PLANET FRIENDLY CITRUS:

Reconnecting our Food Systems to our Ecosystems

PAUL HARDMAN

Inge Kotze, left, is the Senior Manager for Sustainable Agriculture at WWF-SA. As a speaker at the CGA Citrus Summit (8th and 9th March 2017 in Port Elizabeth) Inge provided some perspective of how challenges facing the global food system are directly linked to and contribute to the health of ecosystems, and how agricultural business 'can be caught in the crossfire'. The need to recognize and manage these food- and ecosystems systems together, rather than separately, has never been more apparent.

The facts speak for themselves as a basis for why global agricultural needs to be serious about finding sustainable ways of feeding a growing global population (approx. 9 billion by 2050):

• The food footprint is the leading driver of land transformation, land degradation and biodiversity loss.

• The largest user of freshwater resources (2/3rds of water used).

• A Greenhouse Gas (GHG) contributor. 25-30% contribution to GHG from land conversion, fuel, energy, electricity, agrochemicals and livestock.

• And, over the last 150 years half of all topsoil has been lost.

Here in South Africa, only 3% of land in considered truly fertile soil, and only 13% is good for cultivation. 69% is good for grazing but only 1% has the right climate and soil combination for rain-fed crops. The point is that we have very limited resources and we need to protect them.

Did you know that 50% of the water resource is produced on only 8% of the land surface in SA? This statistic is particularly relevant as major citrus growing regions fall within the large water schemes that depend on these catchments.

Inge went on to explain why and how deliberate management of natural resources can help businesses to become more sustainable. Put briefly, better stewardship of natural resources allows business to tackle key risks they face and therefore to become more resilient to environmental and other shocks.

So what are these key risks?

• **Changing climate:** Increased uncertainty and unpredictability: This is in terms of seasonality, temperatures, and weather patterns (drought, hail, wind, floods). One can think of cases of each

Citrus Growers' Association OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

PLAN TO SUCCEED

LEAD TO INSPIRE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

The Registration Team from left to right: Faisal Asmal, Thembeka Meyiwa, Belinda Goosen, Portia Gasa, Robert Miller,Keziah Naidoo, Rauff Dawood with Gloria Weare.

of these phenomenon impacting on the citrus industry in extreme ways over the last three years.

• **Pest and diseases pressure:** Combined with changing climatic factors, the pest and disease pressures can also potentially shift. This is particularly relevant where the ability for business to access markets is often determined by the pest and disease burden and ability to manage these production and operational realities.

• **Resource Scarcity:** Businesses face increased physical and economic scarcity – what is impacting your ability to grow in terms of land, water and energy scarcity?

• **Regulatory risk:** policy uncertainty is also prevalent and may have significant consequences for business development (think land, water allocation, carbon tax, etc.) which emphasise the need to monitor, verify use and follow due diligence.

• **Water quality:** Most of SA's citrus is produced from irrigation schemes. The reality is water in these catchments many miles away is being demanded by other industries and for other uses. What threats and requirements are they placing on water supply and use?

• **Pollinators:** Although less important for citrus, pollinators play a huge role in the fruit sector and are under threat.

• **Increase risk of and impact from wildfires:** Recent fires in the Western Cape illustrate the need for proper fire management strategies and the need for alien invasive species control.

Reading through these risks and how they threatened business sustainability it become more apparent that is makes good business sense to be more mindful and measured on how to address these risks.

At the CGA office growers and packhouse managers have raised the need for ongoing engagement with retailers around the problems retailer requirements for residues introduce. The reality is these buyer requirements are often divorced from the ability to truly create sustainable business that are working with nature rather than against it. Consider the risk that retailer requirements present around resistance to key post-harvest treatments, and in turn the massive potential for huge post-harvest waste. In this sense it is also noted that many retailers are looking to introduce environmental standards as part of their supplier agreements.

SIZA and WWF working together

This is where the Sustainability Initiative of South Africa (SIZA) comes in with tools that can assist producers to begin working through a process of identifying the key issues they face and what possible interventions and strategies to implement to limit the impact of those threats, or to take advantage of key opportunities.

WWF-SA, Fruit South Africa and SIZA have been working on tools and resources that can be rolled out over the course of 2017 for producers to adopt and use. Inge told the Summit that the purpose is to provide "a one-stop shop for legal compliance requirements and better production guidelines, step wise tracking for improvements". It is a proactive approach and the tools are voluntary.

On the basis of grower participation the opportunity exists for the citrus industry to team up with WWF-SA to engage with retailers with a different positive message about how sustainable production and export can take place. It closes down the prospect of multiple audits and checks but each different retailer. Therefore growers are urged to look out for developments and notices from SIZA and CGA regarding the available tools and ways to engage in the process.

CGA appreciates Inge sharing these thoughts with the citrus industry at the Summit, and for WWF-SA team working with the fruit sector to come up with proactive, sector specific solutions that have the potential to make a lasting difference.

---

theme for the Summit – Plan to Succeed; Lead to Inspire. We are very grateful to these speakers who accepted the invitation to speak and gave of their time and tremendous well of knowledge in their own fields.

We thank our sponsors most sincerely as without them the Summit could not have happened. Once again our Platinum sponsor was Standard Bank. Thanks to Keneilwe and her team. Gold Sponsor (Gala Dinner) was The Co-op, with Villa Crop, (Welcome Dinner) Silver sponsor and Sunkist, also Silver, sponsoring the Study Tour.

PPECB, Mpact, Capespan, JB Technologies, River Bioscience/Xsit and Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality made up the Bronze sponsors. Jannie Spangenberg, former CGA Director for N Cape donated 90 bottles of exquisite wines from the Orange River Cellars.

Thank you all for your generous funding of this event – hopefully the exposure and networking opportunities were to your satisfaction.

PWC, Felco and Ethekwini Cold Stores contributed towards the contents of the Delegate Bags, and Seven Seas, SRCC and Sitrusrand sponsored Citrus Academy Students. Many thanks, we will be contacting you again soon!

A questionnaire has been sent out to all who attended the Summit asking for feedback. The general overall response has been overwhelmingly positive. Thank you to those who took the time to respond and for those few who were dissatisfied in any way, apologies, we will strive to do better next time.

GLORIA WEARE