On pages 44 and 45 we refer to the funding that the AgriSETA provides for the development of scarce and critical skills. The development of scarce and critical skills is a special focus area for the Citrus Academy as well.

Scarce skills are skills that are in short supply in a specific industry or sector, while critical skills means skills that are essential to the survival of an industry or to the success of an individual, but that are not necessarily in short supply. The AgriSETA has identified the scarce and critical skills in the agricultural sector as listed at the end of the article. While the critical skills areas that have been identified generally apply to individuals in the industry, the scarce skills are not all required by the industry. The development of these critical skills is being promoted and supported through various means, and forms part of mainstream skills development. The development of scarce skills however presents a specific challenge.

It is first of all necessary to determine accurately the scarce skills areas in the citrus industry. These may very well include some of the areas that have been identified by the AgriSETA, but will most likely also include specific areas that they have not identified, for instance packhouse management skills or plant pathology.

The Citrus Academy is currently in the process of accurately determining the scarce and critical skills in the citrus industry. This is being done with the help of a survey amongst the largest employers in the industry that will determine their current employment profile and their expected employment needs. It also provides the employers with the opportunity to present us with their wish list of skills that the ideal employee should have in specific positions that they are having difficulty in filling.

The information gathered in the process will assist the Citrus Academy in directing and focusing their approach to scarce skills development. The Academy currently has a two-pronged approach to this challenge, being the development of targeted learning programmes and the promotion of formal education in specific areas through the Bursary Fund.

The Academy intends developing learning programmes that are specifically aimed at addressing scarce skills. This would for instance apply to the example of packhouse management. Based on the job description for a packhouse manager and the skills wish list for such a person, a programme can be developed to ensure that a person gains the specific skills and experience that will equip him or her for this position.

Through the Bursary Fund, the Academy is able to prioritise certain formal education areas. This would apply to the example of plant pathology. If it was found that an area such as this is undersupplied, the Academy is able to provide bursaries to attract students to this field. Bursary students are obligated to work time back in the industry after they have completed their studies.

Bursary students are also obligated to work in the citrus industry during their university or college holidays. In this way, students gain experience and are better able to contextualise the theoretical knowledge that they learn at their academic institution. This also assists with integration into the industry. Potential employers are also provided with the opportunity of getting to know students while they are still studying, and to earmark them for future employment.

The Citrus Academy regards the development of scarce and critical skills as essential to the ongoing health and wealth of the industry.

Scarcé Skills
- General management skills
- Farming and farm management skills
- Process engineering, technicians and tradesmen
- Horticulturalists
- Animal health and related
- Meat processors and related

Critical Skills
- Willingness to learn
- Problem solving
- Numeracy
- Literacy
- Food safety
- Export readiness
- Business and marketing skills

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO ALL CITRUS GROWERS

The Citrus Growers’ Association and the Citrus Research International will be holding its

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

at the Boardwalk Conference Centre, Marine Drive, Port Elizabeth on 22nd August 2006 at 6 pm following the CRI Symposium.