

Sundowner raisin cultivar wins ARC research, technology award

Phyllis Burger and Andries Daniels from ARC Infruitec-Nietvoorbij have been awarded the Deciduous Fruit Industry (DFI) merit award for research and technology...



'Sundowner' - the first South African-bred raisin cultivar to be officially registered as a new cultivar.

The pair were recognised at the virtual 45th South African Deciduous Fruit Industry Awards ceremony for their exceptional work on 'Sundowner' - the first South African-bred raisin cultivar to be officially registered as a new cultivar and available for commercial planting, as well as for their contribution to the South African raisin grape industry.

Over the past three decades, the Dried Fruit Industry and the ARC partnered in a breeding and evaluation research initiative which invested in a project to develop new raisin grape cultivars in South Africa under local climate conditions. Sundowner came out of this programme.

As with many breeding projects, the development of new cultivars is a time-consuming process starting with the performing of hand pollinations, rescuing the embryos from seedless grapes and growing these embryos into viable plants in tissue culture. These seedlings are then planted out in tunnels at Nietvoorbij to acclimatise and thereafter planted in a seedling block at Nietvoorbij as well. This particular cultivar was selected in 2002 and promoted to semi-commercialisation in 2006. Plant Breeders' Rights were applied for in 2017 and awarded in 2019, a long way from November 1994 when the crosses were made. It was launched earlier this year with the name 'Sundowner' as it depicts the reddish blush on the ripe berries which resembles the sunset.