

Press Release:

Hortgro 1662 Industry Award goes to Buks Nel and Henk Griessel



Buks Nel and Henk Griessel –recipients of the 1662 Industry Award (Carme Naude)

The formidable duo, Buks Nel and Henk Griessel, are this year's recipients of the coveted **Hortgro 1662 Industry Award** for their invaluable contribution to the South African deciduous fruit industry.

The 1662 Industry Award was initiated by Hortgro to celebrate the first two Witte Wijnappels that were picked at the Company's Garden on the 17th April 1662 and to recognise the humble beginnings of the deciduous fruit industry on the southern tip of Africa. Every year on this day Hortgro endeavours to honour individuals who went above and beyond what is required for the industry.

Hortgro Executive Director, Anton Rabe, said the type of individual/groups we wish to honour and recognise through the 1662 Industry Award is best described with words such as excellence, fearlessness, visionary, leadership, world-class, competence, and a "do-it-yourself" mindset. "We, at Hortgro, believe these words describe our industry and is also echoed in Hortgro's culture, ethos, and effective delivery of industry services and functions to our members.

"It is, therefore, a great honour to present the Hortgro 1662 Industry Award to two worthy recipients, Buks Nel and Henk Griessel. And in so doing recognise their enormous contributions to a wide range and scope of issues and over an extended period of time. Individually and collectively, they vastly contributed to the success of our industry with innovation and visionary leadership with amongst others new cultivars and plant material – contributing to the world-class industry we are."

Rabe said Nel and Griessel have a combined 85 years of experience within and service to the deciduous fruit industry. Their natural curiosity and shared passion for apple cultivars resulted in the publication of two delightful books: Apples in the Early Days at the Cape and The Newcomers and their Friends.

In these two books, they explored the early days of fruit production on the African continent and the change in varieties that resulted in what is known today as the super varieties.

Apart from their writing feats, the duo also managed to locate the original Witte Wijnappel plant material in the Netherlands. In a joint effort by Tru-Cape and Hortgro, the plant material was imported and after the quarantine was grafted into baby trees. In 2019 these trees were planted on three locations in the Western Cape: the Heritage Garden at Oak Valley Estate, Babylonstoren, and the Company's Garden in Cape Town. Last year saw the first Witte Wijnappels being picked again on South African soil. Thus ensuring that future generations will be able to taste this historic variety.

“Tru-Cape Fruit Marketing Managing Director, Roelf Pienaar, said: “Henk and Buks have, over the many years, made an immeasurable contribution to not only Tru-Cape and our growers but also to the industry at large. Collectively they hold the key to past, present and future answers about apple and pear growth and storage in South Africa and through the publication of their books, and collegiate relations in South Africa, and around the world, they generously share. I know that everyone at Tru-Cape and all of our growers joins me in congratulating them.”

Nel, who grew up on a farm in the Little Karoo, graduated from Stellenbosch University in 1961 with Entomology and Zoology as majors. Thereafter, he worked extensively in the crop protection sphere. He was a founder member and former chairman of the IPM (Integrated Pest Management) group, where he actively served for 15 years. In 1983 he published *Deciduous Fruits and Vines: Pests and diseases and their control*. This followed by two fun books about wine: *Sips for Wine Lovers* and *More Sips for Wine Lovers*.

He joined Tru-Cape fruit marketing team as a New Variety Consultant in 2000. And is on record for his great enthusiasm for the development of new pome fruit varieties. In this regard he found the full-red Gala mutation Bigbucks; the full-red Fuji mutation (now under the name Fuji Royal); the full-red Spur-type Fuji mutation now being developed locally and in Italy named Shortie.

Griessel graduated from Stellenbosch University with an M.Sc in Horticulture in 1992 with a thesis titled: *The Influence of Hormone and Mineral Applications on the Peel Chlorophyll Content and Green Colour of Granny Smith Apples*.

Griessel's expertise includes technical requirements of exporting deciduous fruit; post-harvest storage and handling of fruit; deciduous fruit production; quality systems; managing intellectual property rights of plant material; propagation of woody perennials and greenhouse production.

Over the years, his career made several pit stops and journeyed into academics where he lectured in horticulture for six years at Stellenbosch University, before he joined Unifruco and later Kromco/Tru-Cape as Quality Control Manager. The list of his academic publications is too long to mention here. But many colleagues can attest to Griessel's ardent contribution and devotion to quality fruit produced for the deciduous fruit industry. Griessel has been an advisor to the Hortgro Science post-harvest programme since 2004.

- The 1662 Industry Award was inaugurated in 2019 when horticulturist, Koos Lötter, received it for the first time. In 2020, Joyene Isaacs, former HOD of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture, became the second person to receive the award.

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