



PRESS RELEASE

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For immediate release

## The orchard revolution that's astounding growers the world over

Sometimes it's the simplest of solutions that bring the biggest surprises. That's certainly true for the performance of a new irrigation invention for fruit growers, Treehog. It's the brainchild of South African farmer Louis Loubser who came up with the concept to help reduce water need during times of drought. His Treehog devices have now been tested in robust field trials, with astonishing results.

The devices are made from injection-moulded plastic, and are designed to last up to eight years, enshrouding the base of a tree. Louis was originally looking to prevent water evaporation, but his eventual solution goes much further.

A Treehog contains a micro sprinkler that's angled carefully to direct an even spray of water down the sides of the device to the ground around the root. This is a much more targeted way of delivering the water only where it's needed, encouraging better, stronger root systems for vulnerable young trees.

One early trial in a citrus orchard saw water served within the Treehog devices penetrate to the desired depth within 20 minutes of irrigation. Traditional micro irrigation required over five hours of water application to achieve the same result in the control row.

Primafruit and Waitrose are making joint investments in innovation developments that they hope will benefit their fruit growers around the world. One such investment is





trial funding that has enabled a major South African exporter, Stems, to trial the Treehog technology on nectarine and plum orchards.

Whilst barely a year into the trial, the results are compelling. Treehog is bringing in excess of 50% water saving alone. Commensurate fertiliser savings are also consistent across the board. Add to this an energy saving from reduced application time and a chemical and labour saving from weedkilling as weeds don't grow within the Treehog covered zones around the base of the trees. The overall carbon footprint reduction per kilo of fruit produced is enormous. Over and above this, the investment in Treehog looks set to repay growers in record time as the vigour of growth in the trial trees is remarkable too. Trees have been shown to reach commercial maturity faster with Treehog than without. In the race to market with new varieties, the forward-thinking grower has the potential to start reaping rewards from the system in an attractive, shorter timescale.

With help from Primafruit, Loubser has secured European patents for his Treehog invention and the devices will begin to make their way into fruit orchards and vineyards across producing areas of Europe from this year onwards. Leading Spanish table grape and stone fruit grower, El Ciruelo, has placed its first order already.

Producing more food using less natural resource is a major challenge facing growers and retailers all around the world. Consumers are more and more aware of the issues and of the pressure on global resources, and growers care about carbon footprint and production efficiency alike. To know that Waitrose and their suppliers are helping move exciting new inventions like Treehog into use is reassuring indeed, with everyone keen to see just how widely the technology can be applied across different product groups and production systems.

Speaking after review of the latest trial data, Technical Director for Primafruit, Jim Flambert, said: "We spend considerable time researching the issues around sustainable food production, but moving thoughts and ideas into action can often be slow and laborious. What's great about Treehog is its simplicity and the speed of roll-out around the world. This is a fabulous invention that has the potential to make fundamental transformations in how orchard irrigation works. We're extremely proud to be part of its story and wish Louis every success in its commercial future."





Further information about Treehog is available via <http://www.treehog.co.za/>

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Primafruit Ltd is a UK business that imports, ripens and packs fruit from around the world for Waitrose. An innovative supply partnership contract with Waitrose sees Primafruit responsible for sole supply on key fruit categories. The two companies work hand in hand, delivering great quality fruit for Waitrose customers.

For further information see [www.primafruit.co.uk](http://www.primafruit.co.uk)