

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **South Africa's farming elite honoured at National Farmer of the Year Awards**

**Worcester, Western Cape** – In a celebration befitting South Africa's agricultural pinnacle, Agricultural Writers SA (AWSA) hosted its annual awards at Bergland, outside Worcester to honour farmers, agriculturalists and communicators.

The event brought together more than 120 farmers, agribusiness and industry leaders, researchers, and communicators to honour the innovators, visionaries, and trailblazers shaping the country's food and farming landscape.

"As an industry, we are facing some of the most complex challenges of our time, from rising production costs and climate uncertainty to misinformation and shrinking media platforms," said Lindi Botha, national chairperson of AWSA.

"Yet every day, South African farmers and communicators prove that resilience is not just a word, but a way of life. These awards recognise the people who keep agriculture moving forward, whether through innovation in the field or the powerful stories that give our sector a voice."

Marike Brits, chairperson of AWSA's !Xhariep region and event organiser, said it was a privilege to host agricultural communicators, academics, farmers, and agribusiness leaders in Worcester for this year's gathering.

"Worcester is a key town in the Breede River Valley, one of South Africa's most productive and diverse agricultural regions, which makes it a perfect setting for a celebration of agricultural excellence. We are proud to host the nation's agri elite with the breathtaking Worcester mountains as backdrop."

Minister of Agriculture John Steenhuisen congratulated the winners of the prestigious awards, saying their leadership, innovation, and resilience continue to set the standard for excellence in agriculture.

He praised both the farmers being honoured and the communicators who tell their stories. "To all the members of AWSA, thank you for your incredible contribution in keeping our farmers, our sector, and our consumers informed about the big developments shaping agriculture."

Steenhuisen said agriculture remains one of the cornerstones of the national economy. "I'm really proud to say that agriculture is holding up our economy in South Africa. The growth in yields, the strength of our harvests, and the innovation of our producers are all ensuring that South Africa's economic future is secured."

He commended the award recipients for their excellence and leadership. "You have risen to the very top, the pinnacle of agriculture in South Africa," he said. "Thank you for showing the way, for inspiring others to follow, and for sharing your knowledge so that the entire agricultural sector can grow together."

The 2025 winners are:

## **Farmer of the Year 2025: Jan Grey**

The coveted Farmer of the Year title went to Jan Grey of Janvos Estate in Brakfontein, Mpumalanga. A fourth-generation dairy farmer, Grey has overseen a diversified agricultural enterprise since 1994, including a 650-cow dairy, Boran cattle stud and commercial herd, apple orchards, and crop production on 3 200 hectares.

Janvos Estate operates as a fully integrated business, with divisions run as independent cost and income centres. This structure allows for precision management, efficiency, and sustainable growth – without cross-subsidisation. Beyond farming, Grey is deeply involved in organised agriculture and community development, serving as a director of a joint initiative between Agri Mpumalanga and TLU SA, while supporting numerous local projects.

## **New-Entrant to Commercial Agriculture 2025: Nkosana Mtimkulu**

The New Entrant to Commercial Agriculture award was posthumously presented to Nkosana Mtimkulu of Amanhle Farm in Ngaka Modiri Molema, North West, who passed away unexpectedly this week at the age of 42.

Mtimkulu's journey was one of courage, vision, and reinvention. After leaving a successful corporate career in 2010 to pursue dairy farming, he built a vertically integrated agribusiness that weathered immense challenges, including near closure during the Covid-19 pandemic, before pivoting to grain production in 2022.

Today, Amanhle Farm spans 533 hectares, producing high-value crops such as non-GMO popcorn maize, wheat, and small white beans through partnerships with Tiger Brands and PepsiCo's Kgodiso Development Fund. Beyond his success in the field, Mtimkulu was deeply committed to farmer development, hosting study groups and annual farmer days, and creating inclusive opportunities for youth and women in agriculture.

His legacy, both as a farmer and mentor, will continue to inspire a new generation of South African producers.

## **Agriculturalist of the Year 2025: Dr Hendrik Smith**

Dr Hendrik Smith, agronomist and soil scientist from Gauteng, received the Agriculturalist of the Year award. With over 31 years of experience, Dr Smith is a leader in regenerative conservation agriculture, restoring soil health and improving resource efficiency nationwide. He currently directs the Conservation Agriculture Farmer Innovation Programme (CA FIP) at ASSET Research, building partnerships across sectors and empowering both commercial and smallholder farmers.

Dawie Maree, Head: Agriculture Information and Marketing at FNB and platinum sponsor of the awards, said that the Farmer, New Entrant to Commercial Agriculture, and Agriculturalist of the Year awards are a tribute to the remarkable achievements of those whose dedication, innovation, and resilience continue to shape the future of agriculture in our nation.

“To all nominees and winners, congratulations. Your hard work and dedication are truly inspiring, and FNB is proud to stand with you in celebrating your achievements,” Maree said.

## **Celebrating excellence in agricultural journalism**

Recipients at the FNB Communicator Awards included Temba Msiza, who took home the Youth Communicator award; Glenneis Kriel, winner in the business category; Magda du Toit, recognised for excellence in print media; and Thabi Modutoane, honoured in the broadcast media category. They collectively embody the dedication, insight, and storytelling excellence that define South Africa's agricultural communications sector.

In the CropLife SA Awards, Corné Louw received a special award in recognition of his outstanding support to the crop protection industry, while Glenneis Kriel was honoured for writing the best crop protection article, highlighting excellence and insight in agricultural reporting.

In the Case IH Mechanisation, Data and Technology Awards, Lindi Botha was recognised for outstanding achievement. Botha also received the International Forum for Agricultural Journalists Star Prize for Print Media for her article, "You are what your food ate: The health connection in the soil." This is a global award announced last month at the IFAJ World Congress in Nairobi, Kenya.

Carien Kruger received top honours in the Japie Grobler Technical Article Awards, while Susan Marais was celebrated for excellence in the Japie Grobler Investigative Article category.

The 2025 awards highlighted not only South Africa's top-performing farms but also the vision, grit, and innovation driving the sector forward. From multi-generational family farms to bold new entrants, these awards celebrate the resilience, ingenuity, and commitment that define modern South African agriculture.

## **About Agricultural Writers SA (AWSA)**

Founded in March 1977, Agricultural Writers SA has spent more than four decades championing agricultural journalism and elevating the stories of South Africa's farmers, agribusinesses, and researchers.

As a voluntary, non-profit professional association, AWSA represents the nation's foremost agricultural communicators, spanning print, radio, television, and digital media. Its members are dedicated to maintaining high standards, promoting accurate reporting, and fostering public understanding of agriculture's vital role in South African society.

Through its nationwide network of journalists, writers, and communications professionals, AWSA ensures that the achievements, innovations, and resilience of the country's farming community are told with insight, depth, and impact.

The National Farmer of the Year Awards, first introduced at the association's inaugural meeting in 1977, remain AWSA's flagship event, recognising excellence across the sector and inspiring others to strive for agricultural and scientific distinction.

With a proud history of engagement in the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists (IFAJ), including hosting the IFAJ World Congress twice, in 2004 and 2017, AWSA has cemented its position as a globally respected voice in agricultural media. Today, the association boasts over 200 members, a network that continues to grow, innovate, and amplify the stories that define South Africa's agricultural landscape.

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