

Hortgro Technical Symposium 2026

Growing forward in a changing world

This is more than a theme – it is the reality facing South Africa's deciduous fruit industry. From market access and bio-security risks to fewer effective crop protection tools, water constraints and climate pressures, the challenges are real.

The Hortgro Technical Symposium 2026 is designed to help producers navigate this complexity with clarity, science and practical insight. The Symposium comprises a Business/ Strategy Day and two Technical Days. There will also be a Pome Fruit Field Day and a Stone Fruit Seminar and Orchard Walk.

This five-day symposium brings together local and international thought leaders, scientists, economists, policymakers, researchers, technical advisors, industry stakeholders and producers to examine the challenges shaping the future of pome and stone fruit and to share solutions that work in the orchard.

Business/Strategy and Technical Days

25–27 May | Lord Charles Hotel, Somerset West

Pome Fruit Field Day

28 May | EGVV

Stone Fruit Seminar and Orchard Walk

29 May | Simondium



Business/Strategy Day

MEET OUR SPEAKERS



Riaan Manser's rise to prominence began with the world's first circumnavigation of the African continent by bicycle. It took him exactly two years, two months, and fifteen days, and he completed it alone and unaided. He pedalled a staggering 34 500 kilometres

through 34 countries, some of which were ranked among the most dangerous and inhospitable places in the world. Manser's achievement earned him the title "Out There Adventurer of the Year 2006", and his first book, "Around Africa on my Bicycle", became a bestseller and continues to enjoy great success. Since then, Riaan has circumnavigated Madagascar by kayak, paddled around Iceland, rowed across the Atlantic and part of the Pacific Ocean. Riaan will share his adventures and inspire with "the courage to be brave, perseverance, and having the right attitude".



Hendrik du Toit is the founder and Chief Executive Officer of Ninety-One. The firm manages more than ZAR3.6 trillion, primarily for institutional investors.

Hendrik is a member of the World Bank Private Sector Investment Lab.

He serves on the Glasgow Financial

Alliance for Net Zero Principals Group and its African Advisory Council. In the UK, he is also a member of the Investor and Issuer Forum's advisory board and serves as Co-Chair of the EMDE Investor Taskforce. He is the Lead Independent Director of Naspers Limited and its European subsidiary, Prosus. Hendrik holds an MPhil in Economics and Politics of Development from Cambridge University and an MCom in Economics (cum laude) from Stellenbosch University.

SCHEDULE: 25 MAY

SESSION ONE

Risk, Resilience, and Return on Courage

SPONSORED BY ICA

Chair: Nic Dacey | Hortgro chair

07:50 – 08:25 Registration

08:25 – 08:30 Welcome

08:30 – 08:45 Opening | Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen

08:45 – 09:30

There is an ocean between saying and doing

Riaan Manser | The Manser Group

09:30 – 10:15

Challenges and opportunities of our new reality

Hendrik du Toit | Ninety One (ONLINE)

10:15 – 10:25 Questions

10:25 – 11:00 Tea |

SPONSORED BY Gas at Site

notes:



Prof. William Gumede is an Associate Professor in Public and Development Management at the School of Governance at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and a Professor of Management at Elsenburg, Stellenbosch. He serves as a Board Member of the Global Public Policy Institute in Berlin and is a respected authority on political economy and governance. Prof. Gumede has extensive experience in executive education, having taught programmes for Members of Parliament across the British Commonwealth on public financial management and ethical leadership. He has also convened public policy courses for South African MPs and teaches economic development to members of the South African National Cabinet.



Dr Ilse Eigelaar-Meets is a sociologist and lecturer at Stellenbosch University, where she has taught since 2021. She brings extensive experience in academia and government, having worked as a researcher and programme manager across national and provincial departments, including the National Advisory Council for Innovation and the Western Cape Departments of Social Development and Local Government and Housing. She previously served as Deputy Director for Research and spent 15 years as a full-time researcher at SOREASO. Ilse has also taught at the University of Johannesburg, Cornerstone Christian College, and Hugenote Kollege. Her research focuses on community and rural development, human development planning, and the demographic and social impacts of migration.

SESSION TWO Hard Truths, Real Communities, and Shared Futures SPONSORED BY Philagro

Chair: André Smit | Hortgro
Stone director

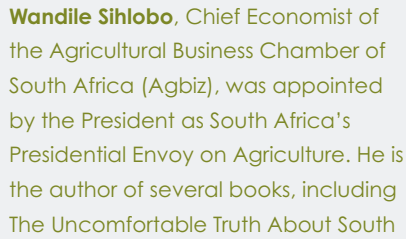
11:00 – 11:20
Local elections: 'Tipping point'
for South Africa
Prof William Gumede |
School of Governance
at the University of the
Witwatersrand

11:20 – 11:40
Internal migration and
urbanisation of non-urban
towns in the Western Cape:
implications for development
planning
Dr Ilse Eigelaar-Meets |
Stellenbosch University

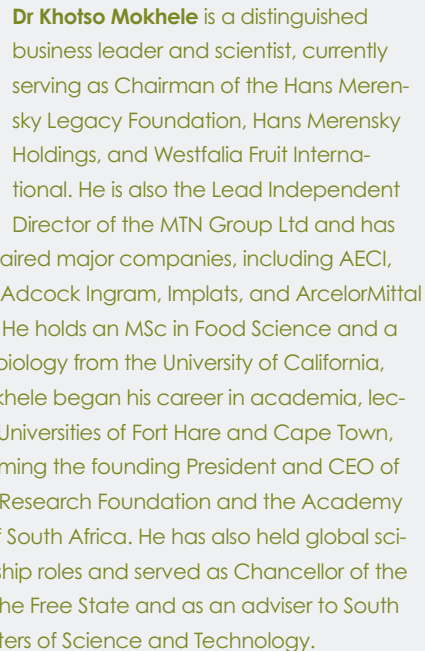
11:40 – 12:00
Principles for inclusive and
sustainable growth of black
commercial farmers in South
Africa
Wandile Sihlobo | AgBiz

12:00 – 12:30
More than fruit: The story of
land, people, and shared
futures
Dr Khotso Mokhele | Hans
Merensky Holdings

12:30 – 12:40 Questions
12:40 – 13:40 Lunch



Dr Khotso Mokhele is a distinguished business leader and scientist, currently serving as Chairman of the Hans Merensky Legacy Foundation, Hans Merensky Holdings, and Westfalia Fruit International. He is also the Lead Independent Director of the MTN Group Ltd and has chaired major companies, including AECI, Adcock Ingram, Implats, and ArcelorMittal. He holds an MSc in Food Science and a Biology from the University of California, where he began his career in academia, lecturing at the Universities of Fort Hare and Cape Town, and serving as the founding President and CEO of the Merensky Research Foundation and the Academy of Science of South Africa. He has also held global leadership roles and served as Chancellor of the University of the Free State and as an adviser to South African Ministers of Science and Technology.

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Prof. Christine Wieck is a Professor of Agricultural and Food Policy at the University of Hohenheim in Germany. Her work focuses on developing and analysing policy solutions that support sustainable and resilient agricultural and food systems in an increasingly globalised market. Since 2020, she has served on the scientific advisory board of the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture. Previously, she was appointed by the EU Agricultural Commissioner to the Task Force "Rural Africa," where she contributed to strategies to strengthen agricultural cooperation between Europe and Africa. From 2015 to 2018, she served as an agricultural policy advisor for the German Development Agency. Her career began with vocational training as a farmer, which grounded her academic work in practical agricultural experience.



Jacques du Preez is a seasoned market access and trade specialist with over 20 years' experience in South Africa's agricultural sector, particularly within the deciduous fruit industry. He currently serves as General Manager: Trade & Markets at Hortgro, where he

leads efforts in international market access, trade policy, logistics, and stakeholder engagement. Jacques has extensive expertise in negotiating phytosanitary protocols, enabling entry into new markets, and maintaining access to key global export destinations. He is a respected industry leader and spokesperson, actively contributing to national and international forums. His strengths lie in export strategy, regulatory compliance, and navigating complex global trade environments to support industry growth.

SESSION THREE Getting Fruit Across the Line SPONSORED BY TopFruit

Chair: Calla du Toit | Hortgro Pome chair

13:40 – 14:00

EU trade deals in turbulent times: implications for EU–South African trade flows and EU sustainability ambitions

Prof. Christine Wieck | Hohenheim University, Germany [\(ONLINE\)](#)

14:00 – 14:20

The process of gaining access to markets

Jacques du Preez | Hortgro

14:20 – 14:40

A time of choices– Developments in South Africa's trade landscape

Wolfe Braude | AgBiz

14:40 – 15:10

The future of cultivars at retail in the United States

Tom Barnes | Category Partners, USA

15:10 – 15:20 Questions

15:20 – 15:50 Tea

notes:



Rod Bell is the Chief Executive Officer of CropLife South Africa and has been active in the crop protection industry for nearly three decades. He holds a BSc in Botany and Zoology from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and began his career at American Cyanamid. He

later held several senior commercial and technical roles at DuPont, including Business Manager for North Africa, the Middle East and Turkey, with a focus on plant protection, and Portfolio Manager for insecticides across Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Rod joined CropLife South Africa as CEO in 2018, having previously served on its Executive Council, and continues to play a key leadership role in advancing the industry.



Prof. Marina Joubert is a researcher, lecturer, and trainer in science communication and public engagement with science at the Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST) at Stellenbosch University, South

Africa. Her work focuses on the complex relationship between science and society, with particular attention to how public understanding of science is shaped by different social actors and communication processes. She is actively involved in international research collaborations and contributes to the field of science communication as Deputy Editor of the Journal of Science Communication (JCOM). Prof. Joubert is also an honorary lifetime member of the Public Communication of Science and Technology (PCST) Network, reflecting her longstanding contribution to advancing science engagement worldwide.

SESSION FOUR **Keeping the Crop Protected –** **and the Story Straight**

Chair: Elise-Marie Steenkamp | Hortgro communications manager

15:50 – 16:10
Local and international regulatory challenges facing South African farmers
Rod Bell | CropLife

16:10 – 16:30
Why "Just the Facts" is not enough: Rethinking agricultural science communication
Prof. Marina Joubert | Stellenbosch University

16:30 – 16:40
Questions and Close

notes:

Technical Day 1

MEET OUR SPEAKERS



Dr Maanda Rambauli is a Deputy Director and Scientist Manager in the Directorate of Plant Health at South Africa's Department of Agriculture. He holds an Honours degree in Horticulture and Crop Protection from the University of Pretoria, as well as an MSc and PhD in Agriculture, specialising in Plant Health, from the University of South Africa.

With more than 21 years' experience in the plant health regulatory environment, Dr Rambauli focuses on managing and controlling plant pests and diseases. His responsibilities include administering the Agricultural Pests Act (1983), coordinating research projects, and overseeing plant pest surveillance systems. He has extensive experience collaborating with industry stakeholders to strengthen plant health systems and safeguard agricultural production.



Prof. Andrew Robinson is the Executive Director of the Centre of Excellence for Biosecurity Risk Analysis (CEBRA) and a Professor of Applied Statistics at the University of Melbourne. His work focuses on strengthening biosecurity systems, particularly at national borders, using statistical modelling and data analysis. He specialises in analysing inspection and interception data to improve the identification and management of biosecurity risks. His research also includes designing

and testing surveillance systems, developing performance metrics for regulatory inspection agencies, and supporting evidence-based decision-making in biosecurity policy. Andrew collaborates with stakeholders to translate statistical insights into practical tools that enhance border protection and risk management.



Nolan Africander is a Scientific Manager with 28 years' experience in plant health and phytosanitary systems, focusing on regulatory interventions that protect agriculture, natural resources, food security, and trade development. He manages National Plant Health Diagnostics and Research, ensuring a balance between risk management and industry needs through ongoing stakeholder engagement across government and international platforms. He

represents the Department of Agriculture on various boards and committees and serves as a consultant to the FAO/IPPC on diagnostic networking, including participation in Africa-focused initiatives. He holds an MBA from Stellenbosch University and an MSc in Microbiology from the University of the Western Cape.



Ghian du Toit is a manager at FruitFly Africa in Stellenbosch, where he coordinates and implements fruit fly management programmes that support the agricultural sector. He holds a degree in Agricultural Economics, providing a strong

foundation in agricultural systems, resource management, and industry economics. In his role, Ghian works closely with producers and stakeholders to support effective pest monitoring, control strategies, and operational efficiency within fruit production systems. His work contributes to improving market access and reducing crop losses through scientifically informed and practical pest management approaches in the deciduous and fruit export industries.



Amy Collop is an entomologist and Monitoring Coordinator at FruitFly Africa, an agricultural services company based in Stellenbosch. The company supports South African producers through area-wide pest management and monitoring, with

a strong focus on fruit flies. In her role as Monitoring Coordinator, Amy focuses on surveillance of emerging insect pests to ensure early detection. In her part of the presentation, Amy will discuss the pest surveillance strategies employed by FruitFly Africa.

SCHEDULE: 26 MAY

SESSION ONE

Shields Up: Rethinking Biosecurity in High-Value Fruit Crops

SPONSORED BY Standard Bank

Chair: Elsa Muller | SAPO

08:00 – 08:30 Registration

08:30 – 08:40 Welcome

Stephen Rabe | Hortgro Science chair

08:40 – 09:00

Plant Health Act and its associated regulations
Dr Maanda Rambauli | Directorate of Plant Health, National Department of Agriculture

09:00 – 09:20

CEBRA and what we've learned about the biosecurity science/policy nexus
Prof. Andrew Robinson | Centre of Excellence for Biosecurity Risk Analysis (ONLINE)

09:20 – 09:40

Plant quarantine and diagnostics in the South African regulatory environment
Nolan Africander | Plant Quarantine and Diagnostic Services, National Department of Agriculture

09:40 – 10:00

Overview of Fruitfly Africa's IPM programme: Monitoring and surveillance
Ghian du Toit and Amy Collop | Fruitfly Africa

10:00 – 10:10 Questions

10:10 – 10:40 Tea



Dr Esmé Louw is a Senior Researcher in the Department of Horticultural Science at Stellenbosch University, specialising in the pre-harvest physiology of deciduous fruit trees. Her research investigates how environmental conditions regulate dormancy, bud break, flowering, and fruit development—all of which are critical to tree adaptability. By decoding these genotype-by-environment (GxE) interactions, Dr Louw provides essential insights to support sustainable fruit production and food security in a changing global climate.



Schalk Reynolds grew up on a pome and stone fruit farm in the Koue Bokkeveld, where he developed a strong passion for agriculture, nature, and the outdoors. He holds an MSc (Agric) in Horticultural Sciences from Stellenbosch University. He began his professional career at Philagro South Africa as a Technical Manager, where he developed expertise in the use of plant growth regulators (PGRs) across a wide range of fruit and vine crops. In 2006, he joined Valent Biosciences in Libertyville, USA, as Business Manager for Plant Growth Regulators. In this role, he has been responsible for the development, marketing, and technical support of PGRs across major fruit-producing regions, including Europe, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and Africa. He continues to contribute to global horticultural innovation.

SESSION TWO

Breaking Rest without Losing Sleep

SPONSORED BY Villa Crop Protection

Chair: Dian Craven | Fruitways

10:40 – 11:00

Basics of dormancy and rest breaking

Dr Esmé Louw | Stellenbosch University

11:00 – 11:20

Hydrogen cyanamide – A collective responsibility

Schalk Reynolds | Philagro

11:20 – 11:40

Rest-breaking alternatives for apple and pear production.

Chad van Wyk | Provar

11:40 – 12:00

Growing apples in South Africa – a future without cyanamide

Dr Nigel Cook | Innovapome

12:00 – 12:10 Questions

12:10 – 13:10 Lunch

notes:



Chad van Wyk is a pre-harvest researcher at Provar, specialising in stone fruit rootstock and on-farm research to inform decision-making for South African producers. He holds an MSc (Agric.) from Stellenbosch University and manages critical

industry trials focused on tree training systems and sustainable rest-breaking alternatives. Chad's approach combines meticulous data collection with active industry engagement, ensuring that modern horticulture is underpinned by proven results. Beyond the field, he mentors the next generation of researchers in partnership with Stellenbosch University.



Dr Nigel Cook is an established horticultural production technology consultant specialising in deciduous fruit production, including apples, pears, plums, peaches, apricots, and cherries, particularly in warm-climate regions. His expertise focuses

on managing production challenges stemming from inadequate winter chilling, with a strong emphasis on tree physiology as the basis for evaluating orchard performance and making decisions. He consults internationally and has worked across South Africa, California, Spain, Italy, Australia, Chile, Egypt, Mexico, India, and Turkey. His approach is grounded in scientific principles to ensure practical, sustainable, and profitable farming outcomes. In recent years, he has increasingly focused on developing and evaluating new varieties, with particular attention to climate adaptation. Dr Cook brings over 30 years of experience in global horticultural systems and fruit production consultancy.

notes:

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Dr Vernon Steyn is the Managing Director of Insect Science and a recognised expert on False codling moth, with a particular focus on the behavioural mechanisms underpinning pheromone-based mating disruption. He completed his doctorate in Entomology at Stellenbosch University in 2018, and his research clarified how and when mating disruption shifts from competitive to non-competitive modes, enabling more effective control with fewer inputs. In 2022, he was appointed a Research Fellow at Stellenbosch University. Dr Steyn is passionate about translating science into practice and regularly delivers training on pest life cycles and biology to improve understanding of how responsible, semiochemical-based pest management solutions work in real-world agricultural systems.

SESSION THREE

When the Toolbox Shrinks: Rethinking Crop Protection

Chair: Dr Minette Karsten | Hortgro

13:10 – 14:10

Panel discussion: How will the deciduous fruit sector transition to sustainable pest and disease management in a world where traditional actives are disappearing?

PANELLISTS:

Jacques Fouché | Nexus
Roleen le Grange | CropLife
Dr Gulu Bekker | Stellenbosch University
Dr Murray Dunn | Stellenbosch University
Wilhelm Joubert | Hartenberg
Chair: Dr Minette Karsten | Hortgro

14:10 – 14:30

Semiochemicals: From concept to crop protection. Tracing the product lifecycle from idea to field application
Dr Vernon Steyn | Insect Science

14:30 – 14:40 Questions

14:40 – 15:10 Tea |

SPONSORED BY Insect Science

notes:



Dr Peter Triloff is a horticulture and crop protection specialist with over 35 years' experience in top fruit production in Germany. He studied horticulture at Munich Technical University Weihenstephan (1979–1985) and served as a technical consultant for the fruit growers' cooperative

Marktgemeinschaft Bodenseeobst (MABO) at Lake Constance from 1985 to 2022. His work focused on advanced spray application systems, including ultra-low-volume techniques and canopy-based dosing models, to improve efficiency and reduce crop protection losses. He founded and led an international apple scab working group that contributed to the development of modern disease control tools, such as RIMpro. Dr Triloff developed the AOS43 dosing model, electronic spray planning tools, and the AirCheck® initiative, and completed a PhD on loss-reduced crop protection and drift reduction in top fruit systems.



Dr Ir. Marcel Wenneker is a Senior Scientist in Plant Pathology and Innovations in Fruit Growing at Wageningen University & Research in the Netherlands. With over 25 years' experience in fruit crop research, he specialises in orchard and postharvest diseases and

in sustainable production systems. His expertise spans pre- and postharvest pathology, epidemiology, pesticide residues, and spray application technologies for pome and soft fruit crops. He is widely recognised for his work on major fruit diseases, including fruit tree canker caused by *Neonectria ditissima* and apple scab caused by *Venturia inaequalis*. His research focuses on practical, science-based solutions that growers can apply to improve productivity and sustainability in fruit production systems.

SESSION FOUR

Taming the Spray

SPONSORED BY Flash Gala™

Chair: Dr Gideon van Zyl

| ProCrop

15:10 – 15:30

Target adapted dosing and spray application in 3D crops in relation to the official German system

Dr Peter Triloff | Marktgemeinschaft Bodenseeobst eG Friedrichshafen

15:30 – 15:50

The history of spray drift legislation and reduction in Europe. What is spray drift? How to measure it? Current legislation and drift reducing technology/strategies.

Dr Marcel Wenneker | Wageningen University & Research (ONLINE)

15:50 – 16:10

Evaluation of crop sensing assisted spraying in mature South African apple orchards

Philip Rebel | ProCrop

16:10 – 16:30

Standardized tools to classify spray deposition and drift reduction potential of orchard sprayers: An European example/ Development of a new tool for orchard sprayer performances assessment

Florence Verpont | Centre Technique Interprofessionnel des Fruits et Légumes (CTIFL). (ONLINE)

16:30 – 16:40

Questions and Close



Florence Verpont is an engineer who graduated from Bordeaux Sciences Agro and currently works at the CTIFL (Interprofessional Technical Centre for Fruits and Vegetables) at the Lanxade site in Dordogne, France. Her research focuses on plant-protection product

application techniques in fruit and vegetable production, with an emphasis on spray application efficiency, environmental impact, and the development of innovative application technologies. She also works on precision agriculture approaches to crop protection. Florence is a co-animator of the UMT ECOTECH technical research unit, which brings together INRAE, IFV, and CTIFL. The unit is dedicated to advancing crop-protection equipment and improving sustainable, science-based solutions for modern agricultural production systems.

[illegible]

Technical Day 2

MEET OUR SPEAKERS



Nitasha Baijnath-Pillay is the Hortgro Resource Management and Sustainability Manager since 2024; supporting the industry's transition towards a resilient, environmentally responsible future by strengthening sustainability practices across the value chain. Prior to joining Hortgro, she built a distinguished career in environmental and sustainability management within the public sector and served as specialist advisor at the National Department of Forestry, Fisheries & the Environment (DFFE).



Eddie Vienings is the Chief Operating Officer at Blue North, leading the delivery of sustainability solutions across food value chains. With deep expertise in life cycle assessment (LCA) and carbon projects, he has guided numerous initiatives that help companies measure, reduce and remove emissions while building more resilient agricultural systems.



Malissa Murphy is an Account Manager at Blue North, where she works closely with food value chain partners to advance sustainability initiatives. She has led the development of several case studies on regenerative farming across supplier farms in the pome and stone fruit sector, focusing on practical implementation and industry-relevant insights.

SCHEDULE: 27 MAY

SPONSORED BY AGROFRESH

SESSION ONE

Footprint: Towards a Sustainable Legacy

Chair: Nomuhle Tema | Western Cape Department of Agriculture

08:00 – 08:30 Registration

08:30 – 08:40 Welcome

Georgie Hewitt | Hortgro Stone Director

08:40 – 09:00

Growing Forward: Sustainable resource management for a profitable and resilient industry

Nitasha Baijnath-Pillay | Hortgro

09:00 – 09:20

From Soil to Strategy. How regenerative farming, carbon removals and LCA are shaping the future of the pome and stone fruit industry
Eddie Vienings & Malissa Murphy | Blue North

09:20 – 09:40

Ecological infrastructure investment

Rudolph Roscher | Western Cape Department of Agriculture, LandCare Cape Winelands

09:40 – 10:00

What have we learned from all our research on orchard water use?

Dr Sebinazi Dzikiti | Stellenbosch University
Prof Stephanie Midgley | Western Cape Department of Agriculture

10:00 – 10:10 Questions

10:10 – 10:40 Tea



Rudolph Roscher has 33 years' experience in the agricultural sector, specialising in Natural Resource Management (NRM) and landscape-scale resilience. He is a qualified Civil Engineering Technician and holds a Postgraduate Diploma in Programme and Project Management. Within the Western Cape Department of Agriculture's LandCare programme, he focuses on strengthening ecological infrastructure and restoring catchment functionality to secure the natural resource base underpinning agricultural production. His work addresses soil degradation, water security, improved land-use practices, invasive species management, and river rehabilitation, often through complex, multi-stakeholder interventions. Rudolph actively supports producer communities in mobilising investment in conservation agriculture, water stewardship, and catchment restoration. By fostering collaboration among farmers, industry bodies, and public institutions, he helps translate sustainability strategies into practical, on-the-ground implementation.



Dr Sebinasi Dzikili is an Agricultural Meteorologist with a PhD in Applied Biological Sciences from Ghent University in Belgium. He also holds an MSc in Agricultural Meteorology and a BSc (Hons) in Physics from the University of Zimbabwe. His research focuses on plant ecophysiology, particularly plant water relations and their application to agricultural water management. With more than 20 years of research experience, he has worked extensively on irrigation strategies for tree crops, including pome and stone fruit, citrus, and subtropical species. His work improves water-use efficiency, optimises irrigation scheduling, and supports sustainable production systems in water-scarce agricultural environments.



Prof. Stephanie Midgley holds an MSc (Agric) in Horticultural Science from Stellenbosch University and a PhD in Botany from the University of Cape Town. She has 35 years of experience in research and policy focused on climate change and its impacts on plants, agriculture, and natural resources. She currently serves as a Specialist Scientist for Climate Change at the Western Cape Department of Agriculture and is an Extraordinary Associate Professor in the Faculty of AgriSciences at Stellenbosch University. Her work involves engaging diverse audiences, including scientists, policymakers, farmers, and rural youth, to support climate resilience and adaptation. She also supervises master's and doctoral students, contributing to the development of future researchers in climate and agricultural sciences.



Prof. Gerhard Pietersen is a South African plant virologist and Senior Researcher at Patho Solutions in Wellington. He holds a BSc in Botany and Microbiology from the University of the Witwatersrand, an MSc from the University of Pretoria, and a PhD in Microbiology from Wits. Prof. Pietersen has held key roles at the ARC–Plant Protection Research Institute, Citrus Research International, and Stellenbosch University, where he served as Professor. His research focuses on plant virus identification, epidemiology, and control, particularly grapevine leafroll disease and citrus pathogens. He has published over 100 peer-reviewed articles, supervised numerous postgraduate students, and is a National Research Foundation B3-rated scientist.



AC Kleynhans is a junior crop advisor at AECl Plant Health, supporting apple and pear producers in the Langkloof region. He holds an MSc in Entomology from Stellenbosch University. His work focuses on delivering practical pest-control guidance and implementing integrated crop-protection programmes tailored to orchard conditions. He works closely with growers to effectively manage insect pest pressure and support the production of high-quality, export-ready fruit. Through applied entomological knowledge and field-based advisory services, he helps improve orchard health, strengthen pest-management strategies, and ensure compliance with international market standards for deciduous fruit production.

SESSION TWO

Shifting Landscapes: The Rise of Novel Pests and Pathogens

Chair: Dr Nanike Esterhuizen | Hortgro

10:40 – 11:00
Viruses in your trees?
Prof. Gerhard Pietersen
| Patho Solutions

11:00 – 11:20
Towards an integrated pest management approach for sucking insect pests in deciduous fruit orchards in South Africa
AC Kleynhans | African Explosives and Chemical Industries (AECl)

11:20 – 11:40
Crown gall of apple rootstocks in South Africa and potential for biocontrol
Dr Yolanda Petersen | ARC Infruitec–Nietvoorbij

11:40 – 12:00
Status of two invasive insect pests, PSHB and SWD: where do we stand?
Prof. Pia Addison & Matthew Addison | Stellenbosch University

12:00 – 12:05 Questions
12:05 – 12:10 Day sponsor presentation | AgroFresh
12:10 – 13:10 Lunch



Dr Yolanda Petersen is a Senior Researcher and bacteriologist at the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) Infruitec-Nietvoorbij in Stellenbosch, specialising in bacterial diseases of high-value export crops. She leads research on crown gall in apples and bacterial blight in grapevine and has extensive expertise in *Xanthomonas* species affecting stone fruit. She holds a doctorate from the University of Florida and has built a strong career within the ARC, focused on plant bacteriology. Her work advances molecular diagnostic tools for pome fruit, stone fruit, and vines, supporting early detection and disease management. Through her research, she contributes significantly to strengthening South Africa's plant health systems and national biosecurity, helping protect export agriculture from bacterial threats.



Prof. Pia Addison is an Associate Professor in the Department of Conservation Ecology and Entomology at Stellenbosch University, specialising in entomology and crop protection. She holds a PhD in Entomology from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and has advanced through the academic ranks at Stellenbosch since 2004. Her research focuses on integrated pest management, biological control, and insect ecology in agricultural systems, particularly fruit production. She has supervised numerous MSc and PhD students and contributed extensively to teaching in entomology and crop protection modules. Prof. Addison is widely published in international peer-reviewed journals and serves on several editorial boards and industry advisory committees. She is actively involved in bridging academic research and agricultural industry needs through applied pest management and innovation.



Matthew Addison is an entomologist and researcher with the Crop Protection Programme at Hortgro Science. His work focuses on the ecology and management of insect pests affecting deciduous fruit, with an emphasis on integrated pest management strategies that balance productivity and environmental stewardship. He collaborates closely with growers and industry stakeholders to develop practical, science-based pest-control solutions. His research supports the sustainability and competitiveness of South Africa's fruit industry through innovation, applied field studies, and knowledge transfer.



Nic Finger is Industry Services Manager – Grower Development and Trials at Apple and Pear Australia Limited (APAL), where he manages the Future Orchards® programme. He grew up on his family's apple orchard in Victoria, Australia, as part of a sixth-generation

farming family, giving him deep practical roots in the fruit industry. He has over 10 years' experience as an independent consultant for temperate fruit crops in both Australia and New Zealand, and has visited numerous major production regions worldwide. Through his consulting company, Fruit Help, Nic provides decision-support services that link on-farm technical choices with economic outcomes across the pome and stone fruit industries, helping growers improve productivity and profitability.



Tristan Dorfling is the Chief Executive Officer of Provar (Pty) Ltd, an independent company focused on evaluating new cultivars and rootstocks in South Africa. He is a horticultural scientist specialising in apple rootstock research and

genotype × environment interactions. Tristan leads multiple long-term, industry-funded trials across diverse production regions and collaborates closely with stakeholders throughout the value chain. His work centres on translating scientific research into practical, commercially relevant insights that help reduce producer risk. A key focus of his research is understanding how different rootstocks affect tree growth, yield efficiency, and overall orchard system performance under varying commercial conditions, thereby supporting more informed decision-making in modern apple production systems.

SESSION THREE

Roots for Fruits. What we've learned about apple rootstocks – and how to choose the right one

Chair: Johan Visser | Dutoit Agri

13:10 – 13:35

Planting systems – an Australian “future orchard” perspective

Nic Finger | Apple and Pear Australia Limited, Fruit Help Australia

13:35 – 13:55

How rootstocks are reshaping apple production

Tristan Dorfling | Provar

13:55 – 14:15

Apple rootstocks: Beyond vigour and yield.

Dr Minette Karsten | Hortgro

Dr Rinus Knoetze | ARC, Infruitec–Nietvoorbij

Prof. Adele McLeod | Stellenbosch University

Tristan Dorfling | Provar

14:15 – 15:15

Panel discussion:

Picking the right roots

PANELLISTS:

Nelius Kapp | Soil2Root

Willie Kotze | Dutoit Agri

Frederik Voigt | ZZZ

Angelique Pretorius | KROMCO

Chair: Wiehann Steyn | Hortgro

15:15 – 15:45 Tea



Dr Minette Karsten is the crop protection research programme manager at Hortgro and a seconded researcher in the Department of Conservation Ecology and Entomology at Stellenbosch University. Her primary role focuses on managing crop protection research at Hortgro Science, aimed at sustainable crop protection solutions for the industry and ensuring that research supports overarching strategies. Her research focuses on applied entomology and integrated pest management solutions, with a particular interest in using molecular and other novel tools to address questions important for the management of major insect pests of deciduous fruit.



Dr Rinus Knoetse is the Research Team Manager of the Plant Protection Division at the Agricultural Research Council, based at Infruitec-Nietvoorbij in Stellenbosch. He holds a PhD in Nematology from Stellenbosch University and brings more than 20 years of specialised experience to the field. Dr Knoetse is a recipient of the Bayer Award for the Advancement of Nematology in Southern Africa. In his current role, he oversees the planning and management of research projects across the agricultural sector, contributing to innovation and scientific excellence in plant protection.



Prof. Adèle McLeod joined Stellenbosch University (SU) as a Senior Lecturer in 2003 and is now an Associate Professor in the Department of Plant Pathology at SU. While working at SU, she undertook a three-year sabbatical at ZZ2 in Mooketsi, Limpopo, where she gained valuable insight into the challenges of commercial agriculture. Before joining SU, she spent five years at the Agricultural Research Council's Vegetable and Ornamental Institute in Pretoria and Elsenburg.

Her research at SU focuses on soilborne diseases of tree crops, with a particular emphasis on sustainable disease management and soil health. Much of her work has focused on apple replant disease and *Phytophthora* diseases of apple. In collaboration with ZZ2, she conducted extensive research on phosphonate-based disease management and the epidemiology of *Phytophthora* root rot in avocado, which later also included macadamia.

Pome Fruit Field Day





Pome Fruit Field Day

VENUE: Elgin Railway Market



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De Rust, 2024.



Pome Fruit Field Day in Elgin Valley, 2024.



Glen Fruin, 2024.

SCHEDULE: 28 MAY

SPONSORED BY NexusAG

08:00 – 08:30 Registration
Elgin Railway Market
Directions: -34.152493, 19.042952

8:30 – 08:35 Welcome
Wiehann Steyn | Hortgro

08:35 – 08:45 Introduction
Keith Bradley | Fruitways

08:45 – 09:00 Field day arrangements
Dian Craven | Fruitways

09:00 – 15:00
Five groups rotating between the following sites:

- 1. Glen Elgin**, Commercial compost and nutrition trial
Nelius Kapp | Soil2Root
Geoff Hutton | Fruitways
- 2. De Rust Estate**, Follow up on high performing G778 blocks and M9 under net
Piet Nieuwoudt | Fruit Tree Services
Jacques Van Dyk | De Rust
Angelique Pretorius | Kromco
- 3. Applegarth**, Full-bearing Rosy Glow on G202 rootstock
Dian Craven | Fruitways
Gerhard Taute | Fruitways
- 4. Gelukstroom**, Young "high density" Forelle_BA29 on Solaxe and Palmette systems
Johan Bayer | Chiltern
Christo Strydom | Wolfpack
- 5. Rustfontein**, High performing (200 t/ha) Cripps Red_MM109 trained to Double Palmette system
Albert Lingenfelder | Rustfontein
- 6. Longdown**, Louterwater GRS_G778 (double leader) under net
Emile Pretorius | Chiltern

A special thanks to Dian Craven and Keith Bradley for the programme.

Stone Fruit Seminar and Orchard Walk

VENUE:

Simondium's Country lodge



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MEET OUR SPEAKERS



Rachel Kriel began her career in agriculture in 1989 at the Department of Agriculture / ARC PPRI – Pesticide Dynamics Division, where she completed an MSc in Plant Physiology at the University of Pretoria. After a decade in research, she transitioned

to the agrochemical industry, serving for 10 years as Technical Advisor and Product Manager. In 2009 she joined TopFruit as Plant Material Manager, marking a shift toward plant improvement. Since 2017, Rachel has led Plant Improvement South Africa (PlantSA), a non-profit company mandated under the Plant Improvement Act to administer the Vitis and deciduous fruit plant certification schemes. She currently serves as Managing Director of PlantSA, driving governance, certification integrity, and sector-wide sustainability.

Chad van Wyk - please see page 11

Dr Rinus Knoetze - please see page 20

SCHEDULE: 29 MAY

SPONSORED BY AECI

08:15 – 09:00 Registration

Simondium's Country Lodge

Directions: -33.8501, 18.9636

09:00 – 09:10 Opening

Wiehann Steyn | Hortgro

09:10 – 09:30

Plant improvement and the value of certification

Rachel Kriel | PlantSA

09:30 – 09:50

Current knowledge on available and upcoming stone fruit rootstocks

Chad van Wyk | Provar

09:50 – 10:10

Susceptibility and tolerance of South African stone fruit rootstocks to plant-parasitic nematodes

Dr Rinus Knoetze | ARC, Infrutec–Nietvoorbij

10:10 – 11:10

Panel discussion: How to choose the right rootstock for your new orchard.

PANELLISTS:

Charl Stander | Freshness First

Andrew Hacking | Ad Lucern

Frederik Voigt | ZZ2

Douw Willemse | Allée Bleue

Chair: Marno van der

Westhuizen | Hortgro

11:10 – 11:40 Tea

12:00 – 13:00

Boordbesoeke (weerafhanklik)

Charl Stander, Andrew

Hacking and Douw Willemse

13:00 – 13:15

Summary and close

Charl Stander

A special thanks to

Charl Stander for compiling the programme.

Our sponsors



About

HORTGRO is the representative grower body for South Africa's deciduous (pome and stone) fruit industry, uniting producers of fresh and dried apples, pears, peaches, nectarines, plums, cherries and apricots under a shared vision of sustainability and global competitiveness. As a producer-driven organisation, Hortgro invests in research, innovation and market development to ensure the long-term profitability of its members. Through close collaboration with research institutions and industry partners, it supports cutting-edge work in plant improvement, crop production and protection, postharvest regulations and resource management. Hortgro also plays a vital advocacy role, engaging with government and key stakeholders on issues such as logistics, market access and regulatory frameworks. Beyond this, it champions transformation and skills development, helping to build a more inclusive and resilient agricultural sector. With a strong focus on quality, traceability and environmental stewardship, Hortgro enables South African deciduous fruit growers to meet international standards and deliver premium fruit to markets around the world.



Hortgro

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Hortgro Packhouse Action Group – www.hortgro.co.za/science-tech-hub/packhouse-action-group



**Hortgro
Science**

Hortgro Pome and Stone Handling Protocols – www.hortgro.co.za/science-techhub/pome-stone-handling-protocols

Hortgro Science Phyto Pest Guide – <https://phyto.hortgro.science/>

Hortgro Sustainability & Natural Resources – <https://www.hortgro.co.za/footprint/>

Hortgro Science Revised Stone Fruit Disorder Guide – <https://www.hortgro-science.co.za/wp-content/uploads/docs/2026/04/Revised-Stone-Fruit-Disorder-Guide-1.pdf>

Hortgro Events – <https://events.hortgro.co.za/>



ONLINE PUBLICATIONS:

Fresh Quarterly – www.freshquarterly.co.za/

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www.hortgro-science.co.za/resources/pamphlets

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