



Media Release

For Immediate Release

To: All Media

Date: 14 October 2024

Attention: News Editors / Agricultural writers

ONE-DAY STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP TO ESTABLISH APPLE ORCHARDS IN RURAL AREAS, INCLUDING KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

The Agricultural Research Council (ARC) will host a one-day stakeholder engagement workshop on October 15, 2024, at the ARC Central Office in Pretoria Hatfield. This workshop will focus on establishing low-chill apple orchards in rural areas, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), Eastern Cape, Free State, Mpumalanga, and Gauteng. Led by the ARC and the Deciduous Fruit Development Chamber of South Africa (DFDC-SA), with support from the Technology and Innovation Agency (TIA), this initiative aims to transform the economic landscape of rural communities by creating sustainable employment and promoting local agricultural development.

With successful trials already conducted in Limpopo, where the unique low-chill apple varieties have thrived despite high summer temperatures, the initiative is now focused on extending the project to KZN. The low-chill apples require fewer chill hours (less than 700) than traditional apple varieties, making them ideal for warmer climates like those in KZN.

The expansion has the potential to drive not only agricultural innovation but also significant economic and employment benefits for the region. As the project scales up in KZN, the demand for skilled and unskilled labour in the agricultural sector is expected to rise. This includes planting, orchard management, harvesting, packaging, and distribution opportunities. Additionally, the project could create new roles in agricultural research, development, and extension services, providing local communities with long-term, sustainable employment opportunities.

Introducing low-chill apple farming in KwaZulu-Natal could also give rise to new agribusinesses, ranging from local nurseries that supply seedlings to processing facilities that convert apples into value-added products like juices and dried fruit. This entire value chain has the potential to enhance the rural economy by creating jobs, improving livelihoods, and contributing to food security in the region.

“The upcoming stakeholder engagement workshop will unite local communities, traditional leadership, government agencies, and industry experts to collaborate on the strategic implementation of the Low-Chill Apple Orchard Project. The main objective is to promote rural economic empowerment through sustainable agriculture while addressing critical factors such as land acquisition, training, and market access for smallholder farmers,” said Dr Rodney Hart Research Team Manager: Post-Harvest & Agro-Processing Technologies (ARC).

Members of the media are invited to attend the workshop as detailed below and are requested to confirm their attendance with Ms. Nomkhosi Ngcobo at 0717345323 or via email at ngcobon01@arc.agric.za.

Venue: ARC-CO, 1134 Park Street, Hatfield, Pretoria

Date: 15th October 2024

Time: 09h00-16h00

Ends

Follow the ARC on social media platforms for more information.

Issued by:

ARC Marketing and Communications

For further information, please contact:

Media Inquiries

Ms. Nomkhosi Ngcobo

Public Relations Officer

Tel: 021 809 3018

Cell: 071 734 5329

E-mail: Ngcobon01@arc.agric.za

Technical Inquiries

Dr Rodney Hart

Research Team Manager: Post-Harvest & Agro-Processing Technologies

Tel: 021 809 3097

Cell: 076 808 1641

Email: HartR@arc.agric.za

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