

Agbiz pays tribute to titans of the industry who have recently succumbed to Covid-19

The dreaded Covid-19 virus continues to take its toll. Last week Agbiz was shocked to hear that Ms Simnikiwe Sikiwe, Mr Bully Botma, Mr Christo Faasen, and Mr Andile Hawes had succumbed to Covid-19. These individuals made telling contributions to the sector and Agbiz would like to express its sincere condolences to their families.

Tribute to Ms Simnikiwe Sikiwe By Theo Boshoff

In 2018, President Ramaphosa held the inaugural Jobs Summit at Nedlac whereby social partners committed to key interventions that would stimulate economic growth and job creation in the country. The agricultural sector projects accounted for almost one-third of all the commitments. As a result, the Nedlac secretariat appointed Simnikiwe as a project co-ordinator to assist with the implementation of the agri-sector commitments. Many Agbiz members will remember Simnikiwe for her calm demeanour, tact and dedication as she chaired the bilateral process to establish a Blended Finance Facility for land reform agricultural development. This is no small feat as the process lasted close to two years due to the complexity necessitated by the scheme. When the scheme is finally implemented, it will serve as a lasting tribute to her perseverance and passion for development. We want to pay tribute to Simnikiwe for her immense work and convey our sincere condolences to her family.

Tribute to Bully Botma By John Purchase

Agbiz, and I personally, was shocked and saddened to learn of the sudden passing of Mr Bully Botma due to Covid complications last week. As chairman of Grain SA, he was dedicated and forthright in serving the grain farmers of South Africa and served in many industry structures of especially the maize industry. As CEO of Grain SA at that time, I got to know Bully well and have only appreciation and gratitude for the positive relationship we had in an extremely trying time. Agbiz and I wish to extend our sincere condolences to his wife Hanneltjie, their children and immediate family.

Tribute to Christo Faasen By John Purchase

Christo Faasen, Managing Director of Senick Feeds and part of the Sernick Group, a member of Agbiz, succumbed to the Covid virus this past week. He was well-known and highly respected in agricultural circles and made a great contribution to the well-known Sernick Group over 27 years of dedicated service. I got to know Christo well over the full span of our careers as his wife and my wife were teaching colleagues in Bethlehem many years ago, and we always seemed to meet up at functions and events then and subsequently. Christo will be sorely missed and our sincere condolences are extended to his wife, Elmie, their children and extended family.

Tribute to Andile Maxwell Hawes
By John Purchase

Andile Maxwell Hawes, or Max as I knew him over many years, sadly passed on this past week. He recently retired as a Deputy Director General of the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD), while he also served in this capacity in the former Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF). He previously, in his younger days, also served as the Transformation Manager of the Citrus Growers' Association (CGA). Always willing to engage constructively, also when he served as the Agricultural Attaché in Brazil, Max will be remembered for his positive contribution to the sector. Agbiz extends its sincere condolences to his family.

The Covid pandemic has also resulted in the loss of many others that to a larger or lesser degree were involved in the agricultural fraternity, including Jabu Mabuza (former President of BUSA, amongst others and who also farmed), as well as Hennie de Lange of Unigrain. Our sincere condolences to all who have lost loved ones. To all, please keep safe and well, and vaccinate as soon as possible.