

Investing in the future of food and agriculture - farm better, not bigger

By [Mark Hassenkamp](#)

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It is no secret that food security, health and sustainability are concerns around the world. The knock-on effect to this is the need to address hunger, lifestyle diseases and climate change. One of the primary considerations of this discussion is centred around changing how agriculture and farming are being done.



We don't need to farm bigger, we need to farm better and invest further down our value chains. This will open an exciting new scope for future food and agriculture. We need to look at current trends and adapt to them, especially in the case of South Africa and Africa.

Around the world, there is a growing trend towards plant-based food. It is seen as the new hi-tech agritech and is attracting significant investment. Globally there is a spotlight on healthy innovative plant-based products, with more and more people, besides vegans and vegetarians, choosing these products for everyday consumption.

Opportunity for Africa's farmers

This poses an opportunity for farmers in South Africa and Africa, especially those within the avocado and macadamia space. Farmers need to be more efficient about where they grow, what they grow, and how they grow and keep the bigger picture in mind of where food consumption is going. South Africa and Africa need to be able to keep up with global demand

and supply opportunities within the agriculture sector, especially where plant-based food is concerned.

But there are challenges that farmers are experiencing. One of the main challenges has to do with hands-on experience and knowledge. This comes down to the difficulties of the job, the turnover of people and the lack of skills training that is available for this specialised profession. As a farmer, you look to suppliers who will provide you with quality products and support. In the case of avocado's and macadamia nuts you will be looking for robust trees that have good rootstock, will allow you to get maximum yield, use fewer resources and produce fruit in a shorter amount of time.

Supplier support

But the question remains, how is this done? The answer is centred around support. Farmers need support from their suppliers. This comes in the form of sharing knowledge, experience and skills. For example, at Red Sun Hortitech, the relationship with the farmer does not start and end with the farmer buying trees from the nursery. As a supplier of macadamia and avocado trees, we need to know what the conditions are like on the farm, what the expected yield is and what the goals are for the fruit etc. From here, our team can advise them on the type of tree that they are looking for. The service and support go even further. Our team of highly specialised macadamia and avocado tree experts are available to teach the farmer and their team how to care for their trees properly. Sharing knowledge and skills on pruning, what to do in a situation where the soil quality is not optimal, how to replant etc. The sharing of this type of expertise and knowledge is essential to the success of a growing tree and ultimately the fruit yields.

As a business, we realise how important farmers are to sustainability and food security, and as an industry we need to rally behind the farmer and support them where we can. The times are changing, and so is food consumption. South Africa and Africa need to be ready when global opportunities come knocking. This can only be done by equipping farmers with the skills and knowledge required to fulfil demand and supply.

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