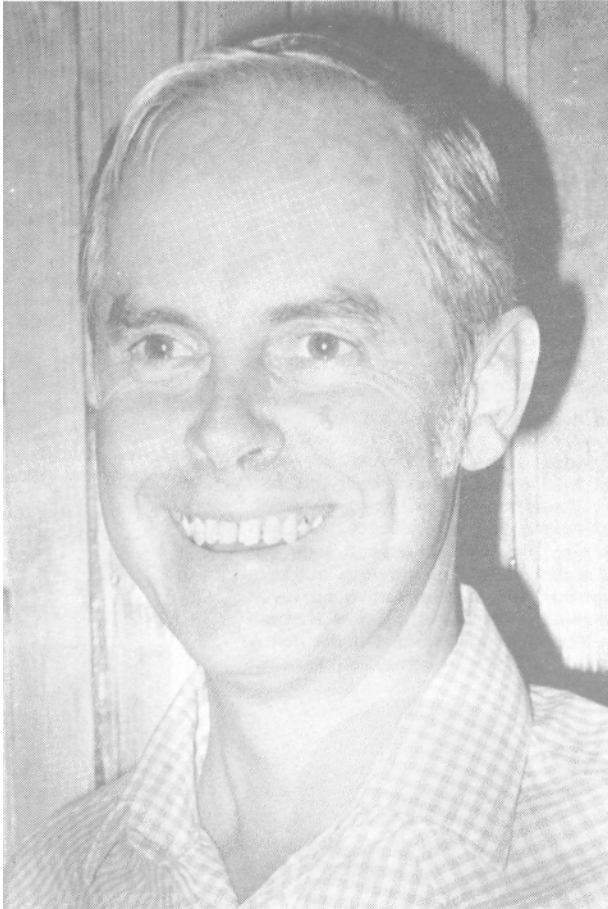


## SAAGA: QUO VADIS

**DR DL MILNE**

*CHAIRMAN 1981/2 WESTFALIA ESTATE, DUIWELSKLOOF*



The old Latin expression "quo vadis" means "where do we go from here?" So how *should* SAAGA develop in the future?

It remains a GROWER organization aimed at assisting the grower in the production of his crop. For this reason, SAAGA must provide the means whereby growers can produce an economical crop, in the long term.

To succeed in marketing, one must produce a *good quality* product at a *competitive price*. The good quality of an avocado will depend on rootstock and scion material, irrigation, soils, and freedom from tree diseases, fruit diseases and post-harvest problems.

In order to meet these needs satisfactorily it is necessary to have effective research carried out over a long period. In this respect SAAGA is one of the most remarkable organizations in South Africa. It has a self-imposed levy system which finances ongoing research in a highly effective way, as is evidenced by the quality of the material published in this Yearbook.

Being a grower-financed organization we can be sure that SAAGA keeps its sights on the

economic problems of the day. In some cases this may mean highly practical research with a quick answer. In other cases the problem is so obscure that basic research is required in order to unravel the intricacies of the problem (as for example pulp spot). By co-operating closely with State organizations (such as the CSFRI in Nelspruit) Universities and private research organizations, it has been possible to produce excellent results over the past few years.

Major progress has been made on Phytophthora control, black spot control, anthracnose control, packhouse procedures, resistant rootstocks, tissue culture, controlled atmosphere, indexing for sunblotch, irrigation, cold storage, oil analysis, fertilization and wrappers and waxes. Even the elusive pulp spot is slowly yielding up its secrets.

As a result, South Africa leads the world in the control of Phytophthora and on many other research aspects. This keeps us competitive on the world market.

However, research is useless if the results do not reach the farmer. Here SAAGA has directed its attention to providing an *Extension Service*, which the State was unable to do. Our Extension is highly effective, but with the increasing number of growers and the advancing technology required, I foresee that SAAGA will have to further strengthen its field force in the future. In the long term however, it is you the grower who must *utilize* the information given to you. Read this Yearbook and decide what you are going to do in reaction to the results provided.

To get back to the requirements of success, both the quality and quantity of your product will depend on your judicious use of the information supplied to you by SAAGA and other sources.

It has been estimated that it is necessary to produce 5 tons of avocados per hectare in order to remain profitable in avocado production. However it is possible to produce an average of 15 tons and more, and this is where your profit lies.

The second requirement of success, as mentioned earlier, is to deliver your product at competitive prices. Here again, SAAGA's role is to give you the necessary information so that you can ask a reasonable price in the market place and still make a healthy profit out of your crop.

SAAGA's attitude should therefore be one of continuing to help and stimulate growers to farm avocados scientifically in order to ensure optimum yields and economic returns.

I do not see SAAGA as a marketing body, but there is no doubt that it can do much to promote the consumption of avocados (currently 1 fruit per person per annum in South Africa) by effective advertising and publicity, especially locally.

A last word on economics. One can try to economize on production costs but the heaviest costs are in getting our products to the markets. SAAGA must therefore avail itself of the opportunity, through its representation on TAU and PPECB, to appeal for the stabilization of export tariffs which will otherwise cripple a growing export industry of great value to the economy.

SAAGA is a self-disciplined organization and I believe self-discipline is superior to imposed discipline. I trust we can keep it that way. If we succeed, SAAGA will continue to play its leading role in making a success story out of the South African avocado industry.