

ARC, Culdevco signs 10-year deciduous fruit commercialisation agreement

In a 'best practice step to commercialise homegrown cultivars' locally and internationally, a new agreement has been signed between Culdevco and the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) for a further 10-year period. This agreement dates back to 2006 but has recently expired.

According to the agreement, Culdevco, amongst other players, is being tasked with the commercialisation of deciduous fruit cultivars developed by the ARC. Culdevco was established in 2006 when the South African deciduous fruit industry and the ARC formed a joint venture to commercialise all ARC-bred varieties.



©Agricultural Research Council: Back: Prof Bongani Ndiraba (ARC), Dr Cynthia Motsi (ARC), Dr Leon von Mollendorff (Culdevco). Front: Dr Shadrack Mbephuli (ARC) and Dappie Smit (Culdevco).

“As with all things, everything changes with time,” said Culdevco Chairperson Dappie Smit. “The environment within which cultivars are being managed and commercialised in the deciduous fruit industry has changed substantially over the past number of years and new negotiations and agreements had to be drawn up that would create a win-win for all parties involved.”

Keeping the homegrown advantage

Culdevco will in future evaluate, commercialise and promote selected ARC cultivars locally amongst growers. “The aim is to keep the homegrown advantage before we commercialise cultivars abroad,” Smit said. The recent launch of Joybells, a new table grape variety, at Fruit Logistica in Berlin, is an example of this approach.



New SA table grape launched in Berlin

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ARC CEO, Dr Shadrack Moephuli, said: “Partnerships such as the one with Culdevco enable the ARC to directly disseminate technologies and scientific solutions to farmers and their associated organisations for use in commercial enterprises which, in turn, facilitates the competitiveness and sustainability of the South African agriculture sector. The net effect is market access and sustainable jobs for our society. We, therefore, hope this agreement will strengthen the

relationship between Culdevco, the deciduous fruit sector and ARC for the growth of South African farmers.”

New cultivars of great benefit to the industry

Commercial development of ARC-bred varieties has already made a significant impact on the South African deciduous fruit industry. This impact is clearly reflected in the number of new cultivars that have been released to the industry during the last 20 years, as well as the foreign exchange earned through exporting these cultivars to countries abroad. In total, 10 pome (apples and pears) fruit, 11 table grape and 67 stone fruit cultivars have been released to the South African deciduous fruit industry during this period.

Currently, there are more than 150 cultivars under the management of Culdevco, which include varieties of apples, pears, plums, peaches, nectarines, apricots and table grapes, as well as apple and stone fruit rootstocks.

All these varieties will be of great benefit to the South African deciduous fruit industry as they have been specifically developed for South African growing conditions.

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