planned for May 2023.

Japanese officials have verified the efficacy of the proposed cold treatment against oriental fruit fly. We are maintaining pressure on DALRRD officials to keep following up with Japan to finalise access to this market.

Indian officials have carried out a verification visit to South Africa. SAAGA is planning to use an Indian consulting company that specialises in government relations and other regulatory matters to assist in getting market access.

SAAGA will continue to issue a market access update via WhatsApp to its members once there is some development in any of the markets we are trying to get access to. SAAGA also commissioned the Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy (BFAP) to do a study regarding the effect that the lack of wider market access was having on small scale farmers. This study has been shared with the Director General of DALRRD and has received a favourable response.

The SAAGA Research Committee is continuing to evaluate and appoint researchers relevant to the avocado industry. There are currently a number of ongoing projects which many grower members will have received feedback on during the AGM. Good technical research remains the basis for the South African avocado industry to remain competitive and covers propagation, production, post-harvest aspects as well as phytosanitary matters affecting market access.

The Local Market Development Committee has overseen a comprehensive campaign run by the agency Protactic, and will continue to do so in 2023.

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**SAFT HEAD OFFICE**  
Atlantic Drive, Atlantic Hills,  
Durbanville, Cape Town, RSA  
Tel: +27 (0)21 202 7440  
ockert@saft.co.za  
www.saft.co.za

**SAFT ATLANTIC**  
Atlantic Drive, Atlantic Hills,  
Durbanville, Cape Town, RSA  
Tel: +27 (0)21 202 7440  
marius@saft.co.za  
www.saft.co.za

**SAFT KILLARNEY**  
Sati Road, Killarney Gardens,  
Cape Town, RSA  
Tel: +27 (0)21 202 7400  
james@saft.co.za  
www.saft.co.za



**COLDHARVEST**  
Oosbosch Street,  
Daljosaphat, Paarl, RSA  
Tel: +27 (0)21 202 2500  
deonh@saft.co.za  
www.saft.co.za

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One of the biggest campaigns was a billboard advertising campaign at the height of our season when the markets came under some pressure due to many of our members sending their fruit to the local markets, thereby trying to avoid the logjam in Europe. As with technical research, local market development remains one of SAAGA's key focus areas, both attracting significant portions of SAAGA's budget.

One of the issues that had a major impact on our industry in 2022 was the inefficiencies in the South African ports. From strikes, IT system hacks and other related problems, there were huge shipping delays in getting our fruit into foreign markets. SAAGA, together with a number of other producer organisations,

appointed Eskesen Advisory to consult the fruit industry on ways to avoid a recurrence of the 2022 disaster.

Thank you to Derek Donkin and the Subtrop team for managing the finances and administration of SAAGA. Thank you to the Board of SAAGA for their guidance. They are all passionate ambassadors of the avocado industry who give freely of their time and experience. They bring expertise, engagement and commitment to the industry. I wish the incoming Chairman – Edrean Ernst – well in taking SAAGA forward.

*Clive Garrett*

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