

Agbiz honours Hans van der Merwe's role in SA agriculture

The Agricultural Business Chamber (Agbiz) has honoured Mr Hans van der Merwe, former CEO of Agri SA, for his exceptional service to organised agriculture in South Africa. He received the Agbiz Honorary Award at the business chamber's biannual congress held in Somerset West last week.

"Van der Merwe played a major role in South Africa's transition to democratic rule in the 1990's, and in the liberalisation of agricultural markets thereafter, which was decisive in maintaining stability of agriculture and the agribusiness environment," says Agbiz.

In addition, Van der Merwe played an important role in the National Economic Forum during the transition years. This was a time of extensive deregulation in agriculture and he was closely involved in drafting the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act. At times of national disasters, he worked hand in hand with agribusinesses, mainly co-ops, in quantifying the magnitude of the damage and recommended relevant support.

Van der Merwe has a special interest in trade policy and has acted as a legal advisor at several ministerial conferences. South Africa became part of the Cairns Group on his recommendation and he was also instrumental in the establishment of the Agricultural Trade Forum in the Department of Agriculture.

He has also been involved in drafting several policies and legislation through NEDLAC, as well as complex land reform policies. Van der Merwe stood in the centre of the handling of the 2012 labour strikes in the Western Cape, as was mandated by the Agricultural Sector Unity Forum (ASUF).

During challenging times in the agricultural and agribusiness environment, Van der Merwe continues to support and show willingness to unite the sector.

Photo caption:

Agbiz chairperson Schalk Pienaar (right) presented the Agbiz Honorary Award to Mr Hans van der Merwe, former CEO of Agri SA. Photo: Gavin Withers