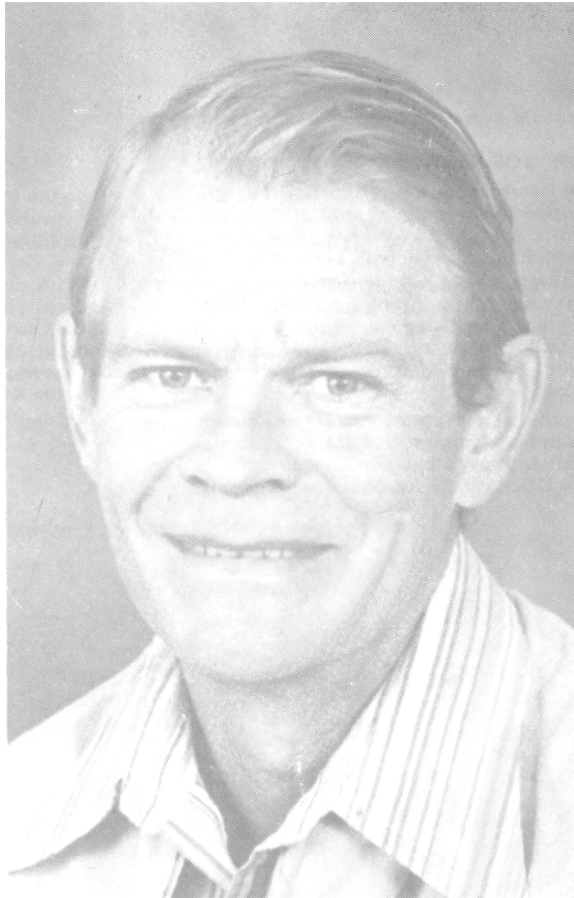


VOORWOORD

MESSAGE FROM DR G.S. BREDELL,
DIRECTOR CSFRI, NELSPRUIT



At times, the fruit industry is labelled as a non-essential or even luxury group of commodities which gets more than its fair share from the taxpayer. No attempt is made to compare fruits to staple foods, but the value of fruits should not be underestimated either.

For man in his primitive state, where agriculture is still underdeveloped, fruits play an important role in his fight for survival. On the other hand, the highly civilized human being is the victim of an extremely refined diet. This sophisticated creature once again becomes very dependant on fruit to be able to survive. It appears therefore that fruit, in spite of its so called luxury value, can be rightly called a kingpin for human survival.

We must admit, though, that during tight economic situations consumers are compelled to remove fruit from their budget before they would remove bread. This is reflected indeed at this stage in Europe where sales of a variety of fruits have dropped dramatically, resulting in surplus quantities of especially canned products. During this very same period (1982), avocado imports from Israel into Britain have risen by 70%. This fact is significant from at least two points of view. Firstly, people are becoming familiar with avocado fruit and are developing a taste for it. Secondly, consumers appreciate the nutritious value of this fruit.

The progress in export made by the South African avocado industry in recent years is a remarkable achievement. The local avocado industry has developed into an important export industry within a fairly short time. In 1970 some 370000 cartons were exported, while the 3 million mark was broken in 1982, just 12 years later. This represents an annual growth rate of approximately 21 percent.

The industry is poised for further large increases in growth in that, of the one million trees planted about 560000 are still to come into bearing. Earnings from avocado exports are expected to increase from R14 million in 1981 to about R50 million in 1985.

Large quantities of fruit are thus going to have to be marketed both locally and overseas, while competition resulting from similar trends in other major producing countries will increase. Probably the only way to win in such a situation is to produce top-quality fruit. It has repeatedly been shown that companies which are prepared to invest in research and development are likely to do better than those which are not, simply because of better products. This is why research is so important to the industry.

A large number of research projects covering a wide field is being undertaken by various institutions. The CSFRI currently has 12 projects, including irrigation, Phytophthora control, various physiological studies, post-harvest work and new cultivar evaluation. This constitutes a vast range of work, and it is necessary that other researchers also be involved. This is where the many projects co-ordinated by SAAGA are important to the industry. It follows that co-operation and teamwork between all the scientists and the industry is necessary for effective overall research.

The Sub-Committee investigating the implementation of the Avocado Improvement Programme has worked in close collaboration with plant inspectors of the Department of Agriculture, SAAGA and interested nurserymen in an endeavour to improve the standard of nursery construction and management. A guideline has been drawn up, and minimum standards decided upon. Interested nurseries complying with these standards will soon be able to register as part of phase one of the improvement plan. The Avocado Improvement Programme should be regarded as a stepping stone towards a Super plant Scheme.

The avocado industry is thus a growing, dynamic industry, set to contribute significantly to South Africa's agricultural health and wealth.

I would like to extend my best wishes to the avocado industry. We are looking forward to another year of fruit (avocado) full cooperation between SAAGA and the CSFRI.