



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **HONEYBUSH SET TO BECOME A KEY INDIGENOUS INDUSTRY IN SA**

**GEORGE, 8 March 2010.** *The Western Cape Provincial Government has committed itself to increasing its support of the Honeybush tea industry, recognising honeybush as one of the unique, indigenous products from South Africa that has the potential to reach niche markets around the world.* This announcement was made by Mr Gerrit van Rensburg, Minister of Agriculture in the Western Cape, at a honeybush industry seminar in George today. He emphasised the value of “*local things that distant rivals cannot match*” and pointed out that despite globalisation, the demand for regionally unique products is growing.

More than 70 guests, represented by Honeybush Tea producers, government officials, processors, industry role players, researchers and students gathered to celebrate the kick-off of the industry’s new strategic plan that was developed by the South African Honeybush Tea Association (SAHTA). The cornerstones of the strategic plan are to improve tea quality, cultivation and breeding material, explains Marlise Joubert, SAHTA chairperson. At the same time the industry has big plans to expand marketing locally and around the globe. Currently, the honeybush industry is worth nearly R11 million per year and is set to grow over the next decade as more farmers begin to realise the potential of this endemic fynbos crop, and more health-conscious consumers around the world discover this sweet, African herbal tea.

Dr Hannes de Lange, widely recognised as the “father of honeybush” looked back to the early pioneering days of the industry, while agricultural economist Johan Carstens outlined the current and future challenges to make the honeybush industry sustainable and truly competitive. Stuart Symington, CEO of the Fresh Produce Export Forum, spelled out the challenges and opportunities of global marketing, but added that the uniqueness of honeybush presented enormous marketing potential. “Don’t forget local consumers,” Symington advised the industry. “Many South Africans are yet to discover honeybush and there is a huge market to unlock right here.”

Dr Johan van Zyl of the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) gave an overview of the significant contribution that this organisation has made to honeybush research over the last few years. ARC research focused on helping farmers on the production side, but also looked at the composition and quality of the product itself. Much of the research was done in collaboration with the Medical Research Council. “There are still many research challenges ahead, but we have a firm foundation of world-class research in South Africa that have begun to document and verify the health properties of honeybush, including its ability to prevent or slow down cancer,” Dr Van Zyl explained.

The honeybush industry also strives towards equal entry and participation and recognises the key role of small scale farmers from previously disadvantaged communities. Over the last ten years, the ARC has implemented community support projects in Fiemersheim, Haarlem, Karwyderskraal and Suurbraak. A new project in Genadendal kicks off in 2010. Four members of the Ericaville community, honeybush farmers themselves, entertained the guests with two honeybush tea songs.

Photo: Me Marlise Joubert, Chairman SAHTA, say thank you to Min Gerrit van Rensburg for his commitment to the Honeybush Tea Association.

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