

TopFruit Celebrates 40 Years of Fruit Innovation and Growth

Simondium, Western Cape, South Africa

TopFruit, a global leader in intellectual property (IP) management and trademark development, proudly commemorates its four-decade journey as a pioneering force in the South African and international fruit industry. This momentous milestone marks TopFruit's commitment to innovation, excellence, building lifelong relationships and reshaping the fruit industry landscape.

TopFruit's origins

Since its establishment in 1983, TopFruit has revolutionised the fruit industry with its introduction of new varieties of pome fruit, stone fruit, table grapes, berries, kiwifruit, and nuts. In the process, the company has established itself as the custodian of various fruit varieties, bringing innovation and value to breeders, growers, and consumers alike. With a dedicated team and a diverse portfolio of fruit offerings, TopFruit continues to be a leading force in the market.

The remarkable journey of TopFruit began with the visionary minds of the late Dr Jim Button, Roy Jeffery, and Richard Hill. These three fruit industry pioneers recognised the need for improved fruit varieties and took the bold step of creating a private company to bring exceptional international fruit varieties to South Africa. From the outset, TopFruit has been dedicated to introducing and testing fruit varieties from around the world. Building upon its earlier successes, TopFruit expanded beyond apples, diversifying into pears, stone fruit, table grapes, and more recently also into berries, kiwifruit, and nuts. By carefully assessing their adaptability and commercial potential, TopFruit ensures that only the finest varieties are released into the industry. This commitment to excellence has not only added value for breeders but also provided growers with a wide range of options to enhance their revenue and farming practices.



Dr. Jim Button



Richard Hill



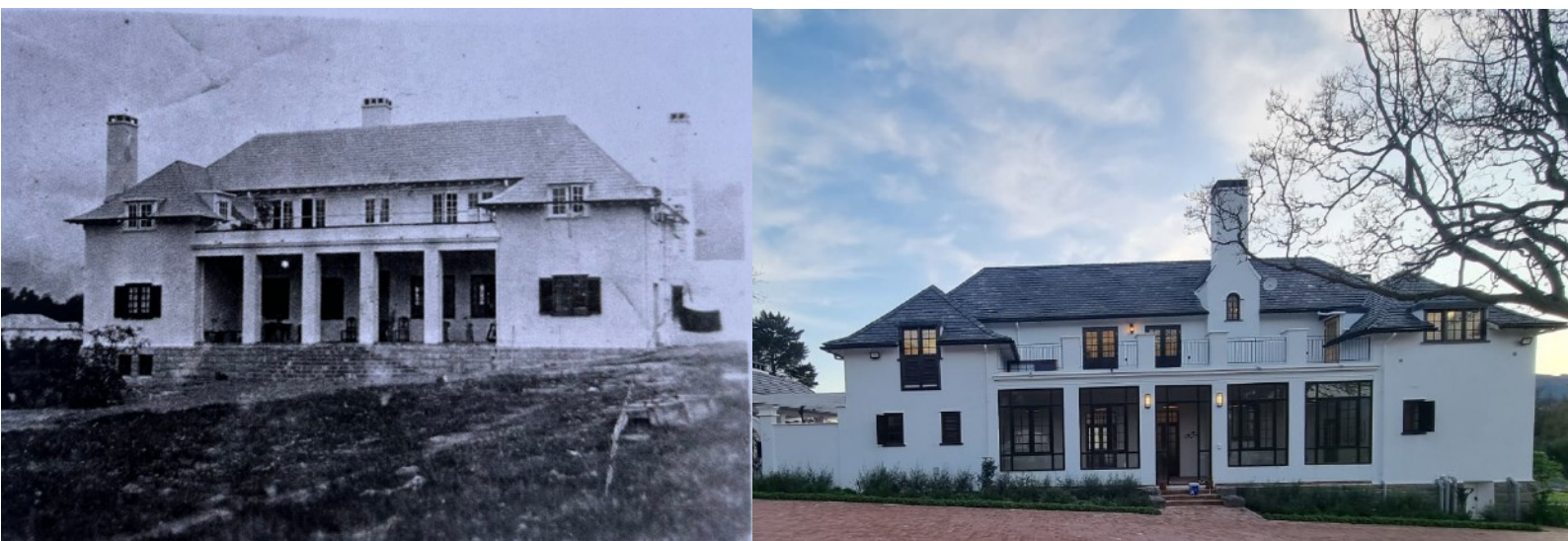
Roy Jeffery

The company recognised the significant value of intellectual property in fruit marketing and introduced a sustainable model by charging royalties on tree production and trademarks, also ensuring a balance between expanding production volumes, and maintaining high-quality standards. Their decision was met with resistance, as it challenged the traditional model of coordinating fruit production through industry organisations. Despite initial resistance to this revolutionary new approach to the introduction of new varieties, this strategic shift allowed TopFruit to establish brands that elevated fruits from simply being commodities to offering consumers a fruit brand they could recognise and trust with consistent and enjoyable eating experiences. The company's determination paid off and established itself as the pioneer of a new era in the South African and international fruit industry.

A meeting of the fruit industry pioneers – TopFruit’s connection with Harry Pickstone

As recent pioneers in the South African fruit industry, it seems fitting that TopFruit has a close industry and geographical connection to the fruit tree nursery, HEV Pickstone and Brother Nursery Ltd headed up by HEV ‘Harry’ Pickstone, who was seen as one of the founders of the South African fruit industry. Pickstone was British and was in his twenties when he arrived in South Africa in 1892. The Victorian entrepreneurial spirit and knowledge that he gained working in the Californian fruit industry provided him with the knowledge and drive to succeed and he was the first person to import 7 000 commercial trees from California into South Africa. When these imported trees did not survive, he decided to start his own nursery, HEV Pickstone and Brother Nursery Ltd. Pickstone was also the founding manager of the Rhodes Fruit farms owned by Cecil John Rhodes and was largely responsible for founding South Africa’s export deciduous fruit industry. In 2004, TopFruit undertook to manage Raku Raku, for Wendy Pickstone, a Japanese mutation of Fuji imported by the Pickstone family business. Wendy Pickstone had continued the nursery business in her grandfather Harry Pickstone’s footsteps.

When TopFruit’s growing operations made it necessary for the company to look for larger premises, in 2022, the company acquired the spacious nearby historic farmhouse, Rust and Vreugd, which amazingly happened to be none other than the home of Horace Pickstone, one of Harry’s 7 brothers and one of two who had joined him in the Cape. The farmhouse was originally named “The New House” and was located next to the family nursery. Horace had no children and lived in the house from 1916 until he passed in 1949. His widow lived in the house until her passing in 1965 whereupon the house was auctioned and bought by HEV Pickstone and Brother Nursery Ltd.



TopFruit's business focus

At the heart of TopFruit's operations is its plant material management services. In compliance with government regulations, TopFruit manages the importation of varieties for evaluation and supports the evaluation and establishment of locally developed/discovered varieties and mutations. The company also manages import permits and oversees the importation and quarantine of plant material, ensuring compliance with regulations and safeguarding the integrity of the industry.

Following the release from quarantine, TopFruit's Foundation Nursery and its various business units play a crucial role in the initial multiplication and comprehensive evaluation of plant material. TopFruit establishes and maintains Nucleus, Foundation and Mother Blocks for the multiplication of plant material after variety listing to ensure the availability of high-quality trees for growers.

TopFruit's commitment to breeder relations is evident through its management of variety listings, plant breeder rights, and trademark applications in relevant Southern African countries.

To maintain the highest standards, TopFruit takes pride in its quality control measures. The company monitors and manages quality standards for its fruit brands in Southern Africa, ensuring that consumers receive fruit of superior quality and taste. With a focus on marketing and merchandising, TopFruit develops annual programs to promote and grow the market share of its fruit brands in retail environments within Southern Africa. The company's expertise in marketing strategies and brand development creates awareness and demand for its commercialised fruit brands, enhancing the success of growers and marketers alike.

TopFruit's achievements over four decades

One of TopFruit's most well-known and successfully managed brands, is the Pink Lady® apple, which originates from the Cripps Pink variety. The quality standards that these apples must adhere to before it can be branded as a Pink Lady® apple, guarantees consumers a superior fruit. This pioneering concept of attaching trademarks to varieties quickly became the industry norm, with TopFruit playing a vital role in popularising this approach in South Africa. Today Pink Lady® is TopFruit's flagship brand, and the company manages the Pink Lady® brand in South Africa, Africa,



Over 40 years of existence, TopFruit has taken on the management of a wide range of varieties and mutations. Below is a timeline of some of these varieties, highlighting the company's milestone achievements.

1983 – 1992

- 1984 - Panorama Golden (South African apple mutation)
- 1988 - Bradford Varieties (stone fruit program)
- 1988 - Founding Member of AIGN (Associated International Group of Nurseries)
- 1992 - Cripps Red/Sundowner® (today sold under the JOYA® trademark) (apple)
- 1992 - Cripps Pink/ Pink Lady® (apple)

1993 - 2002

- 1997 - Ralli Seedless (table grape)
- 1998 - Brookfield (apple)
- 1999 - Bradford Genetics (stone fruit program)
- 2001 - Early Sweet™ (table grape)
- 2001 - Louterwater Granny Smith (South African apple mutation)

2003 - 2012

- 2004 - KIKU® (apple)
- 2004 - Jazz™ & Envy™ (apples)
- 2004 - Raku Raku - Wendy Pickstone (Japanese Fuji apple mutation)
- 2006 - Rosy Glow / Pink Lady® (improved apple mutation)
- 2007 - Lady in Red / Pink Lady® (improved apple mutation)
- 2009 - ARRA™ Varieties (table grape program)
- 2010 - New Zealand Plant & Food Research Institute (blueberry program)
- 2011 - AC Fruit Breeding Program (stone fruit program)

2013 - 2023

- 2014 - Provedo Varieties (stone fruit program)
- 2016 - Cosmic Crisp (apple)
- 2017 - Global Plant Genetics, University of Georgia, USA (blueberry program)
- 2017 - Dori™ (kiwifruit)
- 2018 - Inored (apple)
- 2019 - Bingo Gala (South African apple mutation)
- 2019 - RDS / JOYA® (improved apple mutation)
- 2019 - IQ Berries Program (berry program)
- 2020 - Hot Climate Program (apple program)
- 2020 - Yanoon BioTech Breeding program (kiwifruit program)
- 2022 - MCT 1 (macadamia nut)
- 2022 - Soluna™ (apple)
- 2023 - Ruby Matilda/Pink Lady® (improved apple mutation)

Affiliated companies established by TopFruit

- 2020 - TopFruit International
- 2020 - KIWIKO BV (Joint Venture to manage kiwifruit varieties globally)
- 2021 - The Kiwi Connection (A company focusing on the commercialisation of kiwifruit in Southern Africa)
- 2022 - TopNut International (Joint Venture to manage nut varieties globally)
- 2022 - TopStar (Joint Venture to manage the Soluna™ apple globally)

The Vision of TopFruit's Shareholders

Throughout the years, TopFruit's growth and innovation have been shaped by the company's shareholders, who had the vision and foresight to establish and nurture this company. Currently, TopFruit's shareholder companies are: TopFruit Investment Trust owned by Roy Jeffery, who as one of the founders of TopFruit has remained actively involved, Dutoit Investment (Pty) Ltd; Pedal Trading 203 (Pty) Ltd and Rosenhof Nursery (Pty) Ltd. The TopFruit directors are: Gys du Toit (Chairman); Roy Jeffery; Robert Graaff; Rob Meihuizen, Etienne Duvenage and Clause Lippert.

Friendships, relationship-building, and sustainability are keys to TopFruit's success.

TopFruit's success is not measured merely by its size, but rather by its unwavering commitment to relationship-building with all stakeholders. The company's goal is to add value to all stakeholders by achieving quality and customer satisfaction whilst maintaining valuable relationships and friendships nurtured through many years of working together.

Over the years, the company has grown from a team of two individuals to a workforce of almost 50, comprising highly skilled professionals in the office and nursery. The company has also invested significantly in technical expertise and the team's passion, dedication, expertise, and years of experience in the fruit industry continuously supports growers in producing superior crops and maximizing profitability. The team at TopFruit share the common bond of a love for the land, and the business of farming. Their years of experience, personal understanding of the environment and conditions, and the respect they have earned within the industry come together in the services and products available to all clients of TopFruit.

Reflecting on the company's achievements, Managing Director Rob Meihuizen emphasises the importance of strategic partnerships and valuable friendships. TopFruit has collaborated with local experts in various regions, combining their knowledge with TopFruit's expertise in IP management. Nurturing valuable relationships built over many years is of the utmost importance to TopFruit.

With a diverse portfolio that includes pome fruit (apples, pears), stone fruit (peaches, nectarines, plums, apricots and cherries), table grapes, berries, and the recent addition of kiwifruit and nuts, TopFruit continues to lead the way in fruit production. The company's expansion into these new divisions reflects its dedication to staying at the forefront of industry trends and meeting the evolving demands of consumers.

TopFruit is committed to acting as a socially responsible company within the global community and continuously evaluates its business practices using the principle of sustainability. At the heart of sustainability lies the desire to maintain a balance between the economic, environmental, and social needs of our world today without compromising the opportunities of future generations.

Looking ahead while celebrating and giving thanks for 40 years of success

As TopFruit celebrates its 40th anniversary, the company looks forward to an exciting future. TopFruit remains focused on growth and innovation at the forefront of fruit industry developments, expanding its global presence, and introducing new and exciting fruit varieties and brands to consumers worldwide. When considering this milestone, the company's leadership express their gratitude to employees, breeders, growers, marketers, retailers and consumers for their ongoing support. TopFruit remains dedicated to advancing the fruit industry, fostering long-term partnerships and friendships, and adding value to the lives of all stakeholders. - Join TopFruit in celebrating 40 years of excellence, innovation, and the joy of delicious fruit!

TopFruit, **International leaders in cultivar management.**