

# GROWING MACADAMIA NUTS? Grow them organically

by Terry Dhiwayo  
Technical Services, Training & Agri Support Manager

Email: [info@talborne.co.za](mailto:info@talborne.co.za)  
[www.talborne.co.za](http://www.talborne.co.za)

**Macadamia nuts are indigenous to Australia, originally found in the rain forest all along the coast of north-eastern Australia. While the trees had long been known, eaten and traded by Aborigines to settlers, the nut was first commercially produced on a wide scale in Hawaii, where Australian seeds were introduced in the 1880s, and for some time they were the world's largest producer. South Africa has been the world's largest producer of the macadamia since the 2010's**

Uses of macadamia nuts have evolved with time. While in Australia, the United States and Japan the product is frequently used as an ingredient, in Europe macadamia nuts are still mainly used as a snack product (usually roasted and salted). However, as the world supply is growing, the interest in various industries in Europe is increasing, with macadamia nuts increasingly being used for the production of butter, for chocolate coating and as an ingredient in the confectionery and ice cream industry. In the past, macadamia shells were discarded after removal of the kernel. More recently, alternative uses for this by-product have emerged, such as skin creams, biochar, carbon filters, used to treat poisoning like paracetamol overdose, nano-powders and homeware.

Macadamias can be produced successfully in areas where avocados, papayas, mangoes and bananas do well. The trees require a hot non-humid, subtropical climate. The biggest threats to annual production come from droughts and heavy frost. In South Africa they are mostly grown in KZN, Mpumalanga and Limpopo. Macadamia trees are not heavy feeders, and their fine lateral roots are efficient in absorbing phosphorus and calcium, even where there are low levels of these nutrients in the soil..

South African produced macadamia nuts are in big demand across the world because of their high quality, thus production in South Africa has increased exponentially. The market is growing at a faster pace with the growing importance of healthy eating and consumers are more frequently choosing nuts as a healthy snack option and incorporating them into their daily diets. In addition, organic macadamia is also gaining popularity with increasing demand coming majorly from the European countries.

In a 2018 report, 50% of South African macadamia nut exports were exported nut-in-shell to Asia and mainly China. At the same time reports coming out of China suggested that the industry was expanding with two million trees each year. They predicted that China's orchards should start coming into production by 2019 and if the proper yields are realised, the country could become self-sufficient resulting in a drop-off in imports. Thus the need for SA macadamia farmers to supply more to the Western markets, like Europe, which have strict requirements.

According to the Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI), food safety certification combined with reliable and frequent laboratory testing, helps create a positive image for macadamia nut producers wishing to export to Europe. The most common requirements regarding contaminants in macadamia nuts relate to the presence of mycotoxins,

pesticide residues, micro-organisms, and heavy metals. Due to macadamia nuts high fat and oil content, nuts and seeds act like miniature sponges for these agricultural chemicals. Unfortunately, these contaminants tend to permeate the shells and work their way into the food chain. These are potentially damaging to both our physical health and the environment. Sustainable production and the implementation of corporate social responsibility measures will help emerging suppliers gain an additional advantage. Organic cultivation does away with pesticides and other potentially harmful farming practices. By going organic, you are not only making a healthy choice but also supporting more sustainable farming. Organic Macadamia farming is the way to go.

It has never been easier or more opportune for Macadamia farmers to start growing or converting to organic farming with an abundance of organic inputs available world-wide, as well as in South Africa. For 21 years, Talborne Organics has been supplying a unique range of certified organic fertilizers supplying major, minor and micro nutrients for soil fertility, productivity and quality. Talborne Organics Technical Services Division offers organic fertiliser recommendations based on recent soil/leaf analysis. A soil analysis is the most accurate guide to fertiliser requirements. Please visit [www.talborne.co.za](http://www.talborne.co.za) or contact us at: [info@talborne.co.za](mailto:info@talborne.co.za) for more information.