



## SA berry industry body relaunched as blueberry export growth soars

Data shows a significant increase in South African blueberry exports for the 2020/2021 season. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic last year, blueberry exports increased by more than 27%, growing from 12,221 tons to 15,636 tons.

"The growth of the South African berry industry over the last five years is one of our country's great agricultural success stories. Exports have grown from just 1,792 in 2015 to 15,636 tons. This growth has supported the rapid increase of employment in the industry from just 1,000 workers in 2014 to more than 8,000 workers in 2019," said Justin Mudge, chairperson of Berries ZA

In recognition of the industry's growing strength on the world stage, it has been decided to relaunch the South African Berry Producers Association (SABPA) as BerriesZA.

Whereas SABPA was primarily a producer organisation, BerriesZA includes role-players along the entire berry value chain through its Joint Marketing Forum. The JMF brings together all these stakeholders to tackle industry problems, and to collaborate to ensure the best possible results for the industry as a whole.

Most importantly, BerriesZA has been mandated to become the enabling commodity organization with a new mission to build the South African berry brand at home and abroad.

As part of the launch of the new entity, BerriesZA will embark on a roadshow throughout the country meeting with member growers and breaking down the details of the new mandate of the organisation. This is to ensure that all stakeholders understand the focus of the organisation,





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and how they can make use of its forums and resources so that they can benefit fully from the remarkable growth the industry is experiencing.

The roadshow will kick-off in the Western Cape on 24 March 2021 at Diamant Estate in Paarl. It will then move to the Graham and Rhona Beck training Centre outside Robertson, Chiltern Farms in Vyeboom, and Outeniqua Boerevereningsaal in George. The roadshow will then move to the northern parts of South Africa in May with stops in Rustenburg, Groblersdal, Nelspruit and Kwazulu Natal.

"We believe the South African berry industry is poised to become a major force in the global market due to the superiority of our fruit compared to berries from other countries. By 2024, we aim to have increased production to 62,000 tons and exports to 44,000 tons. This will translate into 3,000 new jobs for South Africans in the local berry industry.

"To achieve these goals, we will be focusing our efforts in the coming years on gaining access to new markets, primarily in the Far East, where demand for South African berries is high. Our newly acquired membership of FruitSA – the umbrella body for SA fruit – is a step in this direction."

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