

**PRESS STATEMENT BY ANDREW RUSSELL
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Sugar industry provides R5 million in funding for tertiary bursaries – applications deadline 31 October 2022

The Sugar Industry Trust Fund for Education (SITFE) has opened applications for bursaries for first-year students pursuing tertiary studies in science, engineering and agricultural fields at South African universities, technical universities, and colleges. R5 million has been set aside for this bursary programme.

The funding forms part of the industry's commitment to invest more than R1 billion in the industry's transformation over a five-year period.

While these bursaries are primarily aimed at children of sugarcane growers and farmworkers in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, all students pursuing studies in the qualifying fields may apply.

Critically, the Fund aims to provide assistance to students from "missing middle" families in sugarcane growing areas, those whose annual income is between R350 000 - R600 000 per annum. This is because these families are often excluded from funding schemes for students.

The sugar industry is among the most labour-intensive agricultural industries and therefore creates vital employment opportunities, mainly in rural areas. But many of these are lower skilled jobs. Through this bursary initiative, SA Canegrowers hopes that more South African youth are equipped with the skills needed for professional careers within the industry while also contributing to the country's STEM graduates, who are critical for our country's economy growth.

The Sugar Industry Trust Fund for Education (SITFE) was launched in 1965 as a private sector initiative and is regarded as one of the oldest Trust Funds in South Africa. The mission of SITFE is to support, promote and advance sustainable, quality education in South African sugarcane growing areas.

Since inception, SITFE has provided bursaries to over 10 200 students, financed school building projects, provided financial assistance to tertiary institutions, and has worked closely with educational organisations to improve the overall education standard in the sugarcane growing provinces, namely KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga. SITFE also supports a wide range of programmes including school support; study assistance; early childhood development; and an education centre development programme.

Applications close on 31 October 2022, and interested young people may visit www.sitfe.co.za or email bursaries@sasa.org.za for more information.

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