ANDILE MAXWELL HAWES is the Transformation Manager for Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa. He answered the following questions about the challenges that this huge task entails.

My job entails the identification of constraints experienced by the emerging citrus farmers, facilitating development activities and assisting in finding solutions to problems.

Yes, transformation will always be challenging and frustrating. Different people view transformation from different perspectives. I think it would be proper to contextualise the transformation within my environment. Citrus transformation targets qualitative and quantitative changes on the environment of citrus emerging farmers. The change should result in these farmers being able to operate at commercial level. In addition the farmers should also be empowered to become more competitive in the global market. It therefore demands the assessment of the citrus value chain.

I joined the citrus industry in December 1988 and started to work for CGA in August 2003. I opted to work for CGA as I had ambitions of being part of the process of empowering the emerging sector and expansion of the industry.

When I joined the citrus industry, I got involved with issues of citrus farm development and training of farmers with the agricultural development agency for the then Ciskei Homeland. I gained valuable knowledge and experience on citrus production at that time which now provide a basis for decision-making in my job.

Do you have any remarks about the citrus industry as a whole and its future?

My comment is that the citrus industry is one of the industries that are well developed and its competitiveness is seen by its performance in the global market. Successful farming can only take place when there is a well-developed industry. However, the reliability on the export market is putting a strain on profitability levels due to foreign exchange fluctuations and if emerging sectors are becoming casualties. Now, the question I be asked, should citrus be given a priority as a commodity for rural development? I would say yes, it deserves that status if you consider the opportunities of employment, comparative advantage of South African agro-climatic conditions to the rest of the world and the effects it has on both forward and backward economic and business development.

For the citrus industry to prosper especially the emerging sector, investment on research for low costs production practices an provision of proper financial packages at all stages of the value chain is critical.

How has this job impacted on your family and your lifestyle?

The transformation job does not have office hours and this puts strain on family life. The advantage is that my family has accepted the demands of my jobs as it has been like that since I joined the citrus industry in 1988.

Have you any significant message for the readers out there?

My message to the emerging sector, agriculture is the way of life and success will only come when citrus trees have green broad leaves and last new growths are reaching not less than 35 cm in length per season. Scorn delight and leave laborious days.