



## *Vizier Greetings!*

As we enter the New Year we at Vizier Systems want to Thank all of our clients and suppliers for their ongoing support during 2017!

We have exciting ventures in 2018 and will be looking at increasing our productivity and better our customer experience in this new-year to come. Please keep in touch with any ideas or suggestions going forward, we would like to improve on all aspects with the help of our clients.

## Vizier connecting with the community's youth.

Our Production Supervisor and staff recently went out with a couple of Meccano G15 personal robots to Beverley Hills community centre in Helderberg, Western Cape area to introduce **robotic mechanics** to our youth. The interest and excitement was infectious.



When we first got to the group of children with the Meccanoid box, the almost tightness expression on the children's faces was amazing. With the handover they were shy, but soon began to become more involved.

Firstly, we told them that our visit aims to give them exposure about what happens in our technology world, and what opportunities there might be, if they would be interested in the things that we will show them. We then tried to explain what the concept 'robot' means. Their understanding of a robot was centered round Iron Man and Transformers. We explained that there are other uses for robots like cleaning house, build cars in factories, robots that are four-or two-legged and will be there to help with logistical or dangerous tasks or in hospitals or old-age homes, flying robots (drones), and so on. We briefly showed them how the Meccanoid robot looks like, and what functions it has.

With the next appointment, we then started to build the Meccanoid robot. Two teams were formed. Each team had to do a portion of the robot building. Initially, they struggled to understand the principles of Meccano construction work, the necessary accuracy and compositions. But some of them soon began to take guidance and the robot was taking shape.

With the last appointment the robot was complete and they could start giving instructions (voice) on the computer so that the robot could 'react'. Each time the excitement and astonishment was very visible when the robot was responding to an instruction!

We hope to influence more youth members with on- going projects like these.

## Vizier Manter Partnership

In 2017, Vizier has joint hands with Manter weighing and packaging equipment.

We can now offer you equipment for your vegetable pack houses, packaging machinery and much more.

Our first order of two roll stock baggers are being manufactured and installation should take place end April 2018. This installation will consist of a carrot weigher, with two baggers and should run giving an output of 45 - 50 bags per minute.

Watch this space for more exciting news.



## Egypt Project

The citrus packing line contract Vizier has with Aldahra Agriculture in Salheya, Egypt is nearing completion. As usual for the end-of-project period, there is intense activity by all involved to add the final touches to ensure the packing line will perform according to specification.

We are grateful for the support received from Werner Bartels, the packhouse manager who steered most of the site preparation activities. We are also very thankful for the tremendous effort by our site installation team, Hein and Wilson. They put in the long hours, away from home for weeks on end, to ensure that the implemented line will do us proud. There were the odd hick-ups, particularly on the logistics side, but with commitment from all involved we are nearing our goal.

This is a 40 ton per hour citrus line. It has two bin tippers plus two crate tippers feeding the line. Pre-grading, chemical treatment, brush cleaning, drying tunnels and waxing are functions performed on the fruit before a grading system feeds the 8-lane high-speed sizer. The fruit is packed on 36 tables, palletized and then shipped to the markets. The customer has already requested that the Ellips sorting and grading electronics/software be upgraded to external defect grading in the near future.

We are excited about the installation and are looking forward to building a long lasting relationship with our Egyptian customer.



## Drought News

*Potato production in the north of the country expected to offset potential drop in volumes from the Western and Eastern Cape*

### South Africa: Water shortages could constrain potato plantings

The drought is affecting potato plantings in the southern parts of South Africa. Only about a third of the usual plantings in the Koue Bokkeveld (Ceres area) will realise due to water supply constraints, but this is a relatively small area in terms of its contribution to the total crop. Whether the amount of water from boreholes will suffice to optimally irrigate this season's potato crop in the southern areas, remains to be seen, says Dr André Jooste, CEO of Potatoes SA.



#### **Sandveld potato plantings down by 600ha last year**

Further north in the Western Cape in the Sandveld, traditionally a major potato production area, there was already a decrease of 600ha in potato plantings last year as a response to the third year of drought. Downstream of the Clanwilliam Dam the water situation is dire; the dam didn't overflow this past season, the flow of the Olifants River is severely diminished and the water table level wasn't adequately replenished by winter rainfall. Irrigation from rivers and dams accounts for 10% to 20% of water supply for potato fields in this important production region. The situation is putting tremendous strain on producers in this region.

"Before winter we might lose some more hectares since rivers and dams don't have enough water. On average, the water levels of boreholes are still manageable, but for how long? Water quality is already providing some problems," Dr Jooste continues.

For 2018, depending on the amount of winter rainfall, fewer hectares of potatoes could be planted in the Sandveld. What happens with rainfall from February onwards will be crucial, with normal rainfall equating to normal plantings, while lower rainfall will most probably translate into lower plantings. Up until then supplies should be sufficient.

### Gamtoos Valley plantings could halve if situation continues



The Eastern Cape is equally acutely affected by the drought – the important Kouga Dam currently stands at 9.6%, of which much goes towards citrus orchards which have expanded over the past few years. Last year there was a decrease of 200ha in potato plantings. “If subnormal rainfall realises for the remainder of 2018, the current surface area of almost 700ha could easily halve,” Dr Jooste says. “Given the low dam level of the Kouga, potato farmers can’t do any planning for the rest of the year. They’re waiting for substantial rain. There is much concern about particularly the newly established citrus orchards.”

Fortunately, the drought in the north of the country appears to have been broken and a normal harvest is expected from Limpopo and the Free State. Northern potatoes will be channelled to the Cape markets, but if volumes from the north are insufficient, there will doubtless be pressure on potato supplies for Cape consumers. Already the average price of potatoes are slightly higher at the Cape Town fresh produce market than in the interior (R49,55 in Cape Town versus R43,37 at the Johannesburg market per 10kg bag today).

"At the end of the day price levels will be determined by demand and supply forces in the markets," he concludes.

