



By Fred Meintjes

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## Water sustainability in focus



With the new fruit season in South Africa getting underway this month, the issue of water is again at the forefront of growers' minds

The latest development in pursuing sustainable water use in South Africa has come from the Citrus Growers' Association (CGA), which announced to growers recently that it has put together a number of bulletins addressing key areas highlighting good practice pathways.

"Through strategic planning sessions and the day-to-day interaction with CGA members the topic of water has emerged as a key issue facing many citrus growers," said Justin Chadwick, chief executive of the CGA.

"This is not simply about having sufficient quantities of water, but having access to good quality freshwater for citrus production on a sustainable basis," he explained. "CGA has put together five bulletins that address key areas relating to water and which highlight good practice pathways."

Chadwick said the themes tied in with the Sustainable Initiative of South Africa, (SIZA) Environmental Standards. "Compiled by Blue North for the CGA

and with inputs from the Citrus Research Institute (CRI), the purpose of the bulletins is to create a baseline knowledge from which further engagement can take place."

The hope is that real solutions become evident on farms and robust discussions can then be had with trading partners. "As the bulletins are release over the next few weeks, there will also be an opportunity to engage the authors as Best Practices are identified," Chadwick continued.

There is certainly additional concern for the citrus sector about water supplies this year – particularly in the key areas of Limpopo and around Letsitele below the Tzaneen Dam, which is expected to run out of irrigation water this weekend. Chadwick said that unless good rains fell soon growers in the region would have a disaster on their hands.

"It will certainly affect our export volumes next year because it is a very important region for us," he said.

The region is also a large avocado and subtropical region, but because avocados are normally more water friendly than other products, it is not clear what the effect will be.

While the dams in the Cape region are this year fuller than they were in 2018, growers in the Olifants River Valley citrus region around Citrusdal have said that they generally had less rain in the valley this year.

The Eastern Cape regions are also reporting dry conditions, but the Sunday's River Valley is supplied by the Orange River system, which is proving a real blessing to growers.

It is clear that the CGA's new 'water wise' move will attract much attention in building future sustainable water use.

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<http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/1474/parts-of-san-diego-quarantined-as-psyllid-count-mounts>

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