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Kaap Agri Academy graduates ready to take on careers in agriculture

Eighteen new generation farmers received their national certificates in mixed farming practices at the Kaap Agri Academy graduation ceremony held in Porterville on Friday 2 December.

The graduates are part of the Academy's Farmer Development Programme, which offers courses accredited by AgriSETA in terms of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). All 18 graduates received their NQF2 qualification in Mixed Farming Practice.

The Farmer Development Programme is designed to provide new generation farmers and students with theoretical, practical, and managerial knowledge to pursue a career in agriculture.

Kaap Agri is one of only a few organisations that provide high-quality, free, academic training to new generation farmers, offering students NQF2, NQF3 and NQ4 level qualifications, thereby providing a learning pathway into commercial agriculture. Through the programme Kaap Agri aims to continue to uplift rural communities through education.

Elize Gerda Beukes, a 23-year-old farmer from Keimoes, graduated top of the class this year. She farms with grapes from which she produces raisins as well as with boer goats, sheep, and pigs.

Whilst farming is in her blood, Elize sought the benefits of a formal qualification in agriculture.

"I have been involved in farming from a very young age. My parents are farmers, and I learned a lot from them but the technical skills and knowledge that I gained at Kaap Agri gave me a much better and wider understanding about farming. My first formal qualification in agriculture is the highlight of my farming career so far," says Elize.

During the ceremony, graduates were addressed by alumni of the programme who confirmed the value of the course in terms of skills development, networking opportunities and business support. Kaap Agri graduates have pursued various agri-related careers.

Renshia Manuel, who graduated at the top of her class in 2020, owns an urban farming and nursery business in Hanover Park, Cape Town: "I started my business (Growbox Nursery) purely because of a need to feed my family, but with time I observed that the wider Hanover Park community could benefit from learning to grow their own food. I see my purpose as uplifting people through educating them on foodscaping and sustaining themselves through urban farming. The Kaap Agri Academy gave me the knowledge to produce in a more scientific and sustainable way, and I am grateful for the opportunity."

The Kaap Agri Academy has trained over 460 new generation farmers, and alumni have become shining examples in the agriculture sector, including the first black female vice-chairman of Grain SA and the first black-owned Halaal & Kosher Abbatoir in the Western Cape. The programme is very competitive and sought after, with 180 student applications received for the 2022 programme.

“I am inspired every year by the achievements of our graduates. They are a true testament of making the right choices every day. During the production year, farmers only have a few opportunities to make the right decisions to deliver success and I am proud that this class chose Kaap Agri to equip them with the knowledge and skills to continue to make the right choices for their farming businesses. We are proud to be part of their journey and look forward to what the class of 2022 will achieve,” says Sean Walsh CEO of Kaap Agri.

The Kaap Agri Academy is based in Porterville and courses take on a blended learning approach, with a combination of online learning, video-based learning and mandatory practical learning sessions. All training costs are covered by Kaap Agri which includes tuition fees, transport, and accommodation. The fully sponsored training allows for the empowerment of new generation farmers who have access to land, live in the Western or Northern Cape and who may not be able to afford tertiary education. Applications are currently open for the Class of 2023. Visit www.kaapagri.co.za/academy for more information on how to apply.