

Media release
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ARC develops a novel method for aspalathin-enrich green rooibos extract

The Agricultural Research Council (ARC) has collaborated with the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) and local wellness product development company Afriplex to produce Afriplex GRT™, a rooibos extract enriched in aspalathin, a flavonoid and one of the key actives in rooibos. Aspalathin is unique to the genus *Aspalathus*.

Prof Lizette Joubert of ARC Infruitec-Nietvoorbij in Stellenbosch, an expert on post-harvest aspects of rooibos tea and its composition, developed a novel method for the production of aspalathin-enriched green rooibos extract (GRT extract), while the SAMRC provided the research to support its health use.

Together with researchers of the Biomedical Research and Innovation Platform of the SAMRC she has spent more than 10 years exploring the anti-diabetic properties of rooibos, leading up to the development of this extract. Afriplex GRT™, is a proudly South African product, which will be launched in April 2018. It will be formulated into products aimed at managing conditions linked to cholesterol, blood glucose and insulin resistance.

According to the SAMRC, diabetes prevalence amongst African women and men has almost doubled between 1980 and 2014 with a 4.8 % increase in women and a 5.4% prevalence increase in men in the same time-frame. Senior Programme Manager at the SAMRC, Dr Michelle Mulder, says “this collaboration is a great example of how we are using research and innovation to respond to key disease burdens in South Africa through technology transfer”.

The ARC’s recent Vision 2050 document maps out how the ARC will contribute to the South African bioeconomy success in the next 20 to 35 years. Prof Bongani Ndimba, Senior Research Manager responsible for ARC Infruitec-Nietvoorbij in the Western Cape says, “This project and its benefit sharing arrangement represents a perfect example of the relationship between our national agricultural and medical research excellence for now and into the future.”

A human trial, earmarked for 2018, will determine the safety profile of the ingredient in healthy but at risk participants in South Africa and will be followed by efficacy studies.

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Notes to the Editor:

About the Agricultural Research Council

The Agricultural Research Council, a schedule 3A public entity, is a premier science institution that conducts research with partners, develops human capital and foster innovation in support of the agricultural sector. The Agricultural Research Council provides diagnostic, laboratory, analytical, agricultural engineering services, post-harvest technology development, agrochemical evaluation, consultation and advisory services, food processing technology services as well as various surveys and training interventions. For more information, visit the website at www.arc.agric.za. Follow us @ARCSouthAfrica on Facebook and Twitter.

Issued on behalf of ARC Infruitec-Nietvoorbij.

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