



# Constitution

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## 1. Name of the Association

The name of the association shall be Agricultural Writers South Africa (SA). Abbreviated to AWSA. The official Afrikaans name shall be Landbouskrywers Suid-Afrika (SA).

## 2. Mission and Vision Statement

Agricultural Writers SA represents agricultural journalists and communicators who serve the industry through magazines, newspapers, radio, television, and digital media. Qualified membership is also extended to allied supporters. However, it remains primarily an organisation run by journalists and communication professionals, serving the needs of their peers.

## 3. Description and Interpretation

For the purposes of this Constitution, the following terms shall have the meanings assigned to them, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise. Words used in singular form include the plural meaning, and references to the male gender also include the female gender.

- 3.1 **ASSOCIATION** refers to Agricultural Writers SA.
- 3.2 **NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (NEC)** refers to the members of the association who were elected, appointed, or named as the national executive committee under the terms of this constitution.
- 3.3 **MEMBERS** refers to persons who specialise in agricultural communication, who have been accepted as members under the terms of this constitution.
- 3.4 **REGIONAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (RMC)** refers to a management committee that was elected by a recognised regional branch of the association.
- 3.5 **DECISION** refers to decisions made by the national executive committee or regional management. Decisions made by regional management committee are subject to approval by the national executive committee.
- 3.6 **ADDENDUM** refers to internal rules instituted with the purpose to elaborate on certain aspects of this constitution. The abbreviation AD followed by a number is used as reference.
- 3.7 **SECRETARY** refers to the member elected at a general meeting to amongst other things handle correspondence, compile agendas, keep minutes and other records, and does general clerical work for the organisation.

- 3.8 **TREASURER** refers to the member elected at a general meeting to administer or manage the financial assets and liabilities of the association.
- 3.9 **SECRETARIAT** refers to an individual or company employed by the national executive committee to fulfil mutually agreed-upon functions for the national executive committee and regional management committee.

#### 4. Objectives

The objectives of the association are:

- 4.1 To promote and protect the interests of members.
- 4.2 To raise funds in order to promote the objectives of the association.
- 4.3 To nominate and select candidates for the association's awards every year, in accordance with the requirements set out by the NEC.
- 4.4 To promote and support press freedom.
- 4.5 To establish and maintain contact with agricultural journalists and their organisations in other countries.
- 4.6 To promote excellence and communication.

#### 5. Powers and Rights

- 5.1 Subject to the terms of its constitution, the association will have the power to act within the framework of these terms and as provided by the law under which organisations of its kind function in accordance with the interests and objectives of the association.
- 5.2 The NEC will make decisions and authorise actions that, according to its judgement, promote and protect the objectives and interests of the association.

#### 6. Membership

- 6.1 All persons who are involved with agricultural journalism or communication may become members of the association. Applications, done through a standardised membership form, must be directed to the regional chairperson of the applicant's home region. The regional branch will react to the application under the terms of this constitution. Only cases where uncertainty exists will it be referred to the NEC for consideration. The decision of the executive management will be final and binding.
- 6.2 Membership of the association can be obtained in seven categories, namely FULL MEMBERS, ASSOCIATE MEMBERS, HONORARY AND LIFETIME MEMBERS,

## HONORARY PRESIDENTS, CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP, STUDENT MEMBERSHIP AND FARMER MEMBERSHIP.

- **FULL MEMBERS:** All journalists and communications officers in the fields of agriculture. This includes persons who specialise in writing articles, compiling radio/digital media programmes or the planning and execution of communication. These members pay membership fees, take part in activities hosted by the association, and can vote at meetings.
- **ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:** Persons who associate with and promote the association's objectives, but do not qualify for full membership, can receive associate membership at the NEC's discretion. These members pay membership fees, can take part in activities hosted by the association, but cannot vote.
- **HONORARY MEMBERS:** The NEC can name any person as honorary member. Honorary members cannot vote but can attend and participate in meetings. Honorary members will not pay membership fees.
- **LIFETIME MEMBERS:** Any member can be named a lifetime member by the NEC.
- **CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP:** Businesses that associate themselves with the association's objectives can become Corporate Members at the NEC's discretion. These corporate members can take part in activities hosted by the association and can vote. Membership fees will be determined by the branch's executive.
- **STUDENT MEMBERSHIP:** Student membership is available to full-time students enrolled in journalism, communication, or agricultural-related studies. Student members may participate in activities but will not have voting rights. Membership fees will be determined by the RMC.
- **FARMER MEMBERSHIP:** Farmer candidates who have been nominated by the regions in the Farmer of the Year and the New Entrant of the Year categories can become farmer members if they associate themselves with the association's objectives. They do not qualify for full membership. These members can take part in activities hosted by the association, but cannot vote.
- **AWSA MEMBERSHIP TO THE IFAJ:** SA is a guild of the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists (IFAJ), which is a politically neutral organisation that promotes ethics, freedom of the press, and professional development for agricultural journalists and communicators worldwide.

## 7. Membership Fees

- 7.1 Membership fees will be determined by the NEC and ratified by an annual general meeting of the association. Membership fees will be payable no later than 30 July every

year into the official account of the regional branch and provide proof of payment to the secretariat and treasurer of the RMC.

- 7.2 Only members who are in good standing with their fees and any other responsibilities towards the association will qualify to be elected to the NEC and will be able to vote at annual and general meetings, attend events or receive any benefits.
- 7.3 Any member who fails to pay the membership fees within 3 three months of being notified will be suspended as a member of the association until the fees have been paid in full.
- 7.4 The executive management may waive a member's fees at its discretion.
- 7.5 Regional branches must, in turn, pay their membership fees to the national association by 30 October into the official bank account of the national association and provide proof of payment to the treasurer of the NEC.

## **8. Termination of Membership**

- 8.1 The NEC can affect a decision to terminate a membership, provided that two-thirds of the NEC are present and qualify to vote. Any member who violates the constitution, disregards the rules of the association, or who, according to the discretion of the NEC, dishonours the association or deviates from the objectives of the association can be suspended.
- 8.2 No steps will be taken towards suspending a member before the member has received written notice of the impending review at least 30 days before the relevant meeting. The member can request to be present at or be represented at this meeting.
- 8.3 Any member who has been suspended must be notified in writing within seven days of the decisive meeting.
- 8.4 A member who is, due to any reason, no longer a member of the association can apply to be reinstated as a member, provided that he/she adhere to the conditions set out by the NEC.

## **9. Register of members**

- 9.1 The secretariat will keep a register of all members. This register will include their contact details and the company they are affiliated with.

## **10. National Executive Committee**

- 10.1 The affairs of the association will be managed by the NEC, consisting of members nominated by regional branches. One member per regional branch will join the national chairperson, vice-chairperson on the NEC.

- 10.2 The annual general meeting will elect a national chairperson, national vice chairperson, secretary and treasurer for the term ahead. Successful election will depend on a majority vote.
- 10.3 NEC can co-opt a person nominated by a sponsor as a member of the management committee, to represent the sponsors.
- 10.4 Members of the NEC are elected for a one-year term but can be re-elected.
- 10.5 If a position on the NEC becomes vacant, the management can co-opt any member of the association to serve as a member of the NEC until the time of the next annual general meeting.
- 10.6 This member of the NEC will have voting rights.
- 10.7 A member of the NEC will end his term in office if he is absent from three NEC meetings without special leave.
- 10.8 All bona fide actions of the NEC will be valid at all times.

## **11. National Executive Committee meetings**

- 11.1 NEC will, if possible, meet at least three times per year to discuss the association's affairs. A management committee consisting of the chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary and treasurer, with the right to co-opt, will handle the urgent day-to-day affairs of the association, with the provision that all decisions will be ratified at the next meeting of the NEC.
- 11.2 A quorum will constitute 50% of the management committee and one member of the NEC.
- 11.3 The chairperson will lead the meetings. In cases where the chairperson is absent, the vice-chairperson will act as chairperson. In cases where both the chairperson and vice-chairperson are absent, the NEC will elect an acting chairperson from the rest of the committee.
- 11.4 Minutes will be kept for each NEC meeting and ratified at the next meeting of the executive management.
- 11.5 Elected, nominated, or co-opted members of the NEC will, have voting rights at the NEC meeting.
- 11.6 Every member of the executive management will have one vote. The chairperson can cast a vote but will not have a determining vote.

## **12. Eligibility to Serve on the National Executive Committee**

- 12.1 Only members who are currently serving or have previously served on the RMC of a recognised regional branch are eligible for election to the NEC.
- 12.2 This requirement ensures that all elected national representatives possess relevant experience and understanding of the association's regional operations.
- 12.3 No member may be nominated or elected to the NEC without having served on an RMC.

## **13. Duties and Powers of the National Executive Committee**

- 13.1 To control and manage all assets of the association and to seize any assets of regional branches in cases of dissolution and/or mismanagement and manage these assets at its discretion in consultation with the relevant sponsors.
- 13.2 To call special and annual general meetings.
- 13.3 To take or defend any legal steps by or against the association or its officials.
- 13.4 To compile regulations and bylaws that are in accordance with the association's objectives.
- 13.5 To investigate and finalise any disputes resulting from the interpretation of the Constitution and regulations/bylaws.
- 13.6 To make final decisions with regard to disputes.
- 13.7 To hold a current bank account in the name of the association, receive and deposit money, withdraw money, make electronic transfers and payments on behalf of the association.
- 13.8 To employ persons who serve the interests of the association, terminate their services if necessary, and remunerate them for their services.
- 13.9 To appoint ad-hoc or sub-committees whose meetings and actions will fall under the jurisdiction of the Constitution.
- 13.10 To ensure that all accounting records are kept up to date by the secretary/treasurer and audited at least once per year by an approved accountant and audited every three years by an auditor appointed by the NEC. An audited statement reflecting the financial position of the association and the auditor's report must be submitted to the annual general meeting.
- 13.11 To ensure that the income of the association is used solely for the promotion of the association and its objectives. This includes the remuneration of any persons who deliver a service to the association.
- 13.12 To collect any money that may be necessary from time to time.

- 13.13 To donate any assets of the association to an association with similar objectives in case of dissolution of the association.
- 13.14 To consider and decide on all applications for membership of the association.
- 13.15 To terminate membership under the terms of clause 8.
- 13.16 To do everything required for the association to thrive.
- 13.17 To annually host awards associated with the association, namely the Farmer and Agriculturist of the Year awards, as well as any other competition in association with sponsors or corporate members.
- 13.18 To pay membership fees to the IFAJ.

#### **14. Finances**

- 14.1 All payments made by the association must be approved by the secretary/treasurer and any two members of the executive committee. The financial year of regional branches will end on the last day of February each year.
- 14.2 The financial year of the national association will end on the last day of July each year.
- 14.3 The travel costs of members of the regional executive management to attend official functions will be determined by the regional executive management on a case by case basis, pending available funds.
- 14.4 The NEC's expenses with regard to NEC meetings and the annual general meeting will be paid by the executive management from the national fund.
- 14.5 No individual may derive personal profit from the activities of the association. All funds shall be used exclusively to promote the objectives of the association.
- 14.6 The association shall not conduct any profit-making activities or participate in any business or profession operated by any of its members or provide any financial support, property, or continued services and/or facilities to members to run businesses or practice a profession.

#### **15. Regional Branches**

- 15.1 The NEC will determine when enough members of the association are active in a specific area to warrant the establishment of a regional branch in the region in question.
- 15.2 The management committee of a regional branch will consist of a chairperson and no less than three members, selected by the members of the branch.
- 15.3 The RMC will be allowed to set rules that are not in conflict with the constitution. These rules will be submitted to the NEC for approval.
- 15.4 The RMC will submit minutes of all meetings and an annual financial statement to the NEC.

## 16. Meetings

- 16.1 The annual general meeting of the association will be held at a venue-determined by the hosting branch of the AWSA National Awards. The date and time of the meeting will be set under the condition that the annual general meeting will be held no later than 5 months after the end of the financial year. Members will be notified of this meeting, and an agenda for the meeting will be sent out at least a month before the day of the meeting. Meetings can be held in person or via electronic meeting platforms.
- 16.2 If it is requested by ten or more members of the association, a special general meeting can be convened. Members must be notified of the meeting and the agenda sent out within two months after the meeting was requested and one month before the day of the meeting.
- 16.3 The NEC can call a special general meeting. Members must be notified of the meeting, and an agenda must be sent out at least two weeks before the day of the meeting.
- 16.4 If, due to any unforeseen circumstances, a member does not receive notification of a meeting, it will not affect the validity of the meeting.
- 16.5 Ten full ordinary members will constitute a quorum at an annual general meeting. If there is still no quorum fifteen minutes after the meeting should have started, the meeting, if it was called at the request of the members, can be cancelled. In other cases, the meeting can adjourn for half an hour, after which the members present can form a quorum and have the authority to continue with the agenda.
- 16.6 If neither the chairperson nor vice-chairperson is present fifteen minutes after the meeting should have started, the present members can elect a chairperson to lead the meeting.
- 16.7 At meetings of the association and its regional branches, all voting members will have one vote. Members will be allowed to vote by proxy and must inform the secretariat or the secretary of his/her intention to vote by proxy and also provide the name of the person who will be submitting the proxy vote. For the election of the NEC at the annual general meeting, each paid-up member will have one vote.
- 16.8 Voting will be done by means of a voting ballot, unless there is a unanimous decision to use another method.
- 16.9 In cases where a member is unable to attend in person, voting may take place electronically via virtual attendance.
- 16.10 Minutes will be kept of all meetings and ratified at the next meeting.
- 16.11 Notices, minutes, and official communications may be sent via email or other approved digital means. Proposed amendments to the constitution and motions for reconsideration at an annual general meeting or a special meeting will be submitted to the secretary/treasurer or the chairperson at least 30 days before the day of the meeting at which it is to be discussed.

## **17. Official Language**

- 17.1 The official language of the association shall be English.
- 17.2 However, during any meeting, if all attendees are comfortable and in agreement, proceedings may be conducted in another language, provided that all participants fully understand and consent to its use. This flexibility is granted in the interest of inclusivity and effective communication.

## **18. Representation in Public Media**

- 18.1 No member may publicly represent the association's views or positions without prior authorisation from the NEC.

## **19. Training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD)**

- 19.1 The association shall promote the professional development of its members through training sessions, workshops, webinars, and mentorship programmes.

## **20. Amendments to the Constitution**

- 20.1 Any amendments to this constitution will require the approval of at least two-thirds of the members present at an annual general meeting or special meeting called for the purpose of voting on the amendment.
- 20.2 Any proposed amendments to this constitution must be distributed to all members of the association at least two weeks before the day of the meeting at which the amendment is to be considered.
- 20.3 This constitution replaces any earlier versions of the constitution but does not render any decisions made under previous versions of the constitution invalid.
- 20.4 This version supersedes all previous versions and is effective as of 2025.

## **Addendums**

- AD 1 Pro Forma for Farmer of the Year nomination
- AD 2 Pro Forma for Agriculturist of the Year nomination
- AD 3 Membership Form
- AD 4 List of members (POPI Act limitations)

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