South Africa

To become better acquainted with the Protea farmers and their farms, my wife and I travelled to South Africa where the CEO of Fynbloem, Mr. Boyers and his business partner Mr. Larsen were so kind to offer us a behind-the-scenes look on the Bloemenkraal Landgoed (estate) in Riviermond, South Africa.

Fynbloem farm gives Protea sector an enormous boost

Last year we were offered a new book for review. This was a publication that I was really glad to read as ‘Protea Cultivation: Flora Concept to Cultivation’ by Gerhard Malan is the indispensable guide for every Protea professional.

The main commercial Protea products, including variety descriptions and photos, can be found in Dr. Malan’s book. A technical review of the book and contact details to purchase a copy from the author can be found on the website of the International Protea Association (www.ipa-protea.org).

Working at Stellenbosch University where he also received his PhD – Malan is a professional researcher with many years of practical experience in Protea cultivation.

by Jaap N. Kras

Fynbloem provides flowers with a feel good factor.
Protea sales

Many Proteas (Source: PPSA production and export estimate 2013) are sold as bouquets, mixed or mono bouquets.

In 2012, South African growers exported nearly 3 million stems with Protea ‘Barbigeria / Magnifica’ (400,000 stems), Protea ‘Pink fox’ (250,000 stems), Protea ‘Corsetta’ (275,000 stems) and Protea ‘Sylvia’ (260,000 stems) being the most popular varieties.

In 2013, Protea exports increased to 3.5 million stems and ‘Barbigeria / Magnifica’ (550,000 sold stems) performed best. Meanwhile, the exports of Leucadendron varieties such as ‘Safari Sunset’, Rosette and ‘Discodor’ accounted for 6 million stems in 2012.

In 2013 the expected growth for Leucadendron was 6.6 million stems.

The production of Leucadendron is also expanding.

Hera type cultivar ‘Eucasion’/Tundus the pack with 6.3 million stems sold in 2012 to 8.1 million stems in 2013.

Other important products are cut foliage (11 million stems) and ornamental grasses (2.2 million stems).

Production facilities

Protea is the popular name for more than 1400 species from 60 genera which grow in South Africa, Australia and South America. The most important cultivars can be found in the Protea Cultivation: Proteaceae, Leucadendron and Leucospermum families.

Over the past few years, an increasing number of professional growers are planting hybrid species and varieties to enable profitable farming, relying on high yield, uniform production and excellent vase life. The newly build FynBloom Protea farm deserves special mention.

Their owners, Mr. Beyers and Mr. Larsen, met in 2009 and decided to set up FynBloom with one very ambitious goal: to build the most successful production facility for Proteas in South Africa.

"In order to achieve this," explained Mr. Beyers, "we concentrated the production, harvest and packaging activities in a single location which specialists in export ready products." He added, "Besides good production facilities, maintenance of temperature control is vital when dealing with Proteas. That's why we decided to build a state-of-the-art cold storage facility and packing area and offices which were completed in July of last year.”

Soil preparations

A sunny, well-drained site is essential for growing good crops of Proteas. We carefully prepared the...
soil before planting the cuttings —taken from our own mother plants— to reduce the risk of diseases,” outlined Mr. Beyers. The Riveronderend river provides fresh water for irrigation. “We have an irrigation permit for 90 ha of land. We opted for a drip irrigation system, and deep ripping of the soil was necessary to install the drainage system. Rock and excavation debris were used as construction material,” explained Mr. Beyers.

**Export markets**

FynBloom aims for a year-round supply of Proteas, which are sold on the domestic market where they enjoy good popularity as a cut flower. The majority of the flowers, however, are destined for export markets of the European Union. So far, exports to the USA and Japan is challenging as the flowers are considered a risk pathway for the spread of pests. When it comes to transportation, customers of FynBloom can rest assured they are getting the very best services by air or sea. The company is leading the way with temperature-controlled reefer solutions, whilst ensuring there is no sacrifice when it comes to the quality of the flowers. Thanks to companies such as FynBloom, the Protea industry is modernising, and production is increasingly reliable and professional. It is anticipated that modern companies of this type will give the Protea sector an enormous boost.