



MOOIGEZICHT ESTATES

New Varieties
New Packaging
New Opportunities

Newsletter 2
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Laetitia Rossouw joins Mooigezicht

After three years in the UK fruit industry, Laetitia's thorough understanding of receiver requirements is adding value to the production and packaging process.



Above: Laetitia Rossouw in the packhouse with packhouse supervisor Johannes Hendriks

Laetitia started at Mooigezicht as an internal auditor on 3 January at the start of the harvest. She currently visits the various packhouses twice daily setting and monitoring standards to include the industry specifications and the particular requirements of foreign receivers.

There is a purposeful energy around Laetitia as she strides in for the interview. Her infectious smile and immediately apparent people skills are a good foil for the businesslike working ensemble with company cap and clipboard. Although her name is of French origin and is familiar to South Africans, when her British fruit industry colleagues battled with this, her response was always; "Laetitia, like the plum!", a reference to the plum variety with the same name. What a great way to be remembered!

"Laetitia, like the plum"

Although she grew up on the family grape farm, when she was at university Laetitia had no idea of what she wanted to do for a career and had not considered the fruit industry. "When I was in my final year of my B. Comm. Management Science at Stellenbosch University, I heard that there was a job available in Paarl with Colors Fruit Exports. I applied and was lucky enough to land the post and started with them in January 2008 directly after completing my studies. After a few months they needed someone to quality control at their UK offices and asked me if I would be interested. Very soon after that I found myself working with South African fruit at the Colors offices in Cambridgeshire! This job also had a commercial aspect as part of my responsibility was as a commercial assistant for a large supermarket account. Although this was physically demanding work with long hours, it was also the most incredible learning curve."

"I left the snow for the sunshine of home"

A few months later a good opportunity arose with Capespan at Kent in the UK and Laetitia's application for the post was successful. "I moved to Capespan in May 2009 as it offered me more scope. Here I was doing quality control on fruit from all over the world and this included fruit that I had not worked with before such as melons, lychees and chestnuts so this gave me a broader exposure. Although I worked with this range of fruit, I specialised in topfruit. I was working in the cold storage facility as well as in the packhouse where fruit was repackaged and I was responsible for setting packing standards and quality control. In 2010 I was appointed assistant account manager for a large supermarket account. I enjoyed this challenge as I could take control of the account and run with it. Although this was an office

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Harvest Progress

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job, I still remained involved on the technical side in the storage facility and enjoyed the varied nature of the daily tasks." Laetitia added that she was the only woman on a team of men and often had to stand her ground under less than genteel circumstances. As a petite young woman working abroad this is indeed a valid issue and speaks of her strength of character.

"The job was great but I resigned at the end of 2010 as I had set myself a limit of three years in England. The experience was invaluable but I sorely wanted to return to my roots. In the beginning there were days when I opened the cartons of South African fruit with a heavy heart and when I left the UK for home, I left the snow for the sunshine of home."



Starlight (a seedless variety)



Midnight Beauty

The harvest started on 20 December (week 51) and as we near the end of January, we have completed the harvest on Alpha Red, Prime Seedless, Sugraone and Starlight. This has been the first year that our Alpha Red vines are in full bearing and this variety had an exceptional crop with outstanding berry size and yield. Our Prime Seedless yielded a normal harvest but the Sugraone is down 27% against our original estimates.

Despite this, by the end of week 3, Mooigezicht harvest totals were 11% up against the same time last year. Week 3 has been one of our best harvest weeks ever as we packed 97 000 cartons in one week! This is a mammoth task with harvesting 6 days of the week and our workforce currently stands at 1341.

We are currently harvesting Flame Seedless, Desert Seedless, Evening Pearl, Regal, Midnight Beauty and Victoria. During the next two weeks (5 and 6) we expect to start harvesting Autumn Royal, Sundance, Crimson Seedless and Scarlotta. At this point in the harvest the rising stars for future production expansion look set to be Starlight, Midnight Beauty and Autumn Royal.

The timing of the harvest is the same as 2010 and in general the season's yield is on the light side. As many of the varieties are ripening simultaneously, it looks likely that the season will be short without much fruit left in the later harvesting weeks.

The industry average in the Hex is showing an 11% drop in production against 2010 so in comparison Mooigezicht is achieving well with the early varieties. For several years Mooigezicht has been focussing on the establishment and production of early varieties and the realization of this is apparent from our share of the Hex Valley's total production. In Week 1 Mooigezicht production represented 16% of the Hex total and in weeks 2 and 3 Mooigezicht production was 12.5% of the Hex total as many producers only start harvesting towards the end of January.

In closing I should stress that we are currently making every effort to harvest, package and ship our quality fruit to our consumers. Look out for our crisp and tasty grapes on their way to you!

Kind Regards,

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Sundance