



By Carl Collen

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## Funding boost for emerging Cape farmers

Some R120m will be used to enhance production at various Cape farms



**I**n the Cape region of South Africa, the deciduous fruit industry has joined the Western Cape government and the National Treasury to help boost the prospects of 24 black fruit growers.

The partnership will see some R120m injected into production at the growers' farms over the next four years.

The funds will be used to renew and expand orchards, purchase production equipment and improve farming infrastructure. This will be based on detailed farm planning models currently being conducted by external service providers, to guide and assist the farmers to full commercial status.

The partnership between the private sector and government will assist the topfruit and stonefruit industries in materially impacting the footprint of smallholder farmers, said Mariëtte Kotzé, Hortgro information manager for agricultural economics.

"The current participation level of smallholder farmers is at 7 per cent of the industry and through this initiative and

other private sector initiatives currently in progress in the Western and Eastern Cape, this will increase to at least 13 per cent over the four to five years."

In doing so the deciduous fruit sector hope that these new orchard developments, as well as the replacement of old orchards, will generate a potential income of R2.9bn over the lifespan of the orchards. This will have a significant impact in the rural economies, creating spin-offs elsewhere in these regions.

The 24 farms in the Western (20) and Eastern (4) Cape are all 100 per cent black owned entities which have in recent years, through the other support projects in the industry, shown a high potential for commercialisation and job creation. Technical, management and financial support will be provided to these farmers to assist them in realising their commercial potential.

According to Pitso Sekhoto, chairman of the Deciduous Fruit Development Chamber of South Africa (DFDC-SA), the initiative was born out of the need to generate economic growth that will

facilitate the integration of black farmers into the mainstream economy and to achieve the Deciduous Fruit Industry's vision of an integrated and representative deciduous fruit industry.

"We are confident that the beneficiaries of this project will be able to graduate into the mainstream commercial sector after the four-year programme which will not only increase the production footprint and ensure increased market access of our black farmers in the Deciduous Fruit Industry, but will also enhance their participation in the off-farm value chain of the sector," Sekhoto said.

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