

South African citrus grower development as a model for inclusive agricultural growth

Recently, a representation from the Citrus Growers' Association Grower Development Company (GDC) attended Asia Fruit Logistica in Hong Kong, a significant global fruit exporters' conference, highlighting the potential for South African fruit exports in Asian markets. This event underscored the role of black citrus growers in South Africa's agricultural sector, showcasing their commercial success and participation in international markets.

President Cyril Ramaphosa, addressing the Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan in Parliament, highlighted the citrus industry as a prime example of transformation and inclusivity in agriculture. He emphasized the importance of opening European markets to both established and developing black citrus farmers, advocating for support from existing farmers and the government towards a sustainable, competitive, and job-creating agricultural sector.

The Citrus Growers' Association established the GDC in 2016, funding it through citrus grower levies to support the transformation of the sector. The GDC provides black citrus farmers with training, mentorship, and technical support, ensuring they have access to the same resources as large commercial growers. This includes advice on cultivars, disease management, and aspects of the citrus value chain, such as cold storage and transport, to enable these growers to meet local and international market demands.

Furthermore, the GDC assists in navigating business aspects of farming, facilitating land access and funding opportunities. Through these efforts, black citrus growers are increasingly becoming successful commercial exporters. The industry aims to clear obstacles for black citrus growers, potentially enabling them to export 50 million 15kg cartons of citrus by 2032.

Challenges such as unfair trade measures by the EU on South African citrus have been addressed through initiatives like lodging a trade dispute at the World Trade Organization. Successful resolution of such issues, along with addressing inefficiencies at ports, are crucial for the growth of the sector.

The GDC's engagement with government at various levels aims to foster collaboration between public and private sectors, enhancing the agricultural and agro-processing industry's value. This cooperation is vital for addressing policy mismatches and implementing supportive measures tailored to the diverse needs of black citrus growers across provinces.

As the agricultural sector looks towards expanding markets, especially in Asia, the success of black South African growers is integral to the nation's citrus industry. The collective efforts of government, industry bodies, and growers are essential for achieving inclusive growth and sustainability in South African agriculture.

Source: IOL (<https://www.iol.co.za/business-report/economy/citrus-grower-development-model-an-example-of-how-to-unlock-inclusive-growth-in-agriculture-9ec617dc-bdd3-4167-968d-9703730e9d5c>)

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