

Anouk Sijmonsma explains what PMA Fresh Connections: Southern Africa is all about

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Anouk Sijmonsma

What does it take to succeed in the fresh produce industry today?

I believe that the challenges and opportunities facing our industry worldwide are much too promising, or too challenging, for any one organisation to think that it's capable of making progress alone.

Our industry is developing into an increasingly global ecosystem which is shaped by rapidly changing technology, evolving consumer preferences, growing worldwide demand and challenges to food safety and security - to touch upon a few of the issues our member companies face. Building partnerships matters, as does creating global connections, driving produce consumption, and contemplating the sustainability of our business.

That is why I'm excited to invite you to our 9th annual Fresh Connections: Southern Africa Conference and Trade Show, taking place on 30-31 July 2019 in Cape Town at the Century City Conference Centre. This is the only annual event connecting people involved in the southern African fresh produce industry.

What is Fresh Connections?

PMA Fresh Connections is part of an international series of events that PMA annually organises and promotes across the world. We hold these events in Australia New Zealand, China, South Africa, Mexico, Brazil, Chile and the United States of America.

The event initially started as a platform to bring people together and enable them to connect - something that is essential in an industry in which success is based on personal connections that cross borders.

Fresh Connections: Southern Africa is a successful combination of a conference, exhibition and new connections roundtable. Along with great speakers, there will be opportunities for attendees to network with the industry's thought leaders and get exposed to trends and business opportunities. We go all out to connect the South African industry to the world by bringing global buyers and service providers to South Africa.

PMA strives to be a world-class thought leader in our key focus areas of demand creation, industry talent, global connections, science and technology and sustainability. Our focus areas are put right in the spotlight at Fresh Connections, with a range of speakers providing business inspiration, navigating African industry trends, being on a quest for a sustainable tomorrow and exploring a new vision for the future of fresh in Southern Africa.

What are the key issues facing the fresh produce industry internationally?

Even though our industry is country and region specific, several issues transcend borders. What we see, for example, is a search for talent and drawing young people to join our industry. Sustainability too, demands that individuals, companies, and governments work better together to find sustainable ways to improve production and trade, and act on global trade issues.

How important is networking in the fresh produce industry?

Networking in our industry is multi-faceted. It is essential for retailers to know and show the end consumer what produce is available. For them to do so, it is imperative that they have direct connections to the growers. In addition, a big part of our industry is international and international trade can only be accomplished if the correct interpersonal relationships are in place.

Fresh Connections attendees can expect to connect with global and regional decision makers from across the entire fresh fruit and vegetable supply chain including retailers, producers, importers/exporters, distributors, wholesalers, service and input suppliers, associations and government officials

The Center for Growing Talent will be hosting three programmes that focus on career insights and growing professional networks.

Developing and retaining talent is one of the key pillars of the Centre for Growing Talent (CGT by PMA) activities. In Cape Town, we will have three unique programmes dedicated to talent.

- The Young Professionals Breakfast for professionals under 35 years of age where major speakers will speak about their career paths and enlighten the young audience on opportunities in our industry.
- The Women's Fresh Perspectives Breakfast that's focused on empowering women in the industry.
- The Career Pathways for students.

Sign up today, and we look forward to meeting you in Cape Town! Alternatively, join our association as a member, support our industry and tap into our global network of more than 34,000 member contacts from more than 2,800 member companies across six continents.

Please help us deliver our mission and vision; bringing together the global produce and floral community to grow a healthier world.

www.pma.com/FCSouthernAfrica

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