



**Media Release**

**For Immediate Release**

**To: All Media**

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**Attention: News Editors / Agricultural writers**

## **AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH COUNCIL SCOOPS THE DFI AWARD FOR RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY**

**Stellenbosch:** The Agricultural Research Council (ARC) is proud to announce that Ms Phyllis Burger and Mr Andries Daniels from ARC Infruitec-Nietvoorbij received the Deciduous Fruit Industry (DFI) merit award for Research and Technology.

The pair were recognised at the virtual 45<sup>th</sup> South African deciduous fruit industry awards ceremony for their exceptional work on 'Sundowner' - the first ever South African bred raisin cultivar to be commercially registered with the registrar of plants of South Africa, as well as their contribution to the South African raisin grape industry.

Over the past three decades, the Dried Fruit Industry and the ARC partnered in a breeding and evaluation research initiative, which invested in a project to develop new raisin grape cultivars in South Africa under local climate conditions. Sundowner came out of this programme.

As with most breeding projects, the development of new cultivars is a time-consuming process starting with the performing of hand pollinations, rescuing the embryos from seedless grapes and growing these embryos into viable plants in tissue culture. These seedlings are then planted out in tunnels at Nietvoorbij to acclimatise and thereafter planted in a seedling block at Nietvoorbij as well. This particular cultivar was selected in 2002 and promoted to semi-commercialisation in 2006. Plant Breeders' Rights were applied for in 2017 and awarded in 2019, a long way from November 1994 when the crosses were made. It was launched earlier this year with the name 'Sundowner' as it depicts the reddish blush on the ripe berries, which resembles the sunset.

Through various research and development programmes, the Agricultural Research Council has been instrumental in improving South Africa's agricultural productivity & global competitiveness while increasing food supply, reducing hunger and improving food and nutrition security.



Caption: Ms Phyllis Burger (Grape Breeder), Prof Bongani Ndimba (Senior Research Manager) and Mr Andries Daniels (Table/Raisin Grape Evaluator) from ARC Infruitec-Nietvoorbij accept the 2020 Deciduous Fruit Industry Award for Research and Technology.

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**Issued by:**

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**Notes to the Editors**

**About the Agricultural Research Council**

The Agricultural Research Council is a premier science institution that conducts research with partners, develops human capital and fosters innovation in support of the agricultural sector. The ARC 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 ARC website at: [www.arc.agric.za](http://www.arc.agric.za). Follow ARC South Africa on social media.