

Hansie Viljoen
Farmer of the Year: North-West

We farm today, for tomorrow ...

“The scent of fresh rains, to see the sun rise or set, are all a privilege. I am truly thankful that I can enjoy this privilege. What would be a better hobby than the love for farming? It is wonderful to be able to live my passion and enjoy farming with my family to make a pleasant working environment as a formidable team. We farm today for tomorrow ... we use ecological, economical and social factors as guideline to farm sustainably. I learnt many of these values from my parents, Lina and Boetie.”

Viljoen Farming is a diversified family farming business that consists mainly of three commercial branches and is managed by Hansie Viljoen. The agriculture and stock farming parts are closely knit and form the basis of their success. Although the branches are closely knit, each forms a business unit on its own that must be profitable.

The farm consists of a cash crop-growing division consisting mainly of white maize and pasture under dry land and irrigation. They are avid supporters of using modern technology like biotechnology and precision farming equipment.

Secondly, there is a stock branch that consists of an extensive cattle farming with Charolais, Simmenthaler and Beefmaster bulls on Bos Indicus – Bos Taurus cross cows. Hansie also runs a Brahman breeding herd and a feeding pen where thousands of stock are being rounded off. In order to distribute risk, the branches are managed in the Leeudoringstad District in the Northwest Province, in Sheffield in the Northern Cape and in Ghanzi in Botswana. Game farming also forms part of the stock branch. Both the Sheffield and Ghanzi farms mainly farm with plain game such as Eland, Gemsbok, Springbuck, Red Hartebeest en Zebra. The game is kept mainly for ethical on-foot hunting and an important focus is to give hunters quality time in nature. On the Botswana farm, the lodge, Makaukau Safaris, is also maintained and managed.

Lastly, there is the TAU Mills which is being managed by Hansie’s father, Boetie Viljoen. The mill contributes to diversification, since raw materials such as “chop” from the mill are being supplied to the feeding pens, and in turn, they supply their maize to the mill. They supply daily food to people and animals and have an own fleet of trucks that takes care of all transport of the products.

Hansie currently serves in:

The management of Grain SA and he is a representative for Region 3
The Board of Agrinet
The management of the Farmers’ Association for the past 30 years
The management of Helpmekaar Study Group (for the past 30 years)
The Board of Agriculture Southwest as Chairperson
Botswana’s Game Farming Association
Ghanzi’s (Botswana) Cattle Producers’ Association

Dr Danie Odendaal
Agriculturist of the Year - Gauteng

Dr Danie Odendaal is a well-known veterinarian in agricultural circles. He specialises in animal health and production management and enjoys a sterling reputation among his peers and within the industry as a whole. During his career he has served in various academic and

private-sector posts. He obtained his B.V. Sc in 1886 at the University of Pretoria, with post-graduate studies focusing on production economics, cattle nutrition and epidemiology.

In 1995 he joined the animal health industry after accepting an appointment at Pfizer Animal Health (now Zoetis) where he was responsible for, among others, the development of various scientific protocols for animal health products as well as an overall herd management protocol. In 2002 he was promoted to technical director and in 2003 to veterinary director. In 2005 he started a private business, Veearts Netwerk, which provides services to private veterinary practices specialising in animal health. The purpose of the company was to enable livestock vets to render an outstanding service to stock producers, the secondary stock industry and the public as end user of animal products.

Since 2006 he has also been in private practice, consulting for private veterinary practices on herd health and production. He provides services to a number of well-known animal health companies and producer organisations, including the Red Meat Producers' Organisation (RPO), the Milk Producers' Organisation (MPO) and the National Wool Growers Association (NWGA). He is also a partner at Afrivet Training Services and has, among others, negotiated a three-year contract with the African Enterprise Challenge Fund for the development of a primary animal healthcare programme for small farmers and workers on commercial stock farms. This programme is currently being presented in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia.

Dr Odendaal was also involved in the development of a code of best practice for both the NWGA and the RPO. He also assisted the RPO in drafting a national biosecurity plan.

In 2012 he formed the company, V-Data, and developed a web-based business intelligence system that enables private livestock veterinary practices to generate animal health and production management plans for livestock farmers. This system also offers a monthly reminder system which informs stock farmers of important actions that have to be taken in relation to animal health and production. The system offers an electronic vehicle for facilitating a national disease-reporting system and timely analyses, as well as mapping of the spread of disease. The electronic system also offers a platform where stock farmers are alerted to diseases reported in their area.

Gugu Mlipha **New entrant into commercial farming of the Year**

Gugu Mlipha has turned her passion for the soil into a viable fresh produce business.

While growing up in the rural areas, farming and planting your own vegetables is nothing out of the ordinary. So, when Gugu Mlipha, founder of Gugu and Daughters Farming, was taught how to grow veggies in the family garden, she never imagined she'd one day use those skills to grow a business.

She sold vegetables on the streets of New Castle before moving to Johannesburg several years ago. While working for a micro-lender, she began to supplement her income by selling the vegetables she'd grown in her garden at the local taxi rank. Sales there weren't good at all so began to look for other opportunities.

She decided to focus her marketing efforts on restaurants and hotels. After she struck a deal with the Birchwood Hotel, other hotels and restaurants followed. In 2013, Gugu won a tender to supply fresh vegetables to government hospitals.

Sun International sources 80% of their products and services from black-owned businesses, and it was not long before they took notice of Gugu and Daughters Farming. Impressed by

her hard work, reliability and the quality of her products the hotel group announced earlier this year that they would be partnering with Gugu.

As part of the deal she provides 200kg of fresh produce to the Maslow Hotel in Sandton, Johannesburg every week. This consignment includes Asian crops grown specifically for the hotel's unique menu.

Not only does the farm in Walkerville give her 15 employees an income, it also gives Gugu the opportunity to teach her daughters business and life skills. Her eldest daughter, who is in Grade 11, helps to market the produce to stores such as Pick n Pay, while her 10- year-old daughter sells fruit and veggies at the Walkerville Farmers' Market on weekends. Her three other adopted daughters also help with marketing.

She wanted to involve her daughters in the business in order to teach them basic survival skills. Gugu never went to school, but she learnt to survive. She believes that there are no guarantees in life, but one can always use your hands to make your life better.

Radley Landgoed Farmer of the Year: Mpumalanga

Radley Landgoed in Malalane, Mpumalanga, is a family owned business specialising in citrus, mangoes and sugar cane. A Nguni stud also serves to conserve the mountainous areas of the farm. Henning Radley and his three sons Wilscott, Rénaud and Henno, manage the 1 800ha farm with a strong focus on expansion and sustainability.

Although the Radleys have focus areas on the farm, responsibilities are shared and all three brothers are involved with each facet on the farm to ensure continuation.

The Radleys employ more than 100 permanent workers who all live on the farm and hire an additional 50 labourers during peak season. The family places much emphasis on instilling a value system in their staff that includes mutual respect for their fellow workers and taking responsibility for the job at hand. This on-going training through the Agri-Business Ethics and Leadership Institute has resulted in a highly productive and stable workforce.

Although labour reduction is always a consideration for reducing costs, the Radleys believe that the community must be taken into account. "Higher employment rates create a ripple effect as the workers become aware of our role in the community and as such take ownership of their jobs. If they see something that is out of place then they will report it," says Henning.

As pillars of the community the Radley family believes in actively contributing to the respective agricultural sectors and the three brothers sit on various boards in the mango, sugar and citrus industries. By being involved in organised agriculture, the Radleys make significant contributions to the industry and the greater farming community in Malalane.

Craig MacFarlane Farmer of the Year: KwaZulu-Natal

Loch Buighe was established in 1868 and Craig MacFarlane is the fifth generation on the farm situated close to Ixopo, between Richmond and Kokstad. Craig started farming at the age of 20, due to the unfortunate passing of his dad who was murdered in their family home in October 1999. But as the time went by he grew in confidence and knowledge and today is one of the foremost potato seed producers and was awarded the Potato Seed Grower of the Year Award from Potatoes Seed Growers Association this year.

Craig farms on dry land and rotation of crops plays an important role in his farming enterprise. He plants 70 ha of seed potatoes and has adapted to the ever-changing seed potato industry. He also plants maize, soya beans, oats and eragrostis of which maize is the most important. He plants 400 ha of maize to produce silage for his dairy division comprising 1 500 cows. He has a 600 cow Red Angus Beef commercial breeding herd that grazes on the steep slopes where no other farming enterprises can be accomplished.

Craig also has a timber enterprise on the farm with 500 ha of *Eucalyptus Grandis* (blue Gum) plantations which are harvested year round according to a ten year felling cycle.

Craig has a great management team that are involved in all sectors of the farm. Craig oversees the seed potatoes but is very involved in all the other sections as well.

Craig and his wife Sue have four children and have worked tirelessly to build Loch Buighe into the success it is today.

Jacob de Villiers **Agriculturist of the Year: Mpumalanga**

The nomination of Jacob de Villiers as Agriculturist of the Year is in a way a first in the history of the competition and the Agricultural Writers SA. As a successful and competent farmer, he was crowned National Farmer of the Year in 1980.

He changed his career in die 1990 and as a politician, minister of agriculture, minister of public works, executive director of the Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut (AHI) and even after his retirement when he became involved in developmental aid, he continued to use his practical farming knowledge and expertise. That is why he is the very first National Farmer of the Year also to be nominated as Agriculturist of the Year.

As a farmer he knew what was best for agriculture when he had to execute cabinet decision which affected the agricultural sector intensely. Probably the most important one was the abolishment of the single channel marketing system. This was a tremendous boost for the competitiveness of South African agricultural products abroad and the free market system we have today is to the advantage of every single farmer in the country.

He took over as Minister of Agriculture (common affairs) from Greyling Wentzel in 1990 and after five years he left politics behind to become the executive director of the AHI where he lead to institute on the road of transformation and renewal for 13 years.

Even after retirement he remained involved in developmental work within local communities at Malelane where he now lives. He was instrumental in establishing the Nkomazi Communities Development Fund to help improve services within previously disadvantaged communities.

Theo Venter **Agriculturist of the Year: North-West**

Theo Venter is not an agriculturist in the conventional sense of the word, but his contribution to the understanding of the complexities and intricacies of political change to the agricultural sector and the impact there of on farmers over many years, are invaluable.

During the past 25 years he has addressed all provincial agricultural congresses, national congresses and meetings of agri-businesses. Conservatively, Theo Venter has done more or less 500 presentations and key-note addresses over 25 years.

He studied at the old Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (Now North-West University) from 1974-1977 and obtained a Master's Degree in Political Science. He

was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship in 1982 and studied in the USA from 1982 to 1984 obtaining a second Masters Degree in Political Science from the Nelson Rockefeller School for Public Management at the State University of New York in Albany, NY.

Theo Venter is presently Special Advisor to the Vice Chancellor of the North West University.

In 2012 he was the NWU's second most quoted person. The awards were a means of providing recognition to the exceptional attempts of several experts who share their expertise with the media and in this way keep the public informed. He was awarded again in 2013, 2014 and 2015 as one of the top 3 academic staff members in all media categories.

He and Harald Pakendorf became the first participants in the regular Sunday evening programme, Kommentaar (Comment) with Niekie van den Berg on the Afrikaans channel of SABC radio, "RSG". This programme is still continuing since its inception in 1988, and Theo Venter is still a regular participant. Many farmers regard this programme as an important weekly summary of the important news.

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