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Media release

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Student case competition becomes premium event at Agbiz Congress

Since 2008 Agbiz has been hosting a very successful congress student promotion programme where top graduated students in agribusiness-related fields of study get the opportunity to meet and engage with industry leaders.

During the 2012 Congress, the inaugural student case competition was hosted to provide students with the opportunity to showcase their academic abilities, skills and expertise, while finding practical and commercially viable answers to real-world issues. Since then, the competition has developed into one of the premium events at the congress to attend and to sponsor.

This year the four teams were made of 16 students from the University of Pretoria, University of Fort Hare, University of Stellenbosch, University of KwaZulu-Natal, North-West University and University of the Free State.

The case focussed on South Africa's indigenous plants industry. Each team was provided a 5-hour time limit to develop a business plan for De Fynne Nursery, a small, medium, and micro enterprise (SME) in South Africa, which is facing expansion challenges that could affect its potential for growth.

Teams presented their strategies and recommendations to a panel of judges consisting of industry executives and leaders: Messrs Nico Groenewald (Head Agriculture at Standard Bank), Sean Walsh (MD at Kaap Agri), Andre Uys (MD at Overberg Agri) and Melcus Nel (Director at Signa).

The top two teams were selected to present in the final round at the congress and delegates voted for the team that impressed them the most.

The facilitators of the competition this year were Prof Johan van Rooyen, IFAMA president and director of the Centre for Agribusiness and professor in Agricultural

Economics at the University of Stellenbosch, as well as Johan Boonzaaier, PhD student and BFAP researcher.

Prof van Rooyen says selecting and developing a good case study; interpreting the case and proposing a good strategic and innovative but a real world solution; and finally selecting a best team are all daunting tasks.

“Case studies can and should however also be exciting and fun. This year’s competition had all of these - it truly was a great experience for all. The competitors were exceptionally strong, and they should be proud of their achievements,” he says.

Unfortunately there can only be one winning team and our congratulations go to the team sponsored by Syngenta: Carmen van Niekerk (UP), Frieda Scheepers (NWU), Luan van der Walt (UFS) and Lawrence Njabulo Nkosi (UKZN).

Members of the runner up team are Michaela Zietsman (NWU), Tatenda Mutungira (UP), Hannes van der Merwe (US) and Dominique Bougard (UFS).

Other participants were Pascalina Mohlotsane (UFS), Jaimé Manuel (US), Putuma Quqani (UFH), Nothando Sharon Buthelezi (UKZN), Sanelise Tafa (UFH), Struan Garland (UP), Pilela Majokweni (UKZN) and Manzi Sishi (US).

The winning team has won a trip on the Blue Train from Johannesburg to Cape Town. John Deere Financial sponsors the students’ return transport as well as their attendance of a Leadership Summit in conjunction with Bathopele and ABSA AgriBusiness.

Prof van Rooyen thanked Agbiz and the sponsors for creating and supporting this great event, which links the academic to the operational world of agribusiness.

The following Agbiz members sponsored this year’s students: FNB, Kaap Agri, Monsanto, NWK, Overberg Agri, Signa, SSK, Syngenta, Talent Africa and TWK.

More information about the students and their feedback on the experience is available on the Agbiz website: <http://agbiz.co.za/congress-2016/resumes-congress-students-2016-2>

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