

# An association for the SA fruit juice industry

by Kobie du Plessis, chairperson: SA Fruit Juice Association

It was an important day for the fruit juice industry when a group of individuals, representing the majority of fruit processors, blending and bottling companies, met in Johannesburg on 27 October 2009, and unanimously decided to initiate an association that will represent all the role players in the fruit juice industry.

The first question is probably: Why another association? The best way to answer this, is to start with the consumer.

The industry needs to regulate itself in terms of product definition, product identification, and product content. One of the goals of the association is to ensure the integrity of fruit juice products. To put this into practice, the representatives have already appointed a technical committee of specialists from the industry. They will be tasked to liaise with the department of agriculture, the department of health and the Consumer Council, to put this goal into practice.

## Conforming to standards

A second goal of the South African Fruit Juice Association is to initiate an independent inspection body that can assist the association with compliance of the regulations, which either currently exist, or regulations that will be redefined to conform to new descriptions and standards, initiated by the association and accepted by its members.

This concept is not new and is already functioning in Europe and Australia. It is a fact that there cannot be fair competition and pricing if fruit juice products are not the same

in terms of content, but has the same labelling. The consumer should have the guarantee that the content is described accurately on the label. And that is an important role of the association.

## A mouthpiece for industry

There are important advantages for the members of the association. It will serve as a mouthpiece for its members. The association will strive to protect the consumer and at the same time gain the trust of consumers in fruit juice products.

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The association will have the ability to raise awareness of the consumer about the integrity, content and type of fruit juices that are available on the shelf, and how to distinguish between all the different juices available.

## The way forward

The management committee will communicate the association's vision, goals and actions to as many role players and stakeholders as possible over the next couple of months. The committee is in the process of finalising the constitution, and the association should be officially operational before the end of March 2010. It is the beginning of exciting times in the South African fruit juice industry. **M&J**