

Carbon calculator makes footprint on SA fruit industry

The South African fruit and wine industry initiative, [Confronting Climate Change](#) (CCC) have made a free carbon calculator available for the South African fruit industry. It might even help producers save on input costs in the process. This is the message from CCC project manager Anél Blignaut who emphasises that the initiative's free carbon footprint calculator tool meets international PASS2050 standards set by the Carbon Trust, and now has 1,500 users and about 702 businesses with completed assessments.



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“It’s primary producers, farmers, packhouses and wineries that use it. We’ve also got a lot of interest from exporters who will typically canvass their farms to also look at the carbon footprint,” Blignaut tells Fresh Fruit Portal. She adds that there is now more pressure from markets to reduce carbon emissions, and representatives of certification standards like LEAF and some European supermarkets have started asking more questions.

“That’s the pushing factor for this – for the farmer himself, it’s a handy tool other than just a carbon footprint tool. It also helps him to measure his input and, if he uses the tool correctly it can also help him reduce his input costs,” she says.

“You can identify from our reporting where the hotspots in your business are, both in terms of carbon footprint and your input, and you can start focusing your energy on that.”

CCC project manager

Blignaut adds: “On a farm itself it’s often the electricity supply for the pumping of water and also nitrogen for some of your input. For your packhouses it’s once again electricity and also packaging material – those are the hotspots. And for wineries, it’s quite similar.”

She adds the service also allows exporters to gain a full supply chain picture of their carbon footprint through to port in the destination market, provided they fill in all sections on the forms and their grower suppliers also use the calculator.

The project began before Blignaut's involvement in 2008, formed by two fruit industry associations – the Citrus Growers Association of Southern Africa (CGA) and Hortgro, as well as the Wine Industry Network for Expertise and Technology (Winetech). "They came together to discuss how they can address climate change within the fruit and wine sectors, and that culminated in a carbon footprint calculator," she says.

"From there it grew and for the last three years it is those industry bodies as well as the Western Cape Department of Agriculture that fund the project."

"Theoretically we cover the whole country but export fruit and wine are concentrated in the Western Cape. But we do our workshops in Mpumalanga and in the Eastern Cape as well," she says, adding that some vegetable growers also use the tool.

Recommended service providers

While the service is free, the CCC puts the onus on growers to enlist recommended service providers to address their shortcomings. "We might give them some ideas in terms of recommendations of what to look at, but every farm is unique and every packhouse is unique, so it's up to the producer then to start engaging with certain service providers.

"Sometimes it's just efficiency and improving your management style, and sometimes it's technology."

She says the CCC now has four years of good data under its belt, and at workshops, there are generally quality checks and updates in order to compile benchmark reports for different regions and commodities. "All their input would be reflected against the region for that region and commodity – that's how they know whether they're high or low or where they fit in.

"Whenever you start with any farmer they generally don't like to do these kinds of things, but we're seeing a shift.

"In general, climate change has been felt more closely in the last few years, especially in the Western Cape where we've had a very dry year." – [Fresh Fruit Portal](#)

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