

**Address by the Western Cape Provincial Minister of Agriculture,
Dr Ivan Meyer, at the Xth International Symposium on Irrigation
of Horticultural Crops on 30 January 2023 at the STIAS
conference centre, Marais Street, Stellenbosch**

Prof Luca Corelli Grappadelli: Chair of the ISHS Division Temperate Fruits
and ISHS representative at the Symposium

Prof Bartolomeo Dichio: Chair of the ISHS Working Group Irrigation and
Water Relations

Prof Sylvester Mpandeli: Executive Manager: Water Utilisation in
Agriculture at the Water Research Commission of South Africa

Prof Elias Fereres: emeritus professor in the School of Agricultural and
Forestry Engineering, University of Córdoba, Spain

Prof Samuel Ortega-Farias: professor at the Agronomy School, Faculty of
Agricultural Sciences, University of Talca, Chile

Representatives of our sponsors

- 1 Good morning and welcome to the Western Cape.

- 2 This is the first time that the International Symposium on Irrigation of Horticultural Crops has been held in South Africa and Africa.

- 3 Water scarcity due to increasing and competing demands and climate change is one of the most pressing challenges globally and in South Africa, especially in the Western Cape Province.

- 4 Irrigated horticulture substantially contributes to agricultural GDP, export revenue, jobs and food /nutritional security. It needs to grow to meet the demand for healthy food and employment.

- 5 Of the major field crops, about 20% of maize, 15% of soybean, 34% of sugarcane and approximately half of the wheat production is under irrigation.

6 Similarly, fruit and vegetable production relies heavily on irrigation.

In the Western Cape, based on rainfall variation, between 200 000-250 000 ha are under Irrigation which is approximately 26% of arable land.

7 Innovative research and technology development has led to more efficient and sustainable use of water resources in horticultural industries.

8 But much more needs to be done to increase efficiencies and product quality through more precise and data-driven water application to crops and to better manage horticultural crops for water deficit, drought and heat stress conditions.

9 New technologies hold enormous potential for this sector, such as remote sensing, including satellite imagery and unmanned aerial

vehicles (UAVs). The Western Cape agricultural sector is embracing these tools.

10 Irrigation systems are also undergoing rapid development, for example, developing next-generation low-flow and ultra-low-flow drip irrigation systems.

11 The Western Cape Department of Agriculture is proud to be the primary host institution of the Xth International Symposium on Irrigation of Horticultural Crops.

12 As I conclude, let me say we warmly welcome the 153 delegates from 18 countries to the Symposium, Stellenbosch and the Western Cape.

13 Thank you.
