

FRESH NOTES

A TECHNICAL UPDATE PUBLISHED BY HORTGRO SCIENCE



Fresh Notes feedback of a Packhouse Action Group (PAG) meeting held in July 2025

Contact details are listed at the bottom of the Fresh Notes.

Hortgro Website (Packhouse Action Group and Pome/Stone Protocols):
Contact Elise-Marie Steenkamp

PAG DOWNLOADS 1 Mar – 25 July (PAG Website and Pome & Stone Protocols):

• 'Quo Vadis' – Long-Term CA storage regimes of Cripps' Pink apples and fruit quality	2181
• PAG Water Project phase 4	2 069
• Jaco Visagie – Trends in Container Technology and Supply	2 049
• Johan Strydom – Container Checklist	1 976
• CA Manual revised	1 867
• PAG Water Project Benchmark Result – Phase 5	1 773
• Fresh Notes 194 – PAG Feedback (March 3)	1 503

A new PAG website is in the testing phase and is expected to be operational by mid-August.

Update on Logistics Chain Efficiencies

Contact: Jacques du Preez

The total volumes of all fruit passed for export in SA ports have increased by 11% year to date. A corresponding increase of 10% was recorded at the Cape Town port. The latter increase was due to exporters trying to beat the expected USA tariff increases. Staff morale and incentives, together with improved maintenance and availability of equipment, also played a role. Productivity in terms of gross container moves per hour (GCH) had increased from 12 – 14 GCH to 17 – 18 GCH. The first batch of new Rubber Tyre Gantries (RTGs) is expected to be commissioned by the end of August. Further batches of 9 and 10 RTGs are scheduled for delivery later this year.

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Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG)

Contact: Nitasha Baijnath-Pillay

An interview with Freshfel Europe was held in June as part of the Hortgro Footprint Webinar Series on sustainability-related topics. This webinar provides valuable information on the implications of the EU PPWR and what we are currently doing in SA. The webinar is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BKQHughocC4>. All were encouraged to watch the webinar.

The Hortgro Sustainability Advisory Committee (met on 12 June 2025) supported the inclusion of Pome and Stone in the ESG & Sustainability WG, along with relevant information for the pome PAG to be extracted accordingly. Subsequently, the Packhouse ESG & Sustainability Work Group meeting was held on 30 July.

- A list of all ESG retailer requirements is being drawn up. This will assist with streamlining ESG reporting processes.
- The new members were welcomed, and a call for more members/nominations will be made (to include Pome and Stone).
- SIZA presented a brief overview of the **SIZA Environmental Standard** regarding waste and materials most applicable to packhouses. SIZA also highlighted some **compliance performance statistics** relating to packhouses, and the most common non-compliance is record-keeping. Some packhouses do not separate their waste on-site for due diligence purposes, irrespective of whether they are being collected for recycling.
- It was noted that of the 104 Pome and Stone packhouses, 102 received Platinum status in Quarter 4 of 2024, and 2 received a Gold status for compliance. This is a great accomplishment for our sector. SIZA will consolidate the information for pome and stone compliance regarding recycled waste versus disposed waste and present it at the next meeting.
- SIZA also presented an overview of the **SIZATrack360 Digital Record Keeping Programme** and indicated that SIZA runs workshops and seminars on record keeping, as compliance is vital for market access. This forum will be used to reach out to all Pome and Stone packhouses.
- SIZA will present the integration of CCC and carbon footprinting (there are new service providers added to the list of reputable service providers who calculate carbon footprinting) into the SIZA Environmental Standard at the next meeting.
- An update of the EU PPWR was presented, as well as Hortgro's possible research ideas. A request was made to submit food-grade packaging suppliers for potential partnership in trialling new recyclable packaging. Many have indicated that this avenue will greatly benefit them. RecyCLASS EU requirements will be helpful to use in the interim, to understand the specifics of recyclable materials accepted in the EU, whilst the EU regulations, specifications and exemptions are being finalised.

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- A request on current packhouse activities/interventions on waste, water, electricity, etc., should be shared so that we can identify gaps and possible projects for replication or expansions where there is a need.
- The next webinar will be on carbon footprinting and how to become a Carbon Hero. As such, there was a request for Blue North to present on carbon footprinting, their SHERPA sustainability tool (for a pome or stone business as an example) and the CCC Project at our next ESG meeting (date TBC).

Packhouse Water and Energy Management Projects

Contact: Hugo Kriel/Eddie Vienings

Blue North energy project phase 4 report can be viewed at:

https://www.hortgro.co.za/download/2024_pag-energy-project_phase-4_report_final-2/?tmstv=1754981204

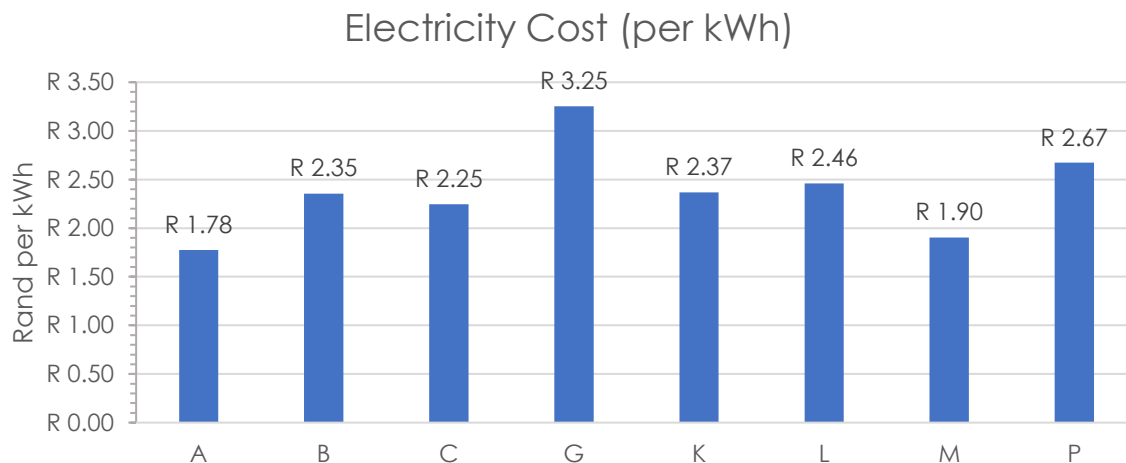


Figure 1: Electricity cost for each packhouse



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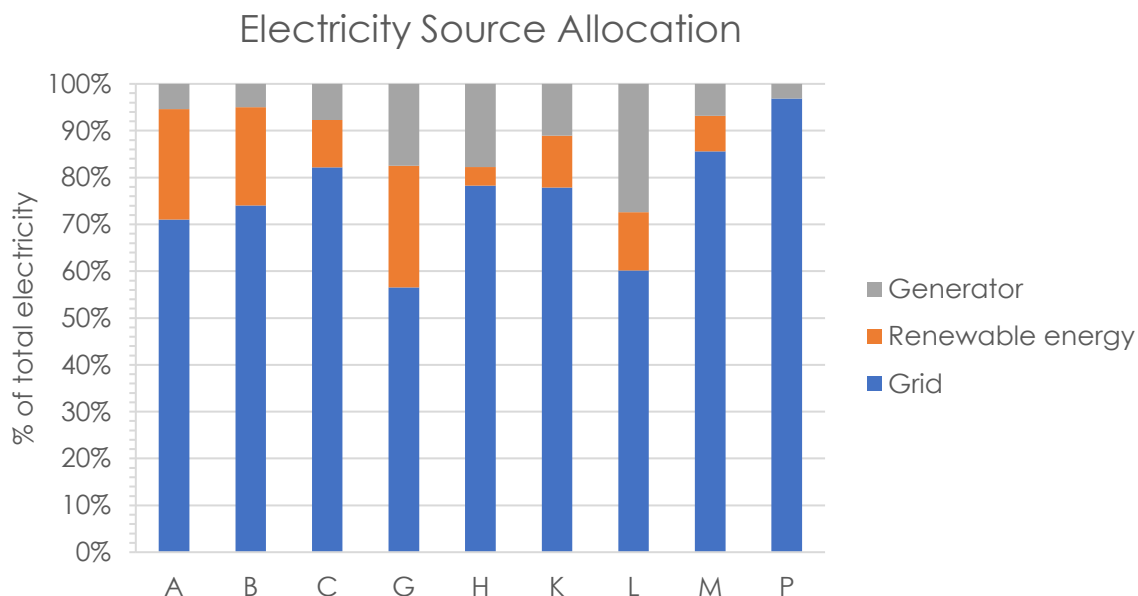


Figure 2: Electricity sources per packhouse

Eskom Electricity Tariffs Contact: Koos Bouwer/Nitasha Baijnath-Pillay

Eskom electricity tariffs were increased in April. The original increase for the Ruraflex tariff was announced to be 12,7%, whereas a recent analysis on a pome farm has shown an average cost increase of 24% – 25%. This was due to a fixed tariff cost increase of 12.3% and a variable (per kWh) cost increase of 27.5% in the low tariff season (September to May). A new legacy charge (per kVA) and a generator capacity charge (per kWh) were added to be implemented over the next 3 years. The time of use periods have changed on 1 April, 1 June, and 1 September. It is thus essential for packhouses and farms to reschedule their electricity consumption to off-peak times in the respective seasons. These cost increases will impact financial budgets and make solar PV implementation more feasible.

Solar installation will not only improve one's carbon footprint but also save on electricity costs and can possibly generate carbon credits. A carbon net-zero plan will, however, discount carbon offsets. A carbon credit webinar will be arranged in due course.

Ethyl Formate Fumigation Presentation

An ethyl formate delivery system using carbon dioxide was presented to the PAG. The process is still subject to registration. See the link below.



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<https://www.hortgro.co.za/download/ethyl-formate-fumigation-efume-delivery-system/?tmstv=1754981200>

Maximise cleaning efficiency and reduce food safety risks with Nanobubbles

A Teams meeting was recently held for PAG members and technical personnel by the suppliers of this new technology. Nanobubbles are generated from the atmosphere to form either oxygen or ozone nanobubbles and can be used independently or combined. They are reported to reduce fungal and bacterial load on product surfaces and process water. This new technology may be helpful in light of the reduction in chemical options. This technology has not been used on pome fruit in South Africa, though trials were conducted at an apple packhouse in Washington State. It has been tested on citrus in SA and has also been used pre-harvest to control fungal infection in table grapes and post-harvest in cherries in the USA. Since nanobubbles have anti-fouling properties, they are also used to clean irrigation lines and control algae in water storage reservoirs.

For further information, see:

- Nanobubble postharvest food processing and food safety

https://www.hortgro.co.za/wp-content/uploads/docs/dlm_uploads/2025/08/Nanobubble-postharvest-food-processing-and-food-safety-1.pdf

- Nanobubble case study in apple flume water

https://www.hortgro.co.za/wp-content/uploads/docs/dlm_uploads/2025/08/Nanobubble-case-study-in-apple-flume-water.pdf

- Oxygen nanobubbles for water purification and soil cultivation

https://www.hortgro.co.za/wp-content/uploads/docs/dlm_uploads/2025/08/Oxygen-nanobubbles-for-water-purification-and-soil-cultivation.pdf

Market Access Feedback

Contact : Jacques du Preez / Lindi Benic

Mexico: Volumes were down. It helped that the same inspector came out.

Taiwan: There was great difficulty in obtaining the required producer information regarding the codling moth interception.

Thailand: Volumes are slowly gaining momentum. A market access visit is planned for September / October. Pear access is the next goal.

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Philippines: The Philippines will be included in the market access visit. Apples & Pears are next up in line to obtain access.

PAG Disciplines and Coordinators

Please get in touch with the relevant person below if you have any queries regarding the PAG.

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