

Annual Report 2008/2009

Wine industry

SA Young Wine Show

Agri-Expo hosted the presentation of the 2008 SA Young Wine Show. A total of 2 036 young wines were entered by no less than 179 cellars. The judging took place during the last week of July at Nederburg, where a panel of seven members judged 17 different wine categories.

Boland Cellar of Paarl achieved the award for the best young wine in South Africa with a Merlot. On Thursday 21 Augustus, the sought-after Genl Smuts trophy was awarded to the winner during a luncheon at Oude Libertas in Stellenbosch. Spier wines of Stellenbosch walked away with the Pietman Hugo trophy for obtaining the highest points for five entries.

While Agri-Expo hosts the SA Young Wine Show every alternative year, financial support is given to the regions hosting the show every other year.

Veritas

The Veritas Awards is widely regarded as South Africa's foremost wine competition. It is aimed at rewarding quality and excellence in this highly competitive field and serves as an excellent guide to wine enjoyment for consumers.

This year the judging panel was complemented by a team of international wine experts from diverse backgrounds and each with extensive experience in wine assessment. The presence of these six top international wine connoisseurs, from as far afield as Australia, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Canada and the UK, augmented the credibility of the results.

The judging for the 17th annual Veritas Awards took place at the Nederburg Auction Complex in Paarl from 8 to 12 September. A remarkable 1 753 wines were assessed by 105 distinguished judges that comprised of 15 panels who shared their professional opinions before reaching a consensus to determine the award winning wines. For the seventh year running Shiraz had the most entries with 220 wines, while Sauvignon Blanc followed with 192 entries and Cabernet Sauvignon with 187. The 2008 Veritas double gold and gold winners were announced at a gala dinner sponsored by Agri-Expo at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC) on Saturday 11 October.

Cultivar workshops

To further emphasise the quality of South African wines, Agri-Expo also supports various cultivar workshops. The purpose of these workshops is to promote the quality of different cultivars. This year, Agri-Expo supported Shiraz, Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling and Chardonnay workshops.

Dairy Industry

South African Dairy Championships

The Championships is now well entrenched as a benchmark for South African dairy products with 75% participation from the dairy industry. The main objective of the competition is to improve the quality of dairy products. The results are used by manufacturers to compare their products against the winning products and to make manufacturing changes if necessary – both with the view to improve the quality.

Close to 800 products were entered and judged by 43 dairy experts under the most ideal conditions for the sensory evaluation of dairy products. Agri-Expo has improved the judging conditions to such a degree that it now compares excellently with the major dairy product competitions in the world. However, it remains a challenge to improve it even further by breaking new ground in the training of dairy judges in order to make the results even more credible and helpful to the manufacturers.

The major supermarkets use the results extensively to promote the winning products and in the process are also marketing the Qualité Awards and SA Dairy Champion prizes. The results are published in a variety of consumer and industry publications and it remains a priority to inform the public of the winning products on a wider scale.

Danisco Qualité Dinner

The value of this event is reflected in the willingness of the sponsor, Danisco to contribute marketing funds in the present financially difficult times. It remains the most important annual dairy event, aside from the SA Cheese Festival, and is attended by a broad spectrum of industry players. After being held for many years in the Stellenbosch Town Hall it was moved to the Bloemhof Centre due to it happening on the national Election Day. However, the attendance figure of 430 is a sign of its importance. Danisco expressed its satisfaction with the value which the event holds for them as a supplier to the industry and it is hoped that this partnership will be continued.

An Extra Matured Cheddar from Parmalat SA walked away with the honour of being the Dairy

Product of the Year while the first African exhibitor, Browns Cheese from Kenya, won two Championship titles.

Africa projects

Agri-Expo has become more involved in consultancy and technology transfer projects in Africa during the year. A strategic document prepared for the Mozambique dairy industry has been accepted by its authorities and the proposals are now being implemented. Extensive training has been carried out in Tanzania and Zanzibar where three workshops were held to increase the consumption and use of cheese in the retail and the hospitality sectors. Consultancy visits took place to Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda where requests for further interventions have been received. Three young cheese makers from Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda were selected to study in France on a scholarship of which Agri-Expo is the project manager.

International cheese competitions

The World Cheese Awards took place in Dublin and as Southern Africa consolidator for the competition, Agri-Expo co-ordinated 37 cheese entries for the competition. A number of Gold, Silver and Bronze medals were won by the bigger cheeseries but an encouraging outcome was the number of medals won by smaller artisan cheese makers – a definite sign of improved cheese quality. Agri-Expo's manager: Dairy acted as one of the international judges and also did duty on the supreme jury which selected the World Champion Cheese, live on Irish television.

Retail training

Agri-Expo was contracted to train retail workers in the handling, merchandising and marketing of cheese by the biggest retail organisation in Africa. This training has as its objective to increase the sales of cheese through the proper handling at retail level while informing customers about the uses of cheese in the daily diet. A number of training sessions were held and bigger participation in the retailer's future training programmes is anticipated.

Slow Food Organisation

Agri-Expo's manager: Dairy was invited as a delegate to the third Terra Madre Conference in Turin, Italy to represent the small artisan cheese makers of South Africa. This conference was attended by 7 200 representatives from 137 countries and apart from the many stalls exhibiting agricultural products, also staged numerous breakaway discussion groups on all aspects of sustainable farming.

Advisory and consultancy services

This service continues to increase in importance as no organisation exists to assist smaller cheeseries with problems around quality, supply chain management and range extensions. The Goat's milk Processors Organisation which was formed with the help of Agri-Expo is progressing well and has already tackled projects to improve this dairy sector. Various quality projects were carried out for which Agri-Expo was reimbursed on a professional basis.

Western Cape/Burgundy Cheese making fellowship

Twenty Western Cape cheese makers have now been trained through this programme, which was initiated by Agri-Expo in 2004 and since sponsored by the Department of Agriculture: Western Cape. The success of this programme is visible in the number of new cheeses developed but also through the improved cheese quality that is now available in the market. The role that the Department of Agriculture: Western Cape and its senior management play in supporting and funding this program is what makes it possible. Their vision to support cheese making in the province has strategic value, as more than 50% of all South African cheese is now manufactured in the Western Cape. Agri-Expo has been instrumental in the decision to develop an advanced course, which will in future, be presented during alternative years.

SA Cheese Festival

The 2009 SA Cheese Festival, held during the weekend of 24 – 27 April, once again proved to be one of the country's most prestigious events and is highly respected for its superior culinary presentation and friendly atmosphere. The extraordinary quality of South African cheeses as well as the variety of related products ensures that this festival remains a highlight on all food lovers' calendars.

Market research that was carried out among visitors and exhibitors this year indicates that the Cheese Festival continually succeeds to encourage increased cheese consumption in South Africa.

In an effort to address the traffic problems encountered in the past, Agri-Expo decided to sell all the tickets in advance through Computicket. Because of worldwide economic pressure, it was a challenging step to take. However, loyal supporters of the festival were not influenced by the price increase, or the restriction on ticket sales. Three days were sold out, and the Friday attracted the most visitors ever on a working day. The numbers were limited to 8 000 per day, and 28 905 visitors attended the four-day festival.

The economy also had a negative impact on getting sponsorships. Three big sponsors withdrew,

which necessitated Agri-Expo to impose efficient management of expenses and negotiations with service providers in order to balance the books. Agri-Expo wishes to thank all sponsors and service providers for the way in which they co-operated to ensure the success of the 2009 SA Cheese Festival.

Judges of EXSA (Exhibition and Event Association of Southern Africa) judged the stands on the Friday. The following winners were announced during an exhibitors breakfast on the Saturday:

Portobello	-	best boutique cheese
Checkers	-	best national cheese
Mannamakers	-	best related product
Marc's Mediterranean Cuisine	-	best in Gourmet Lane
Boschendal	-	best wine stand
Fleckvieh	-	best in Milk factory

This year, the University of Stellenbosch carried out a market research among visitors and exhibitors. It was delightful to find that 59% of visitors attend the festival regularly, while 88.2% indicated that they plan to attend the festival in 2010. Most of the respondents indicated that they tasted new cheeses, discovered new cheese makers, and gathered information to ensure that they will, in future, purchase a wider variety of cheese.

Equestrian

Sibaya Sales

The 2008 Sibaya Sales had 292 yearlings catalogued, with 201 horses on the mixed sale. Once again nearly 500 horses had to move through the stables. The whole event in Durban is totally time driven and Agri-Expo is only allowed on the Sibaya Car park on the Saturday – and then, 4 days later (Tuesday) the first horses arrive! Fencing to go up, walking ring to be built, 350 stables to be built, bedding put in and the grooms quarters have to be built. We house 160 grooms on site. Space is very tight and it becomes a jig saw puzzle to fit in the cabins, showers and toilets in a small area next to the stables - all the time remembering aesthetics as we are right on the Front Car Park of the Sibaya Casino! The Yearling Sales were run in the Imbizo Conference Centre of the Casino. The aggregate was R15,675,000.00 which is 16% down on the previous year's figure. The Mixed Sale was down on aggregate, but up slightly on the average price. It would appear that the Horse in Training have built up into a rather strong part of the sale.

Lippizanners at GrandWest

Agri-Expo has been contracted by GrandWest to manage the logistics for the presentation of the Lippizaner Stallion Shows in the Grand Arena. We were also responsible for designing and building the Dressage Arena inside this remarkable venue.

For the first time heavy machinery were allowed inside the arena. Clay and sawdust were carefully mixed and used to create the perfect surface. We received many compliments from the riders, saying that was the best surface they ever performed on.

The Grand Arena's professional team handled the lighting and contributed to the fact that the performances were a remarkable experience. All performances were very well attended by the public, and it was an honour for Agri-Expo to be involved with the performances of these world-renowned stallions.

Annual Equestrian Show

Unfortunately, due to the very heavy rains experienced during winter, the newly levelled arenas were not ready when it was time to run the Annual Equestrian event, so we had to cancel the event for 2009. We do, however, plan to run a bumper show for 2010.

GrandWest Yearling Sales

The Cape Sales were moved back to the traditional time (first weekend in February) running together with the J&B Met. Although it is considered to be a bit early in the year for the yearlings it is still better than running them after the National Sales and in the Cape Winter.

With the economy right down, expectations were not that high! Only 210 Yearlings were lotted compared to the 253 yearlings the year before. Average price was just under 10% down but still thought to be pretty good for the current economy. The mare sale was also run two days later at the marquee in the Sales yard, but the average price was down 23%.

Logistics at GrandWest is slightly easier than at Sibaya, because of more space, but it still has very tight time constraints as the Casino has to give up a very big part of their car park and they keep the time to the absolute minimum. They expect the car park to be absolutely clean and no sign of the stables or horses after only 5 days!

Member shows

Financial support from Agri-Expo made it possible for twenty four member shows to present their annual agricultural shows during the course of this year.

Eight national, 22 provincial, 34 regional, 3 inter-regional and 35 club championships were presented under the auspices of Agri-Expo. In addition to these championships, several poultry shows, upcoming farmer shows and youth shows were also presented at member shows under the auspices of Agri-Expo.

The annual meeting of member shows took place on 30 October at Sandringham. Agri-Expo organises this meeting to address problems encountered at shows, co-ordinate show dates and build on Agri-Expo's positive relations with member shows. A positive spirit prevails among the agricultural societies, and the way in which representatives of various societies exchange ideas, enhances the show industry. This occasion is well attended every year, because it is here that people work together to make good shows even better.

During this meeting, the project co-ordinator emphasised the following:

agricultural societies should regard youth shows as a way to add value to their shows;

agricultural societies should promote transformation in the show industry;

Agri-Expo is always available in a consulting capacity for agricultural societies and encourages the shows to contact Agri-Expo whenever necessary.

Not many people realise the impact of the current economic climate on the show industry. In these difficult times, agricultural societies should therefore stand together, support one another and seize opportunities.

Poultry

Young Bird Show

During the past 5 years, this show extended over two days. However, due to several reasons, it was changed to a one-day show in 2009, and from feedback received, it seems to be a more suitable arrangement.

Despite the fact that many members experienced a very bad breeding season, 29 exhibitors

entered 592 yearlings at the show. The judges agreed that, in general, the quality and standard of the entries were extremely high.

Western Cape Club Show

Despite price increases, high fuel prices, long distances that had to be covered and the current economic climate, 47 exhibitors responded with 1 529 entries.

Apart from the members living relatively close to Worcester, entries were also received from as far as Port Elizabeth, Mossel Bay and Oudtshoorn.

As with the Young Bird Show, the entries were of exceptional quality. One judge commented that the quality of some breeds were so evenly matched that it was difficult to distinguish between first and second places. Indeed a feather in the cap of all exhibitors!

The public supported this show in great numbers, and the Club received many compliments for a well organised and successful show.

Youth

Agricultural schools

The Project co-ordinator paid several visits to the three agricultural schools within Agri-Expo's service area. Every year, Agri-Expo rewards learners from all grades at Augsberg Agricultural Gymnasium, Boland Agricultural High School and Oakdale Agricultural High School at their prize-giving functions.

Agri-Expo is aware of the financial pressure that academic institutions experience nowadays, and therefore extends a helping hand to these institutions. Loans are made available which can be used to create or upgrade computer rooms, hostel facilities, sport centres and housing for educators.

Youth shows

Agri-Expo is the main sponsor of the Western Cape Agricultural Youth Society. With the Society's support, six regional shows were organised, with 523 learners participating.

Winelands (74), Eden (79), Outeniqua (38), Cederberg (181), Overberg (88) and Swartland (63).

The following disciplines are involved at the various Youth shows:

Winelands: Beef cattle, Dairy cattle, Milk goats, Boer goats, Wool sheep and Mutton sheep

Eden: Beef cattle, Dairy cattle, Wool sheep and Mutton sheep

Outeniqua: Beef cattle and Dairy cattle

Cederberg: Milk goats, Boer goats, Angora goats, Wool sheep, Mutton sheep and Home industry

Overberg: Beef cattle, Dairy cattle, Wool sheep and Mutton sheep

Swartland: Beef cattle, Wool sheep and Mutton sheep

Following the regional shows, the Western Cape championships are presented where one provincial team is chosen to participate in the National championships. The National Championships were held in Williston during September. Three times in succession, the Western Cape came first in the championships and won 18 gold, 11 silver and 9 bronze medals.

General

Cape Women's Agricultural Association (WAA)

This year, Agri-Expo granted financial assistance and support to the Cape WAA. During August, the Marketing Manager represented the Society at its 79th Annual Congress in Jeffreys Bay, with the theme, "Women of Tomorrow".

The Society also contributes financially towards Circle Tygerberg's annual show, and we made our trophies available to be awarded in the different categories. The Marketing Manager also attended the opening of 42nd Circle Tygerberg conference in March.

The Cape WAA deserves praise for the outreach projects in which they are involved. They helped under-privileged young rugby players to participate in the Craven and academic rugby week; raised funds and renovated a cottage for 16 girls at a youth centre in Port Elizabeth; took care of street children and tried to re-unite them with their parents; offered support to municipalities in maintaining museums, and assisted rural towns to beautify their pavements and gardens.

Royal Agricultural Society of the Commonwealth (RASC)

The Society's Board sent a delegation, consisting of the President, Vice President and the Chief Executive Officer to attend the 23rd Commonwealth Agricultural Congress in Christchurch, New Zealand. The Society's Project Co-ordinator was awarded a bursary to also attend the congress. This bursary is intended for the "next generation" of the RASC. Potential candidates must be nominated by an agricultural society and must be younger than 30 years.

The theme for this year's congress was "The Challenges of Change". This informative four-day

congress, attended by more than 150 delegates of various agricultural societies within the Commonwealth, addressed several relevant aspects. Feedback about the congress was given to different interest groups at various opportunities. During the year the RASC's Honorary Press Secretary as well as the Press Secretary visited the Society.

Agricultural Writers Society

Agri-Expo's membership of the Agricultural Writers Society forms part of its mission to promote the image of agriculture. Every year, Agri-Expo hosts the Agricultural Writers Society's national photo competition and provides administrative assistance. This year, there were several entries of exceptional high standard which challenged the judges. The winning photo was entered by John Norval with the theme "Resounding hooves".

EXSA Conference

The EXSA Conference was held with the theme WIDING HORIZONS. It was the first time that the conference was held outside the Gauteng area. The actual conference ran from the Lord Charles Hotel in Somerset West. The entertainment was designed to show off our beautiful City and Agri-Expo was tasked with running the Welcome Party – uniquely set up on Bikini Beach in Gordon's Bay.

Conservation

During the past few years, Agri-Expo supported two projects managed by the WWF (World Wildlife Fund for Nature). Due to the fact that it is mainly agricultural methods that threaten the natural habitat of the Riverine Rabbit, the Society has considered this conservation project as priority for several years now.

Agri-Expo also supports the Karoo Eco-schools project. From a young age, learners are made aware of conservation and the role of existing agricultural practices in the destruction or conservation of the environment. The funds made available by the Society were also used to develop a board game that portrays the various processes. Learners loved the game, and it proved to be extremely successful.

Feedback and personal visits by project managers on a quarterly basis keep us informed of the progress. This year, the Society also participated in the WWF's Earth Hour initiative, which emphasised the importance of saving electricity. The Chief Executive Officer represented the Society at the Waterfront on 28 March, on which occasion the lights on Table Mountain were switched off.

Staff

After a taxing first six months of the financial year, the staff had the privilege to attend a team-building session at the Cape Town International Convention Centre during December. Dr Ben Zander, world renowned conductor and motivational speaker, led the session with the theme “The art of possibility”. Such events are definitely worthwhile and an enriching experience for staff members.

A great honour was bestowed on Mr Kobus Mulder, Manager: Dairy this year as he was appointed Dairy Newsmaker of the Year by the Milk Producers Organisation (MPO). This award was handed to him during an ostentatious event in Port Elizabeth. The Society is indeed proud of Mr Mulder’s contribution to the dairy industry in South Africa.

The Project Co-ordinator, Mr Breyton Milford, has been nominated by the RASC to visit Papua New Guinea during October 2009, together with 11 other members of the “Next Generation” group. The purpose of this visit is to support new and small farmers in remote areas, pass on information and offer training. This is an exceptional opportunity created by the Commonwealth, and Agri-Expo is proud that Mr Milford is part of such an exquisite group of young people.

Investments

This year will be remembered as one of the worst in terms of economic collapse and the global financial crisis. Experienced investors have never experienced such markets, and it has been compared with the global depression of the 1930s.

Locally, pessimism about the markets dominated the news and economic growth slowed down significantly. The questions posed by investors are: What now? How do we react to this market situation?

Fact remains, no one knows for sure what is going to happen in the short term. Agri-Expo is a long-term investor and believes that a well-diversified portfolio will limit its risks. The Society follows a balanced investment plan, including the full spectrum of portfolios (shares, stocks, cash and property) in both local and international markets. The focus is on real growth in the long term, and growth of investments is monitored continually.

Trust in the fund managers and a conservative investment plan came to the benefit of the Society during these difficult times. A positive yield was achieved from all investments, which appropriated the Society’s business activities.