

# New SA-grown almond brand to stimulate growth of local industry

ZZZ subsidiary Cape Almonds has launched 50 tonnes of locally grown almonds through South Africa's national fresh produce markets under the Al Monde brand name.



Source: Supplied

Cape Almonds has formed licence agreements with more than 50 Western Cape farmers to grow and produce the almonds, helping to create employment and upskill the farmers in making a locally-grown crop commercially viable. The Al Monde almonds are raw (not roasted, salted or treated in any way) and are available in packs at the National Fresh Produce Markets in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town.

## Independence Almonds

Almonds need a Mediterranean-type climate to flourish, and the Western Cape is therefore a suitable growing environment. The Al Monde growers are mostly farming the Independence almond varietal, which is self-pollinating.

Most commercial almond cultivars rely upon natural pollinators, by bees, to ensure successful cross-pollination and fertilization. The Independence cultivar, however, is the first self-compatible and self-fertile almond cultivar developed by the Californian breeder, Zaiger's Inc. Genetics.



Source: Supplied

In 2016, ZZZ subsidiary Cape Almonds was granted the exclusive master-licence to cultivate 'Independence Almonds' in Southern Africa from Zaiger's Inc. Genetics and Zaiger SA. Since then, Cape Almonds, in partnership with around 50 sub-licencee growers, has planted approximately 700ha of 'Independence' almond trees throughout the Western Cape Province.

## New South African Almond Association

Dan Coetzee, CEO of Cape Almonds, says that people are becoming increasingly aware of the need to support local farmers and they also want to know where their food comes from.

"So, knowing they are buying a product that is fresh – and not six to 12 months old as it is when it arrives from California – will be a major factor in their purchasing decision. Until now, very few almonds sold in South Africa are grown locally. The local product will therefore be fresher with a much lower carbon footprint and will be supporting local."

Coetzee is also head of marketing of the newly formed South African Almond Association. "Farmers and consumers alike in this country need to know that the industry is committed to long-term sustainability. The Almond Association will not only be a hub of information but also a body of mutually interested people who will collectively ensure that the local industry thrives over time.

"Together with ZZZ, we began researching and creating the Al Monde product around four years ago because we believe the future is in unlocking the natural goodness available right here in South Africa and to delivering an excellent natural product to local people."



Source: Supplied

Coetzee says the launch of local almonds in South Africa comes at a critical time. “Due to the oversupply of almonds in the US, South Africa is getting flooded with cheap poor-quality stock. As an association, our main aim is to protect producers and the almond market as a whole and to ensure South Africans consumers get better quality local almonds at competitive prices.”

According to Cape Almonds, there is good news in the offing for SMEs and the SA economy too. "As the local almond industry matures, it will help support and create new industries from the bi-products of raw almonds which are not fit for packaging - those that are chipped or broken in half will be sold to third parties. In time, this will develop into a burgeoning bi-product industry producing almond flour and almond milk," the company said.



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## Complex crop

Coetzee says that almond farming is more complex than might be appreciated. “Soil preparation is critical and the ZZ2 and Cape Almond agronomists are working hard to give the growers the intelligence and help they need to produce the most abundant and healthy harvest.

“Our production guide is a fully comprehensive ‘manual’ giving the producers everything they need to know - from the arduous soil preparation process, which includes analyses and consultation from soil scientists, through to soil mapping and modification, irrigation and draining, timing, grafting, harvesting, and post-harvest handling. It is an exceptionally technical and involved process and budding almond producers need to perfect the initial planting and soil preparation to ensure a healthy yield every year.”

Fresher and more affordable than their imported counterparts, Al Monde almonds are packed in unique boxes (sizes 250g, 500g, and 1kg packs) as well as in recycled plastic bags (100g and 250g).

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