New researchers at CRI

Teunis Vahrmeijer started with Citrus Research International in March and is being hosted by the Department of Plant Production and Soil Science at the University of Pretoria in Pretoria. He is finishing off his PhD on irrigation efficiency at the moment while he learns more about the citrus industry’s nutritional research requirements. Teunis has a BSc Hons and MSc in Soil science from North-West University and has experience from running his own seedling nursery. He consulted to commercial vegetable and broad acre farmers on cultivation methods, soil analyses and nutrient requirements for the last 12 years.

The Citrus Crop and Fruit Quality Management research committee recently discussed the areas of research on which Teunis should be concentrating and grouped them as follows:
1. Optimize both macro- and micronutrient need and use in relation to horticultural response, i.e. start with the problem or issue at hand and then determine what nutritional/irrigation constraints are limiting that aspect and what are the optimal nutritional requirements to overcome that problem. Some of the recent cultivars may require special attention to develop leaf norms.
2. Identify factors restricting nutrient uptake and find methods to improve efficiency of both soil and foliar applications (this in collaboration with Dr Stephan Verreyne).
3. Identify water-related impacts (poor irrigation practices) that are responsible for various fruit disorders and link scheduling to nutritional and pruning requirements.
4. Learn more about water requirements and scheduling needs, being careful not to merely optimise systems, but rather to understand water requirements.
5. Research on soil dynamics that could perhaps be incorporated with the irrigation/nutrition research.

Glynnis Cook joined CRI’s Disease Management team in August as industry virologist, and will be based in Nelspruit. She will work alongside Dr Fanie van Vuuren and Kobus Breytenbach on research and services regarding graft transmissible diseases of citrus. Glynnis replaces Prof Gerhard Pietersen who has returned to ARC-PPRI in Pretoria, where he will continue his research on citrus tristeza and citrus greening.

Glynnis obtained her BSc (Agric) degree in Microbiology at the University of Pretoria in 1993. She was an Agricultural Researcher at the ARC for 10 years and worked as a plant virologist at the Plant Protection Research Institute for most of that time. Glynnis took a detour into the commercial world, but decided that agricultural research is her passion and resumed her career as a plant pathologist at SAKATA Vegenetics (Pty) Ltd in 2006 where she was the plant pathologist of a tomato breeding programme stationed at Lanseria, Jhb until taking up the position as Plant Pathologist at CRI. She is looking forward to applying and furthering her original training and work experience as a plant virologist in the citrus industry.

We wish both Teunis and Glynnis prosperous and exciting careers in the southern African citrus industry.

TIM GROUT & PAUL FOURIE