WAGENAAR & HOBBS BENEFITS FROM CGA & NAMC OPPORTUNITIES

HANNES HOBBS

Wagenaar & Hobbs is the 100% owner of Welverdiend Farm, operating as Wagenaar & Hobbs Citrus in the Sundays River Valley. This citrus farm was purchased in 2002. The family owned business is managed by Stephen Wagenaar and his son-in-law Hannes Hobbs.

Stephen has over 45 years experience in Citrus farming and is responsible for the production and quality at the farm whilst Hannes handles the sales and financial management. The farm is Globalgap & Nature’s Choice accredited and the farm’s produce is marketed for export to the Middle & Far East, Europe, UK & Russia through the Sundays River Citrus Company.

The managers of Wagenaar & Hobbs Citrus are not immune to challenges and difficulties faced by other new farmers, particularly those linked to accessing export markets and the ability to operate and market in these environments. All the farms marketing is currently handled by the Sundays River Citrus Company and as a result the managers are not exposed to the procedures that comprise the supply chain of citrus fruit.

The CGA & NAMC selected and jointly funded Hannes Hobbs on an Agri Match Mission to Europe in September 2008. Two countries were visited namely the UK & The Netherlands. The purpose of the trip was to expose participants to the agricultural markets in these countries and to introduce them to the EU market from a customer/buyer perspective. The mission exposed them to the different markets in the EU as well as to the complete supply chain - from loading of citrus produce right up to its display on the supermarket shelves.

This two week programme started with a training session in Cape Town on pricing, costing & logistics as well as on the importance of the cold chain in fruit exports.

The highlight of the tour was the visit to a TESCO supermarket where participants could monitor how many customers were buying South African citrus products, how the supermarkets shelves were displayed as well as the quality of South African citrus in comparison with other citrus producing countries.

A workshop facilitated by the British Agrifood Consortium, focusing on imports of fruit into the UK from a buyer perspective was also attended and the following observations were made:

- That quality is not an issue; quality is the basis
- That food safety protocols are a necessity
- That logistics are the deciding factor

We certainly feel proud to be able to contribute our little bit to the successful export of quality South African citrus into discerning markets such as Europe & the UK. Thanks to the CGA, NAMC and the SA Agri Academy for making this possible.

H Hobbs, N Mbilafa, S Ndlangalane, L Mgadie (Eastern Cape citrus farmers) and E Grifford (Western Cape citrus farmer) during the AgriMatch Mission to Europe.

PARTING THOUGHTS: To successfully operate in Russia export agents/growers are required to be tough, show a strong presence and commitment, and be prepared to negotiate on every aspect of the business.

The rise in Russian living standards is noticeable and makes this an attractive market for the future. The technical trade requirements remain a concern because it is uncertain to what extent these will impact on volumes of citrus going to Russia.

The technical trade requirements remain a concern because it is uncertain to what extent these will impact on volumes of citrus going to Russia, however, South Africa could be well placed to take advantage of this situation given the organization and discipline of the SA citrus industry.

APPRECIATION: CGA appreciates the funding contributed by DTI towards this ITI, and the planning of the trip from the DTI staff in SA. In addition the author thanks the CGA for affording him this opportunity to visit this fascinating country.