Introduction
The southern African citrus industry has a long and illustrious history of international export success that has relied heavily on its strong research and technical support capacity. Post-deregulation of the industry, Citrus Research International (CRI) was established to continue with the development, support, co-ordination and provision of Research and Technical services to the industry. Access to new cultivars has always been and remains important in pursuing the long term global competitiveness of the citrus growers. The industry’s research and technical support base has a long history of involvement in this aspect of technical support. However, the cultivar development landscape underwent considerable changes shortly before and subsequent to deregulation. The nature of CRI’s involvement in cultivar development has accordingly undergone considerable adaptation over recent times. Growers often ask for clarification of the extent and nature of CRI’s involvement in cultivar development and this article is aimed at clarifying the situation.

Background
Whereas there was a time when nearly all available cultivars were managed by the industry’s Research and Technical support structures, there are now many parties actively managing cultivar rights. These include numerous private cultivar management companies. The decentralization of cultivar rights management in the industry was precipitated by Outspan going into partnership with a private cultivar management company in 1999. In the process the management rights of a large proportion of cultivars were thereby transferred from a broad based industry organization to a private company. Likewise, the developers of new cultivars mostly take out Plant Breeders Rights protection and restrict access to such new cultivars. This is a worldwide trend and takes place within the scope of Intellectual Property (IP) rights protection afforded by the law.

In light of these changes, it is not feasible for CRI to occupy a position where it controls all cultivars. Likewise, it is in the best interest of the industry’s grower base that CRI cooperates with the various cultivar management organizations that are active in the industry.
CRI’s Cultivar development policy

In mid-2007 CRI was faced with the need to fill the position of Cultivar Development Manager, after resignation of the previous incumbent. This provided an opportunity to review its cultivar development policy, to ensure that it remains aligned with the continuously changing cultivar development landscape. The updated policy makes provision for the following key aspects.

Objectives: CRI strives to ensure that southern African citrus growers are provided with timely access to cultivars and that such access be on reasonable terms and conditions; and to provide the southern African citrus growers with appropriate and impartial information on cultivars and rootstocks in order to assist growers in making decisions with respect to plantings and product quality standards.

Mode of operation: • CRI operates a mutation screening project to identify and develop new cultivars arising from natural mutations.
• CRI may choose to operate or support one or more of the following as additional, and potentially cost effective, sources for new cultivars: an accelerated mutation (irradiation) screening project; an in-house breeding programme; and other citrus breeding programmes, both local and international.
• CRI (on behalf of all southern African citrus growers) is available to acquire citrus cultivar rights, both locally and internationally. However, CRI will not purposefully engage in the pursuit of access to new cultivars in a way that leads to an increase in growers’ cost of access.
• CRI strives to expedite the movement of all cultivars through the post-entry quarantine, shoot tip grafting (STG), pre-immunisation, virus indexing and the Citrus Improvement Scheme (CIS) pipeline.
• As a matter of course, CRI will put out to tender, the management of all protected cultivars (requiring active management beyond sale by citrus nurseries) that it may gain rights to, unless there is no party that is willing to provide the service or meet the terms of the tender, in which case CRI will manage the cultivar.
• CRI operates a cultivar and rootstock evaluation project, including as wide a range of relevant cultivars as it can access.
• CRI provides growers with objective and reliable information on cultivars and rootstocks.
• In pursuit of a broad-based cooperative approach to cultivar development, a forum has been established with private cultivar management companies. This initiative includes providing for the participation of such role players in CRI grower study group meetings, the establishment of joint evaluation trials and participation in CRI’s Citrus Symposia.
• On the request of growers or the relevant regulators, CRI provides available technical information to facilitate the establishment of relevant product quality standards.

Selected Guiding Principles:
• CRI pursues provision of grower access to cultivars, on a non-profit basis.
• CRI respects the rights and protection afforded to other parties by Plant Breeders’ Rights and other relevant legislation, and upholds all relevant phytosanitary regulations.
• The funding of breeding programmes is conducted via standard CRI structures, policies and procedures, that include the condition that the allocation of industry funds to such actions, requires as a prerequisite, agreements that secure collective grower ownership (or shared ownership) of resultant IP.
• CRI strives to cooperate, where appropriate, with cultivar owners and their appointed agents (cultivar management bodies), for the benefit of growers.
• CRI deals with all cultivars on an impartial basis, regardless of the cultivar’s ownership or the management status of its rights.
• CRI strives to maximise the range of available cultivars that are included in the evaluation project.
• CRI maintains objective impartiality with regard to the technical inputs that it may be requested to make on the regulation of product quality standards.

All citrus growers are reminded of the potential value in identifying mutations that occur in commercial orchards. Where such mutations are stable and associated with desirable characteristics, they can be a valuable source of new cultivars. CRI operates an industry-wide natural mutation screening project that will assist growers in taking such mutation discoveries through to the development of new cultivars. All growers are encouraged to be on the lookout for such mutations and to contact Andrew Lee for assistance with its further evaluation and development.