

HORTICULTURE STUDENT WINS TOP AWARD



Mr Nhlanhla Mathaba

Mr Nhlanhla Mathaba, a Horticulture Masters student of the School of Agricultural Sciences and Agribusiness, outshone other national young researchers at the recent Southern African Society for Horticultural Sciences Combined Congress in Grahamstown.

He won the Best Young Scientist Award for his presentation titled: "Potential use of hot water and molybdenum dips as methods to mitigate chilling injury in citrus fruits with emphasis on lemons (cv Eureka)".

A product of UKZN's Science Foundation Programme,

Mr Mathaba said it was "unbelievable" to have won the award especially since his research was not yet complete. He was encouraged by his success which he says "shows that people out there appreciate my work and acknowledge the energy I put into research".

Mr Mathaba's research on chilling injury in citrus fruits focuses on solving one of the biggest problems facing South African citrus farmers.

The South African citrus industry is extremely export-oriented and its high-paying customers demand superior quality. Chilling injury, resulting from cold storage of fruits before and during exportation, significantly reduces their marketability. Methods of mitigating this occurrence and also understanding the physiology of chilling injury are thus vital.

Supervised by Professor John Bower, Mr Mathaba aims to complete his Masters degree by the end of 2008. His future goals include a PhD with a focus on citrus physiology.