

ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT strengthens black citrus growers

Targeted grant funding is an effective lever for the GDC's efforts to support majority black-owned citrus enterprises.

By Yolanda Ntlakaza

The Grower Development Company (GDC) channels targeted grant funding to help majority black-owned citrus enterprises improve productivity, expand production and build long-term sustainability across SA.

Since 2018, the Enterprise Development Fund (EDF) has played a catalytic role in supporting majority black-owned citrus enterprises. Offered as an internal full-grant funding instrument by the GDC, the fund advances the organisation's mission to establish, empower and support black citrus growers for sustainable profitability.

See **Figure 1** for a breakdown of proportionate funding per category. From 2018 to 2025, the EDF recorded a cumulative spend of R159 854 208.47, reflecting sustained investment in the development of black citrus producers. And from 2018 to 2024, a total of 14 712.84 hectares were supported at an average investment of R8 695 per hectare.

The GDC channels funding towards several critical areas that enable growers to maintain productivity, improve orchard performance and strengthen the long-term viability of their businesses.

Key areas of support (2018–2025)

- Production inputs
- Infrastructure
- Mechanisation
- Establishment
- Packing costs
- Compliance
- Integrated Pest Management

Support is guided by priorities identified through the Grower Development Chamber. Then, a call for applications is issued, followed by a structured process of vetting, allocation, disbursement, product delivery and verification.

Production inputs dominate the EDF support (**Figure 2**). This could be driven by the number of orchards that have not reached full bearing stage.

Measured impact on the ground

Impact has been tracked through tree census information and production data records, providing a clear picture of progress over time. The planted area grew modestly but consistently from 2023–2025. And export volumes remained stable, recording a 36% surge in 2025 that suggested improved yields or productivity.

Expansion at Champagne Farm, an 11-ha enterprise in Mpumalanga, attests to the output of EDF funding.

Tree census trends

In recorded tree census data, Valencia recorded the lion's share in planted hectareage (**Figure 3**).

Currently, 52.6% of the total hectares are at full bearing capacity (**Figure 4**). And 13.3% of orchards are being considered

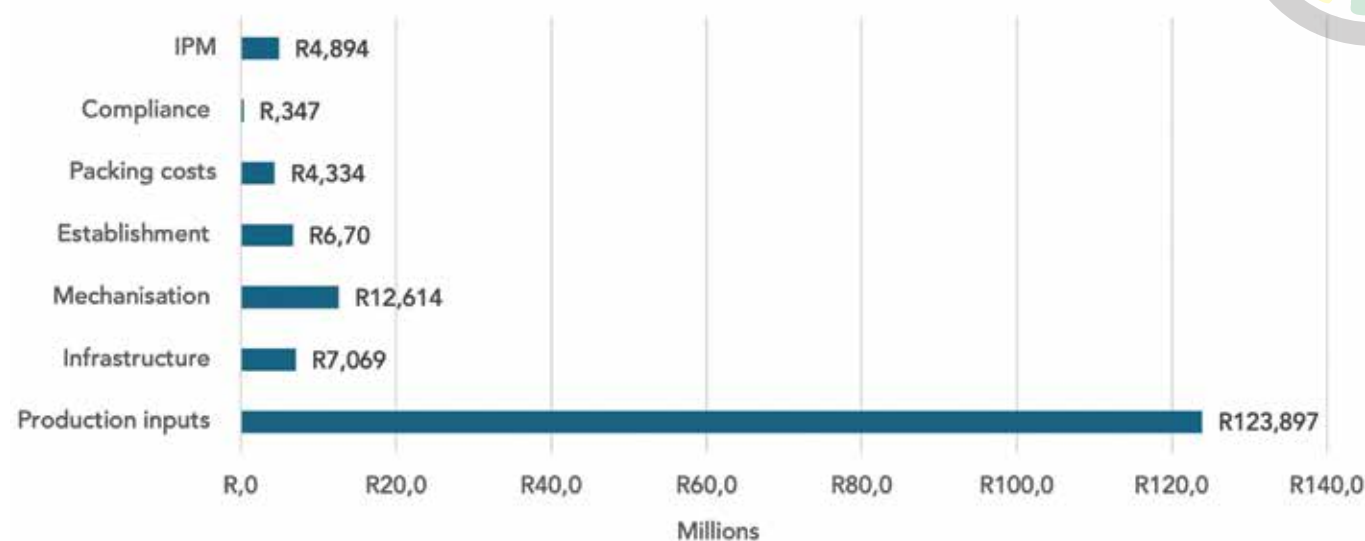


Figure 1: A categorised breakdown of channeled EDF rand

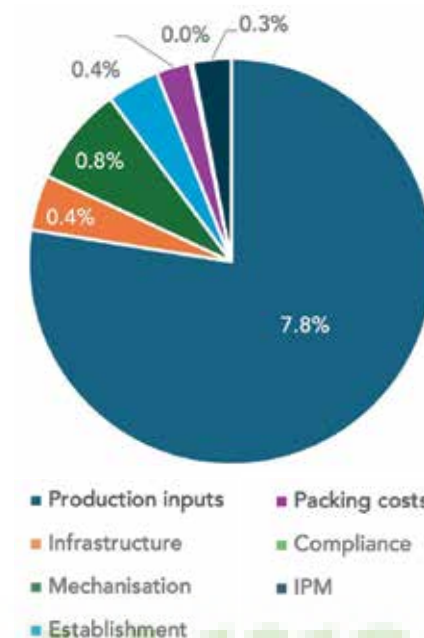


Figure 2: A breakdown of cumulative EDF support, 2018–2025



Figure 3: A snapshot of the total hectares planted in 2025

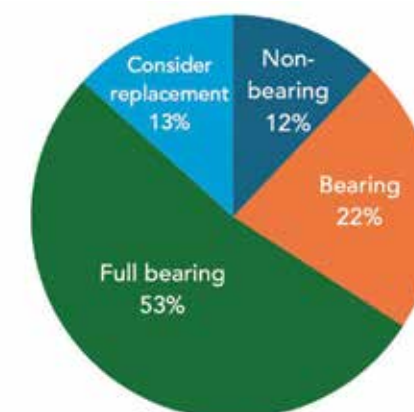


Figure 4: Bearing capacity in the overall hectare count



The Champagne
Farm expansion

for replacement (which impacts growers' planning). It is envisaged that the non-bearing and bearing orchards will be an enabler to increase the production and export volumes. But this is subject to appropriate orchard management practises.

Viewed collectively, these results show how targeted enterprise development support can strengthen grower resilience, expand productive capacity and contribute to a more inclusive citrus industry. With sustained investment and careful implementation, the EDF continues to provide practical support that enables black citrus growers to grow stronger businesses and participate more competitively in the sector.

The EDF continues to respond to immediate operational needs, helping farms improve production quality, increase volumes and unlock long-term value at farm level.

Targeted enterprise development support can strengthen grower resilience and contribute to a more inclusive citrus industry.

