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MEDIA RELEASE

Competitiveness central theme at 40th GOSA symposium

The Grain Handling Organisation (GOSA)'s 40th symposium, held recently in Mossel Bay, highlighted how South Africa's grain industry can innovate to maintain and improve its competitiveness in a more competitive global market.

A total of 280 representatives from more than 70 agricultural companies from the grain value chain attended the organisation's symposium on 18 and 19 March this year at the Diaz Strand Hotel. Several of the speakers highlighted the current and future competitiveness of the local industry.

Retired international rugby referee Jaco Peyper, who is currently a member of the management and coaching team of the Springbok team, drew parallels between the performance of the Bok team and the workplace. "In a competitive environment, you don't get better by just hoping for the best. Your team's performance needs to be measured regularly in order to balance their capabilities (assets) and obstacles (liabilities)," he said. "Keep the core goal in mind at all times and anchor your success in core fundamental aspects rather than bells and whistles activities that distract from the focus."

According to Tjaart Kruger, CEO of Tiger Brands, the South African food value chain plays a critical role in economic growth and food security. However, to remain competitive in the global market, there must be stronger collaboration across this value chain. Investments in infrastructure, training and policy reform are essential. Competitiveness in the agricultural sector can be ensured by continuously improving supply chain efficiencies. This includes better transport systems, increased port efficiency as well as the removal of trade and other regulatory barriers.

"South Africa can grow through development and improvement to be more competitive in a global market. This includes the traceability of products and the improvement of rail transport. With limited port capacity, alternative ports will also have to be looked at. More efficient waiting areas for trucks waiting to unload their cargo and the move to electronic documentation will increase efficiency," said Dr André van der Vyver, executive director of the South African Grains and Oilseeds Trading Association (SACOTA). He is optimistic about South Africa's future in terms of grain exports. To increase profitable exports, cost cutting and/or increasing efficiency in the value chain is necessary, as well as a focus on specialized or niche markets and not trying to compete with large countries.

Prof Nick Vink, emeritus professor of agricultural economics at the Stellenbosch University, pointed out to symposium attendees that, in terms of the production of livestock, fruit and vegetables, and field crops, South African agriculture has not been in such a favourable position since 1961. He further says that the value of agricultural production has more than doubled and its growth since 2013 has also been better than the rest of the economy. The comparative advantage of the local grain industry compared to other countries proves that South Africa is considered a competitive producer and exporter of maize. As for soybeans, it has increased sharply in recent years, but in the case of wheat, the country is still not competitive.

In addition to the latter speakers, three breakaway workshops were presented:

- Dr Roelof Botha (economist) gave his view on growth opportunities in a new political dispensation. He referred in particular to 28 key indicators that indicate that the economy is moving in the right direction.
- Johan van den Berg (agricultural meteorologist) discussed the global impact of climate change and changing weather patterns.
- Prof Jan Havenga (Stellenbosch University), a macrologistic researcher, focused, among other things, on the recovery of the South African railway system and ports – and the progress in the turnaround of Transnet.

GP van Rheede van Oudtshoorn (Coppertop Consulting) was the inspirational speaker and made representatives think twice about the power of innovation and communication. Mention was made during the symposium of Dr Richard van Wyk, who opened each day's proceedings with a spiritual message, who has performed this function for GOSA for the 21st year.

A special recognition was presented to Hein Rehr, who has been president of the organization since 2019 and retired at the annual general meeting. He has been a member of GOSA for 29 years and is also a former chairperson of GOSA Cape. Under his dedicated leadership, GOSA's relevance as a platform for networking, discussion and training in the grain value chain has been established and expanded.

New leadership

Hein Rehr (RehrCo.) and Tom Terblanche (Grain Carriers)'s terms as board members ended this year while Michal Rehr resigned as chairperson of GOSA Cape. During the annual general meeting, Stefan van Staden (AFGRI), Ferdinand Meyer (Ronin) and Willem Strauss (RMB) were re-elected as board members. Dawid Beets (Tiger Brands) and Dries van Jaarsveld (Bester Feed & Grain), as acting chairperson of GOSA Cape, were welcomed to the Board.

During a board meeting after the annual general meeting, Johan van Rensburg (VKB) was elected as president and Ferdinand Meyer (Ronin) as vice-president.

GOSA would like to thank **AGI** as the main sponsor of the symposium.

Photo 1: *Johan van Rensburg of VKB was elected as president of GOSA on 18 March this year.*

Photo 2: *Jaco Peyper, retired rugby referee (centre), one of the speakers at GOSA's recent symposium in Mossel Bay. With him in the photo are Johan van Rensburg, newly elected president of GOSA (on the left) and Hein Rehr, retired president.*

ENDS

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