According to the Produce Marketing Association (PMA) by 2010 the US will experience a shortage of nearly 10 million skilled workers. Given some of the breakdowns in essential services (read electricity and water quality to name just two) in South Africa we are facing such critical shortages right now. In order to attract top talent into the fresh produce business in the US the PMA launched a number of campaigns – one being the PMA Career Pathway Fund.

Every year this fund pays for the attendance (accommodation and entrance fee) for a number of talented students to attend the PMA Fresh Summit. Our own Danie Kieviet of Freshworld is an international member of the PMA Board and he champions the cause of South Africa at every chance he gets. He managed to get PMA to take four students (out of 36) from South Africa to attend the Fresh Summit in Orlando in October 2008. What an experience for these students – some of whom had never traveled abroad before!

The Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) also assisted the Citrus Academy in getting students to the event. All in all thanks must go to Danie, to the PMA Career Pathway Fund (and our own South African born head of PMA Bryan Silbermann), the IDC and the Citrus Academy in making all this happen.

We are going to need to attract, gain and retain bright, young talent in our industry – and this is a fantastic opportunity to do just that.