

# CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

It is my pleasure to present the Annual Report of the Perishable Products Export Control Board (PPECB) for the 2019/20 financial year. Firstly, I would like to thank my predecessor, Angelo Petersen, for his sterling work as Chairperson for the last six years. The PPECB is a complex business with many aspects that must be carefully managed. Angelo showed great leadership during this time and carefully steered the ship to ensure the PPECB rendered a service that enhanced the credibility of the South African export certificate, while supporting the export competitiveness of South Africa's perishable product sector. Thank you also to the retiring Board members, Jill Atwood-Palm, Dr Mono Mashaba, Eurica Scholtz and Arthur Shiplana.

**T**he Board duly welcomed five new members, namely Warren Bam, Mariette Kotzé, Dr Charlotte Nkuna, Kathryn Sinclair and Dr Madel van Eeden. They have joined Khaya Katoo, Anton Kruger, Mooketsa Ramasodi, Martli Slabber and myself, who were reappointed for an additional term. The Board is therefore optimally constituted to provide continuity and generate new ideas.

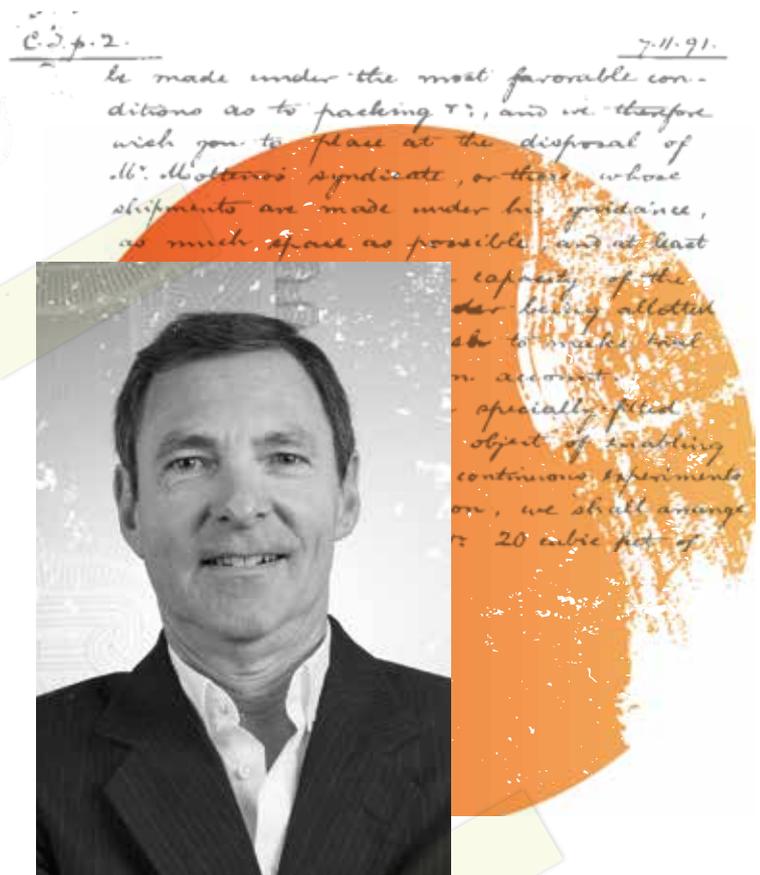
In this context, the long-awaited PPEC Bill has now received legal certification and awaits introduction to Parliament.

## Rising to extraordinary challenges

As I write this foreword, the country is in a state of lockdown. These are unprecedented times; but under the expert guidance of President Cyril Ramaphosa, who delivered a decisive, considered and impactful plan on stemming the spread of COVID-19, we should come out less affected than many other countries. President Ramaphosa stood up to lead a nation through uncharted waters and he did us all proud.

In the same vein, I must express my thanks to the management and staff of the PPECB, which is considered an essential service and so has remained at work throughout the lockdown. Our inspectors have risen to the challenge and continued to render an outstanding service to the perishable products sector around the country. Thanks also to the team at the PPECB who put in place a comprehensive set of guidelines and a detailed information pack to mitigate the risks the virus posed.

The above just happens to be one extraordinary challenge of many facing the PPECB on a daily basis. With the ongoing drought in parts of the country and the resulting shortage of fruit, notably citrus, the finances of the PPECB have come under pressure. Immediate action was taken to reduce costs and delay projects where possible. In this way we have been able to absorb the impact of the reduced income to a large extent.



*Clive Garrett*

## Digitising for a changing future

Digitisation is the process of converting information into a digital format. In this format, information is organised into discrete units of data that can be more easily accessed, preserved and shared. The PPECB is making great strides in this regard. The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) team has identified ten focus areas for the financial year 2020/21. Detailed project plans and delivery timelines have been developed. These projects include: cloud migration, TITAN 2.0® (managing our technical environment), our data assurance project, a wide area network (WAN) upgrade, the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) project, end-point security and ICT governance.

The ICT team is committed to continuous improvement and adopting an agile approach to transforming the way we work. We have prioritised stakeholder engagement regarding TITAN 2.0® and e-Certification to ensure vendor readiness. Much of the period has been spent assisting industry vendors and clients to go live with the Product Inspection module of TITAN 2.0®. The PPECB conducted a number of testing sessions with software vendors and also assisted them with client launch implementations.

Moreover, ongoing engagements with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) regarding e-Certification and eLot implementation took place to ensure timeous roll-out for the citrus season. These interactions were useful in ensuring the systems fully integrate with each other.

## Streamlining operations

As industry representatives are aware, there are currently many challenges at our ports. We have therefore formed a task team, together with the perishable products industry, to try and overcome these challenges.

The training of AMTA (Namibian Agro Marketing and Trade Agency) inspectors in Namibia was concluded as per the Service Level Agreement by utilising one PPECB Chief Inspector. We received positive feedback after the training, which reported that the knowledge levels of the AMTA Inspectors had improved significantly.

The PPECB was invited to a round-table discussion regarding the consolidation of regulatory food testing in South Africa during the year under review. Laboratories which work closely with DAFF (now DALRRD) were invited to form part of the discussions. Preliminary discussions indicated that the PPECB laboratory will handle fresh fruit and vegetables for pesticide residue testing.

The laboratory is also looking to purchase a Near Infra-Red (NIR) instrument, which will be used to improve efficiencies in the Dairy Analytical Programme by automating some methods and introducing the SO<sub>2</sub> analysis method, which dried fruit clients have requested. This new testing method will be an additional income stream for the laboratory in the new financial year.

Meetings have been held with DAFF (now DALRRD) to discuss the standardisation of codes being used by industry and regulatory systems, with a view to moving to fully electronic export certification. Agreement was reached that a forum be established in this regard, with the PPECB taking responsibility for the Chairpersonship and DAFF (now DALRRD) for the Secretariat. All relevant stakeholders in the value chain will form part of proceedings as well.

Finally, the programme certified 249 smallholder farmers during 2019, which contributed to the transformation strategy of the organisation.

## Serving our communities in need

We have been involved in a number of Corporate Social Investment initiatives over the past year, including our charity golf day, smallholder farmer development and working with Call 2 Care. One of the projects the PPECB has been involved in, is the iGardi, an innovative programme that improves nutrition in underprivileged communities through a proven model for water-wise vegetable food gardening that educates and empowers individuals to increase food security.

## Heading forward

Our goals for the next year are as follows:

- To continue focusing on creating a stable ICT infrastructure, including increased cyber security
- To become more efficient and contain costs
- To become more customer-centric
- To focus on our digitisation projects
- To support market access initiatives, especially to countries in the east, by creating confidence in South Africa's export certification
- To commit to the development of our staff, with special emphasis on our female employees.

## In gratitude

In closing, I wish to extend our gratitude to the Honourable Minister Thoko Didiza, the Portfolio Committee, the team at DAFF (now DALRRD) and our clients for their continued support and assistance.

Special mention must be made regarding the staff of the PPECB, who have been at the front line and have carried out their duties diligently under challenging circumstances. Our inspectors in the packhouses and ports must be commended for their sterling work. Achieving 85% in our Customer Satisfaction Survey indicates we are doing most things extremely well.

I would furthermore like to thank my fellow Board members for helping to guide the PPECB and to make it the success it is today.

**Clive Garrett**

Chairperson, the PPECB