



STRONG DEMAND REFLECTS CONFIDENCE IN CERTIFIED PLANT MATERIAL

The 2025/2026 season is shaping up to be a positive one for the deciduous fruit industry, with overall plant material sales projected to finish approximately 3% above forecast. This continued growth reflects strong confidence from growers in certified planting material and ongoing investment in orchard renewal and expansion.

Demand for pome fruit budwood increased compared to the previous year, indicating sustained interest in commercially important cultivars across production regions. These trends highlight growers' focus on varieties that deliver reliable performance, market acceptance and long-term value.

Stone fruit demand from nurseries was lower overall than the previous season, although certain categories continued to attract healthy interest. Such shifts are a normal part of orchard replacement cycles, varietal transitions and changing market dynamics within the industry.

Encouraging progress was also seen in grapevine certification activities, with increased sales of grafting material and successful nursery registrations strengthening the availability of high-quality planting stock. Ongoing plant health monitoring and testing continue to support confidence in certified material across the sector.

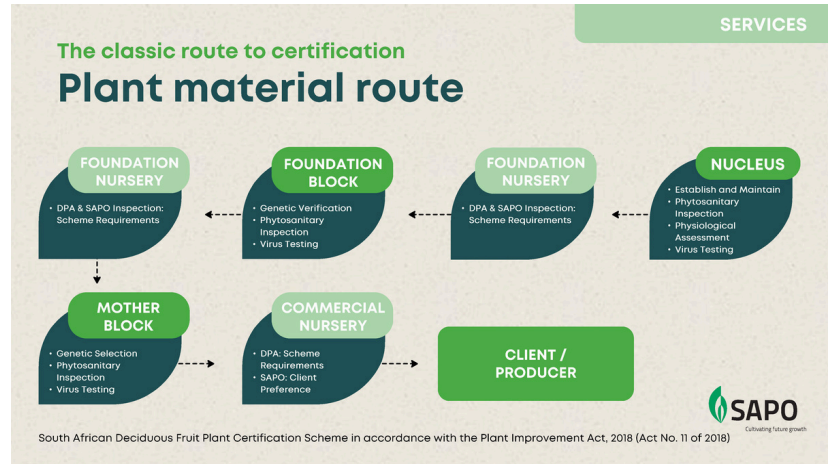
Behind these trends is a carefully managed certification pathway – often referred to as the plant material route – which ensures that growers receive healthy, true-to-type planting material. In South Africa, this process forms part of the national plant improvement system. The route begins with carefully selected source plants that undergo rigorous testing and monitoring. Plant material then progresses through specialised nurseries and mother blocks, with inspections and health verification at each stage, before being released to commercial nurseries and ultimately supplied to producers.



This structured system plays a critical role in supporting the industry by:

- Reducing the risk of pests and diseases
- Ensuring varietal authenticity and performance
- Supporting orchard productivity and longevity
- Strengthening confidence in South African fruit locally and internationally

Ultimately, the plant material route protects not only individual farms, but also the sustainability and reputation of the entire deciduous fruit sector.



IN THE FIELD



Over the last couple of months our team has been conducting **plant material selection of Gala mutants** across Witzenberg Valley, Villiersdorp, Greyton, Ceres and the Koue Bokkeveld. Through careful evaluation of growth performance and colour development, and strict adherence to our selection protocols, we consistently identify superior plant material. This disciplined, field-based approach supports long-term orchard performance and delivers sustainable value to our growers. We thank our team for their commitment and consistency throughout the season.

Green propagation is a plant propagation method where young, actively growing plant material (green cuttings) is used instead of dormant wood. In grapevines, this means:

- Cuttings are taken from fresh, green shoots in spring or early summer.
- They are propagated under controlled nursery conditions
- Roots develop quickly, resulting in vigorous, uniform plants



Guided by our commitment to quality and integrity, SAPO conducted thorough **true-to-type grapevine inspections** across nurseries since the start of the year. A big thank you to our dedicated team whose hard work ensures growers receive high-quality plant material every time.

Our rebranded fleet reflects the evolution of SAPO and our ongoing commitment to strengthening South Africa's deciduous fruit industry. Give us a wave when you see us on the road!



2025–2026 FIELD DAYS & EVENTS

BIGBUCKS GALA / FLASH GALA™ PACKHOUSE EXHIBITIONS

In early February, the BigBucks Gala / Flash Gala™ Packhouse Exhibition sessions were successfully hosted in Grabouw, Ceres, and the Langkloof. These events brought together industry stakeholders to review and discuss critical technical specifications and packhouse requirements, underscoring the collective commitment to maintaining consistent standards and ensuring quality across all production areas.



Grabouw



Ceres



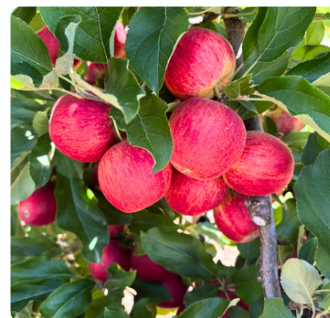
Langkloof

VISIT BY ZOUK bvba - Gala One

SAPO recently had the pleasure of hosting Johan Nicolai and Laura Nicolai, licensees of the ZOUK bvba variety Gala One, during their visit to South Africa.

As the local agent, SAPO coordinated a comprehensive programme, including visits to Cape Sweet Nursery, an orchard visit with Johan and Fourie Zulch in Wakkerstroom, attendance at the Gala One field day on 29 January 2026 in Ceres, and meetings with Tru-Cape Fruit Marketing.

Gala One, a mutant of Gala Royal Beaut, offers notable commercial advantages. The variety is harvested 5–7 days earlier than standard Gala strains, delivers comparable yields, and demonstrates excellent storage potential of up to 12 months, making it a strong addition to the South African apple portfolio.



VIDEO: [Message from Laura Nicolai](#) >>

Other field days and events

The past few months have been filled with insightful field days, bringing together growers, nurseries, packhouses, and industry specialists to share knowledge and observe the latest cultivar developments in South Africa.

The **Ruby Sun Field Day, hosted by Culdevco on 9 December 2025**, provided an important platform for discussion around plant material quality and virus status. SAPO shared updates on the South African Plant Improvement Scheme requirements and the measures in place to ensure the highest quality material. Attendees gained valuable insight into how tree performance is influenced more by stress factors than by virus status alone, highlighting the importance of careful orchard management.

Just two weeks later, on **23 December 2025, the Queen Elsa Field Day** brought stakeholders together for another engaging exchange. We thank Charl Stander for facilitating the event and Willie and Mariska Vorster for their exceptional hospitality. Participants were able to observe orchard performance firsthand and discuss the promising potential of this cultivar. The enthusiasm around Queen Elsa was palpable, with many looking forward to its future impact in the industry.

The new year began with the **Roselyn Field Day at Jakkalsvlei on 13 January 2026**, which focused on both plant material and fruit quality, as well as the critical factors required to grow productive trees. Producers, nurseries, and packhouses were particularly impressed with how the selection's potential could be realised when correct orchard management practices are applied, ensuring optimal productivity from year five to six. Contact Culdevco for the technical report: mish@culdevco.co.za

On **22 January 2026**, Fine Farms in Grabouw hosted the **Gorgeous Gala Field Day**. Around 30 industry peers joined to experience this striking Gala mutant, noted for its deep pink colouring and crisp, refreshing taste. The day offered in depth orchard observations, lively technical discussions, and meaningful conversations about performance and future potential in the heart of apple country.

These field days have been invaluable for fostering collaboration, sharing technical insights, and showcasing the potential of emerging cultivars. We thank all participants and partners for their contributions and continued commitment to strengthening plant quality and orchard performance across the industry.



SAPO BOARD MEETING 25 FEBRUARY 2026

The SAPO board met to review key strategies and plans to continue supporting South Africa's fruit industry with high-quality plant material and innovative solutions. We thank our board members for their guidance, commitment, and valuable contributions in shaping the future of the industry.

Photo, from left to right – Back: Anton Rabe, Louis van Zyl, Andre Smit. Front: Jacques Jordaan, Paul Cluver (Chairman), Bennie van Rensburg.



MEET THE TEAM:

Annamarie van As

Annamarie has been a highly dedicated and disciplined SAPO professional since 2011, bringing 15 years of experience and a proven track record of delivering consistent results. She combines passion with structure, driving operational excellence while building meaningful, long-term relationships across the value chain. She thrives on collaboration with nurseries, exporters, IP owners, and growers, with a strong emphasis on stakeholder satisfaction and proactive support. Known for her exceptional time management, solution-oriented mindset, and strong work ethic, she adds measurable value to every initiative she undertakes. Annamarie takes pride in contributing to the continued success and reputation of the SAPO team.



Jeniley Anthony

Jeniley began her career at SAPO in 2016 as a young professional, quickly demonstrating dedication and growth. With a National Diploma in Legal Secretarial Studies Jeniley brings several years of legal experience to her role, managing Plant Breeders' Rights, variety listings, and royalty contractual obligations. . Recently, she furthered her expertise by completing an Introduction to Intellectual Property Law course at Stellenbosch University. Internally motivated and driven, she continually seeks opportunities for personal and professional development. Jeniley is known for her strong time management, problem-solving skills, and solid work ethic.

SUBMIT SAMPLES FOR ELISA TESTING

- **Grapevine ELISA testing** season is starting in March 2026. Email wendy@saplant.co.za or brandon@saplant.co.za to submit samples to our lab.

ORDER PLANT MATERIAL

- **Pome** – Autumn Budding orders closes end of May 2026.
- **Grapes** – Green-propagated grapevine rootstocks available. Early ordering is recommended to secure availability.



Elsa Muller

Variety Development Manager and Grower Support
elsa@saplant.co.za



Marthinus Gresse

Production Manager Tree Fruit
gressem@saplant.co.za



Nadine Steenkamp

Grapevine Sales Coordinator
nadine@saplant.co.za



Annamarie van As

Pome & Stone Fruit Sales Coordinator
annamarie@saplant.co.za

