QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

SAPO

AUG 2025

SAPO FROM A STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE

During the last two years SAPO went through a restructuring process to stay relevant and economically viable. This process concluded with the phasing out of Tygerhoek on the 30th of June this year. Moving forward our focus would be to comb through all our nucleus, foundation and motherblocks to ensure that we deliver gold status plant material to all our customers.

On the 10th of June the DPA (Deciduous Fruit Plant Improvement Association) held a strategic workshop to identify focus areas to address to within the plant certification scheme as well as the bigger plant improvement environment.

The following key DPA objectives were formulated:

- Optimise the virus testing and other testing and create or get access to a virus elimination facility – preferably in SA.
- Create different levels / status of certification
- Determine the economic impact of different viruses
- Well trained and independent inspection service
- Training and communications for Growers
- Funding model & cost-effective testing

As a participating plant improvement organisation SAPO support the certification scheme and the objectives of the DPA. We would also combine them with that of SAPO to contribute to better and improved material to industry.

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Jacques Jordaan

During the last year the DPA upped their game and changed their virus analysis method from the traditional Elisa tests to that of PCR (polymerase chain reaction) testing. PCR is a specific method for detecting a known virus's presence through that virus's genetic material (DNA or RNA). Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) is a further step-up by sequencing an entire genome, allowing for more detailed pathogen identification, tracking of strains, and understanding of the host-pathogen relationship. However, transitioning from Elisa to PCR to NGS the tests and analysis become more complex and costly.

Going into the new season it is SAPO's intention to:

- Work with other organisations to improve virus testing methodology
- Determine the status of all plant material in the nucleus tunnels with PCR and combine it with Next Generation Sequencing, thereby also contribution to the knowledge base of other virus stains and pathogens that might contain a future risk to our industry
- Roll out this methodology (within financial constraints) to foundation and mother blocks
- Participate with local and international organisations to develop and optimise virus elimination procedure and tissue culture protocols

VIRUS TESTING SEASON APPROACHES

As the season for virus testing nears, SAPO welcomes growers and industry partners to take advantage of our comprehensive ELISA and PCR testing services for pome and stone fruit. Our laboratory ensures the highest standards of diagnostic accuracy, backed by the expertise of skilled pathologists and virologists. In addition to fruit trees, the upcoming season includes testing for Grapevine Fanleaf Virus (GFLV), reinforcing our commitment to maintaining orchard and vineyard health through reliable, timely diagnostics.

Plan your sampling and submissions in accordance with the schedule below to make the most of these essential services. Refer to the schedule below for testing windows and sampling guidelines:

	GRAPEVINE		STONE FRUIT	POME FRUIT
Testing season	ELISA: 1 March - 31 August	ELISA: 1 November – 31 December 1 June – 31 August	ELISA: 1 October – 15 December PCR: 1 October – 15 February	ELISA: 1 October – 15 December PCR: 1 October – 15 February
Type of samples	Mature petioles without leaves or wooded/dormant winter vines	Young, soft developing leaves or wooded/dormant winter vines	Young, soft, actively growing leaves with petioles evenly spread over the tree.	Young, soft, actively growing leaves with petioles evenly spread over the tree.
Sampling	Pooling 4-12 vines: Collect 2 petioles per vine. Pooling 1-3 vines: Collect 5 petioles per vine.	Pooling 4-12 vines: Collect 2 leaves per vine. Pooling 1-3 vines: Collect 5 leaves per vine	Pooling 3-10 trees: Collect 3-2 leaves per tree. Pooling 1-2 trees: Collect 10-5 leaves per tree (Avoid collecting >20 leaves + petioles per sample)	Pooling 3-10 trees: Collect 3-2 leaves per tree. Pooling 1-2 trees: Collect 10-5 leaves per tree (Avoid collecting >20 leaves + petioles per sample)
Virus Abbreviations	Grapevine leafroll virus type 1+3 (GLRaV1+3) Grapevine leafroll virus type 2 (GLRaV2) Grapevine leafroll virus type 3 (GLRaV3) Grapevine virus A (GVA) Grapevine virus B (GVB) Grapevine Fleck Virus (GFkV)	Grapevine fanleaf virus (GFLV)	Apple chlorotic leafspot virus (ACLSV) Apple mosaic virus (ApMV) Prunus necrotic ringspot virus (PNRSV) Plum viroid 1 (PVd-I) Prune dwarf virus (PDV)	Apple chlorotic leafspot virus (ACLSV) Apple mosaic virus (ApMV) Apple stemgrooving virus (ASGV) Apple stempitting virus (ASPV)

**Read in conjunction with the DPA and VIA guidelines*
***Ensure sampling during the cooler period of the day. Avoid sampling at extremely warm temperatures.*
****After sampling and labelling, store samples in a cooler bag with ice packs (4°C). Avoid temperature fluctuations.*
*****Submit samples within 72 hours after sampling*

CELEBRATING WOMEN'S MONTH

At SAPO, we are proud to celebrate the incredible women who contribute to the strength, knowledge, and success of our organisation. From research and pathology to operations and industry support, their expertise and leadership are integral to driving growth and innovation in plant improvement.

This Women's Month, we honour their dedication and the invaluable role they play in shaping both SAPO and the broader agricultural industry. We are inspired by their commitment and thank them for the difference they make every day.

GRAPEVINE PLANT MATERIAL ORDERS AND DISTRIBUTION SUMMARY 2025

The annual grapevine plant material orders commenced in June 2025. SAPO always strive to supply the best possible quality plant material within the certification scheme.

The season started of with orders from our prominent raisin grape varieties such as, Merbein Seedless followed by Selma Pete. Both Merbein and Selma Pete obtained W2 certification status across all registered blocks. Thus, complying with the highest level of certification according to the PlantSA Scheme. We received well over two million orders of budwood material for Selma Pete, followed by Merbein Seedless just under half a million.

We also received sufficient plant material orders for varieties such as Flame Seedless, Sultanina, Do vine and Autumn King with the average ranging between thirty-eight and forty thousand respectively. All our blocks planted across different climatic and production areas are tested each year for leaf roll for compliance with scheme requirements set out by PlantSA. This ensure that our plant material is tested virus free and true to type.

In conclusion, with the season coming to an end for nursery orders we are already planning for the registration of additional bud wood blocks. Varieties such as Flame Seedless, Sun Muscat, Do vine, Diamond Muscat as well as Selma Pete and Merbein Seedless will be some of the additional bud wood blocks.

Merbein Seedless

Selma Pete

CLOSING OF TYGERHOEK FOUNDATION PLANT IMPROVEMENT FACILITY

After 18 years of dedicated service to the South African stone and pome fruit industries, SAPO announces the formal closure of the Tygerhoek Foundation Plant Improvement Facility.

Established in 2006, Tygerhoek was envisioned as a specialised hub for producing high-quality, clean plant material. Over the years, more than 3,000 varieties and selections were planted, multiplied, and maintained at the facility. These included advanced selections and commercial cultivars, which served as the foundation for budwood, cuttings, and apple rootstock layer production for nurseries across the country.

The decision to locate the facility at Tygerhoek was strategic. The site's geographic isolation from commercial orchards reduced the risk of disease transmission, while its deep, well-drained soils proved ideal for rootstock development, especially for producing strong, healthy apple rootstock layers.

However, as part of SAPO's restructuring process. It is with sincere sentiment that we completed the phase-out of the Tygerhoek facility on the 30th of June 2025. Production activities have ceased, and the premises will no longer be used for plant material propagation.

Looking ahead

Although we bid farewell to Tygerhoek, the legacy of its contribution to plant improvement will continue through the newly established foundation sites, all part of striving towards better quality plant material and the use of advanced propagation technologies. We remain committed to delivering the same high standards of plant health, genetic integrity, and industry support that growers have come to rely on.

Thank you to all who contributed to the Tygerhoek journey — researchers, nursery partners, farm workers, and industry stakeholders. Your support was instrumental in making this foundation a cornerstone of plant improvement in South Africa.

CELEBRATING ELSA'S IP LAW SUCCESS!

Elsa Muller, Variety Development Manager and Grower Support at SAPO, has successfully completed Stellenbosch University's Intellectual Property Law programme, gaining expertise in Copyright, Trade Mark, Patent and Design Law, Competition Law, and Digital IP. Her achievement highlights her dedication to advancing knowledge and practical skills in protecting and managing intellectual property.

WORKING TOWARDS INSPECTOR ACCREDITATION

We're proud of our team members who are progressing through the PlantSA Inspector Course. Rudi Vos and Khaya Ngoshe recently completed a refresher, while Wendy Bailey and Craig are actively working towards full accreditation.

Their dedication reflects our ongoing commitment to improvement and to strengthening the SA Plant Certification Scheme.

Photo *from left to right:*
Craig Pietersen, Wendy Bailey, Khaya Ngoshe and Rudi Vos

MEET THE TEAM: Wendy Bailey

Wendy is a dedicated member of the SAPO team with a strong background in plant science and a passion for finding innovative solutions. With both a BSc Agric. in Plant Pathology and Agronomy and an MSc in Plant Pathology from Stellenbosch University, she combines academic depth with hands-on industry experience.

Her career has taken her into international blueberry production and sustainable chemistry, giving her a broad perspective that she now applies across laboratory, preharvest, and postharvest work. Known for her attention to detail and commitment to continuous improvement, Wendy thrives on challenges and is driven to deliver practical, effective outcomes.

You can reach Wendy at wendy@saplant.co.za.

ORDER PLANT MATERIAL

REMEMBER: Orders for stone fruit summer plant material can be placed from October

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