

Media Alert

Date: 10 July 2014

## **AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH COUNCIL (ARC) MAKES PROGRESS WITH RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IN LIMPOPO**

The rural development project of ARC Infruitec-Nietvoorbij, under the leadership of Ms Odette Beukes, realised the importance of deciduous fruit production for small farmers in Limpopo to help ensure sustainable agricultural practises, poverty alleviation and improved nutrition.

A range of the most suitable ARC peach, nectarine, plum and apricot cultivars, produced by SAPO, were delivered to small farmers in August 2013. To be eligible for assistance, small farmers (pre-selected by DAFF, DRDLR and municipalities) had to comply with minimum requirements to give the project any chance of success. This included access to electricity, water and transport, animal proof fencing and security against theft. The same cultivars were planted simultaneously, under ideal conditions at both ARC and DAFF research farms to demonstrate tree, crop and soil management practises and fruit processing.

Tree growth and development under generally good soil and climatic conditions was excellent (subject to sufficient irrigation being applied). At the best sites, most cultivars grew up to 2 meters in height over an eight month period, with the capacity to bear their first crop in their second leaf. These promising results gave the farmers incentive to diversify out of cash cropping and demonstrate what can be achieved under correct fruit tree management.

The greatest challenge for the sustainability of small farmers is the distribution of their produce and the associated waste. Fruit tree cropping, together with vegetable production, especially using permaculture principles, not only spreads risk and reduces soil degradation, but also makes food processing more lucrative. Team members from ARC Infruitec-Nietvoorbij are exploring these possibilities country wide.

Regular visits by horticulturalists from the Institute provide technical assistance in irrigation, pest and disease control, tree management and cropping. Various peach and nectarine, figs, pomegranate and quince cultivars will again be provided to selected small farmers during August 2014.

*For more information, contact Mike North or Bongani Sokomani on (021) 809 3100.*

---

**Issued on behalf of ARC Infruitec-Nietvoorbij.**

Derusha Crank | Marketing | (021) 809 3018, [crankd@arc.agric.za](mailto:crankd@arc.agric.za), [www.arc.agric.za](http://www.arc.agric.za)