

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2024

South African Avocado Growers' Association (SAAGA) Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting is a pivotal moment to reflect on SAAGA's achievements, confront challenges, and collectively chart a course for the future of the South African avocado industry. It is essential to acknowledge both our triumphs and the obstacles that lie ahead, as we navigate the complexities of a dynamic global market landscape.

Market access triumphs and ongoing challenges

The past year (2023) has been marked by significant strides in our efforts to expand market access for South African avocados. After more than a decade of relentless effort, we can now celebrate that we have finally gained access to two of our new target markets. The successful entry into key markets such as China and Japan stand as a testament to the tenacity and perseverance of our industry stakeholders. However, it is imperative to recognize that our journey is far from over. The looming challenge of gaining access to the other target markets underscores the need for continued advocacy and strategic engagement with relevant authorities. Moreover, the persistent barriers hindering access to the USA market demand a concerted effort to address political complexities and regulatory hurdles. Despite these challenges, SAAGA remains resolute in its commitment to advancing the interests of our growers and maximising market opportunities on a global scale.

European market perception and port functionality

One of the most pressing concerns confronting our industry is the relatively poor perception of South African avocado quality in the European market, our



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largest and most pivotal destination for exports. While our produce meets rigorous quality standards, misconceptions persist and opportunity presses, posing a significant threat to our market share and profitability.

Compounding this challenge is the continued unreliable functioning of Transnet ports, most notably the Cape Town port. The inefficiencies and delays experienced at these ports severely undermine our ability to export perishable goods like avocados in a timely manner, exacerbating the challenges associated with addressing the quality perception issue in Europe. SAAGA continues to recognise the urgent need to address these logistical bottlenecks and is actively engaging with relevant stakeholders, through a collaborative effort within the Agbiz structure, to advocate for improvements in port infrastructure and operational efficiency.

Domestic market development and strategic allocation of funds

While our focus on expanding international market access remains paramount, we recognise the critical importance of nurturing and strengthening our presence in the domestic market. Domestic market development initiatives play a pivotal role in fostering consumer awareness, promoting local consumption, and driving demand for South African avocados within our own borders. It is essential to approach the allocation of funds to this objective with careful consideration and strategic planning.

In this regard, a willingness by the Board to consider providing additional funds above those budgeted has been emphasised to our market development partner, Protactic, if deemed necessary to capitalise

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on strategic opportunities within the domestic market. During the past year such additional opportunities did arise, and we were indeed able to capitalise on them. As stewards of our Association's financial resources, we will continue to collaborate closely with Protactic to ensure that any additional funds allocated to domestic market development are used judiciously and effectively to maximise their impact and deliver tangible benefits to our growers and stakeholders.

Financial stability and operational excellence

Amidst the backdrop of market complexities and logistical challenges, I am pleased to report that SAAGA remains in a robust financial position, thanks to the prudent management of resources and the unwavering support of our members. Our Association continues to demonstrate operational excellence, driven by a dedicated team of staff whose commitment and expertise are integral to our success.

Industry collaboration and innovation

In an era defined by rapid technological advancements and shifting market demands, collaboration and innovation are paramount to the continued growth and competitiveness of the South African avocado industry. Research is a cornerstone of our efforts to drive innovation and enhance the competitiveness of our industry.

A significant portion of SAAGA's budget is allocated towards research initiatives aimed at addressing key challenges, exploring new technologies, and optimising cultivation practices. Through strategic partnerships with research institutions, universities, and industry experts, we are at the forefront of pioneering breakthroughs in avocado cultivation, post-harvest handling, pest and disease management, and sustainable farming practices. The insights gained from these research endeavours not only empower our growers with the knowledge and tools needed to maximise yields and quality, but also ensure the long-term sustainability and resilience of the avocado industry in South Africa.

SAAGA remains steadfast in its commitment to fostering collaboration among industry stakeholders, promoting knowledge-sharing, and driving innovation to address emerging challenges and capitalise on new opportunities and, in doing so, ensuring the sustainability and prosperity of our growers and stakeholders. Through continued investment in research and the knowledge-sharing through mechanisms such as our study groups, we will harness the collective expertise and ingenuity of our industry to navigate the complexities of the global marketplace and unlock the full potential of South African avocados.

Proposed conversion to non-profit company

A pivotal agenda item for the Annual General Meeting meeting revolves around the proposed conversion of



SAAGA's legal status from a voluntary association to a non-profit company. This strategic initiative reflects our unwavering commitment to enhancing governance practices, transparency, and accountability within the Association. The transition to a non-profit company will empower SAAGA to adopt more robust governance structures, streamline decision-making processes, and uphold the highest standards of integrity and accountability. Grower's consideration of this proposal is invaluable as we seek to embark on this transformative journey to strengthen the foundations of our organisation.

Gratitude and conclusion

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our members, partners, stakeholders, and the broader avocado community for their unwavering support, dedication, and resilience. It is through our collective efforts and shared commitment throughout the years that we have achieved remarkable progress, and I am confident that by standing united, we will overcome the challenges that lie ahead and usher in a new era of growth and prosperity for the South African avocado industry.

Thank you for your continued trust and confidence in SAAGA.

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