

Hortgro's Nicholas Dicey named new WAPA president

Nicholas Dicey, chairman of Hortgro, has been elected president of the World Apple and Pear Association (WAPA). A fourth generation deciduous fruit producer from Wolseley in the Western Cape and graduate from Stellenbosch University, Dicey joined the family business in 1992. He runs La Plaisante Estate with his two brothers, Anthony and Peter, and together they produce pears, plums, and peaches for the local and export market.



L-R Philippe Binard, WAPA secretary-general, Todd Fryhover from Washington Apple Commission in the USA and outgoing WAPA president, and Nicholas Dicey, new WAPA president

Dicey joined Hortgro Pome (previously known as the South African Apple and Pear Producers' Association) as a director in 2000 and became the chairman in 2006. In 2016 Dicey was nominated to represent South Africa at an annual WAPA meeting, and at that time was elected vice-president.

Dicey will work closely with the Brussels-based secretariat to raise awareness about apple and pear production, consumption, and marketing - thereby growing the global industry.

WAPA was founded in August 2001 with the objectives of providing a world forum for discussion on matters of interest to the apple and pear business and initiating recommendations to strengthen the sector.

Well-structured SA industry

Dicey says he is honoured to represent South Africa on the world stage and is proud of our local, well-structured deciduous fruit industry body, Hortgro. "Not all the countries are as well-organised as the South African pome fruit industry. If we want information or statistics it takes a button click to get the information, other countries have diverse groupings representing their industry, which makes data gathering difficult."

One of his objectives is to get meaningful and accurate statistics from all the apple and pear players in the world in order to help everyone make intelligent marketing decisions. "With the increase in world apple and pear production, accurate information is required for effective marketing decisions and strategies to be implemented in keeping the market in equilibrium – data has never been more important and precludes responsible marketing."

Increase membership

Dicey also wants to increase WAPA membership – which is voluntary – and currently includes: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, China, France, Germany, Italy, Moldova, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Scandinavia, Slovenia, South Africa, the UK, Ukraine and the USA.

“There are a number of pome producing countries that are not yet members, but over the past number of years countries such as Moldova, Slovenia and China have joined the association and that is good for the global industry.

“Through the sharing of information and challenges, countries become more competitive and make better business decisions. We cannot market apples and pears efficiently and compete against other fruit groups if we do not have up-to-date information and statistics of the apple and pear world. We have seen consumption stagnation in some areas and we need to stay abreast of trends and supply a good quality product.”

Research and technology

WAPA is interested in sharing production figures, hectares planted, research and promotional activities. “By sharing research and technology the whole apple and pear industry will benefit.” According to Dicey, sustainable farming, ethical production practices, preservation of biodiversity, and the health benefits of apples and pears, are also serious talking points at WAPA.

“I am looking forward to my two-year tenure. It is going to be a major learning curve for me. I hope to increase my knowledge and exposure and plough that back into the South African industry,” says Dicey.

Historically, South Africa is a major player on the apple and pear world stage with ±640,000 tonnes being exported annually.

It is expected that SA apple production will be 928,122 tonnes and pear production 422,728 tonnes for 2019. European production also bounced back during 2018 to an above average volume after the reduced apple crop of 2017. This, combined with other Southern Hemisphere production, will result in a challenging marketing season in Europe this year.

The consolidated crop forecasts for the forthcoming southern hemisphere apple and pear seasons were recently released by WAPA. Collected from industry associations in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, New Zealand and South Africa, the forecast showed that the 2019 apple and pear Southern Hemisphere crops are expected to reach 5,261,000 tonnes and 1,327,000 tonnes, respectively. For apples, this represents an increase of 2% compared to the 2018 crop. Export is expected to remain stable at 1,738 million tonnes. The pear crop is expected to increase by 2% compared to 2018. Export is expected to remain stable at 712,154 tonnes.

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