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First winner in the Women's Insight Deliberation Competition announced in Johannesburg today

Congratulations to Michelle Marais, the first winner of the 2023/2024 Women's Insight Deliberation Competition. At a gala event held at Villa Arcadia on the Hollard campus in Parktown, Johannesburg Marais elaborated on her passion for creating opportunities for farmers in Africa and stressed that although young people must be enticed to enter the agricultural sector, it remained important that they are made aware of all the realities as well.

The Women's Insight Deliberation Competition seeks to create a platform for women in agriculture to discuss agricultural issues, and ultimately influence public and industry discourse. It aims to encourage well-thought-out and accurate deliberation of topics relating to agriculture.

Entrants had the opportunity to share their views on any aspect impacting on their lives or careers in agriculture or affecting their rural communities or the environment in general, and to say how they would bring about change.

"The **Women's Insight Deliberation Competition** provided the ideal platform and opportunity for women involved in agriculture to share their views on how boardroom decisions on policy matters, have an impact on their daily lives," says Magda du Toit, event organiser.

All women in agriculture aged 18 years and older were invited via various platforms to participate in this initiative. Each participant could air her views and participate in a debate to share her solutions for change. "Our sincere appreciation goes to the participating partners for supporting this initiative and contributing to the success of the first-ever competition of this nature," adds Marianna du Plessis, event organiser.

This competition was made possible with the generous support of Hollard Insurance Group, Case IH SA, NWK, Syngenta Seeds, FNB, Edge Communications, FlexBox, Old Mutual, Farming Portal, Empire Fleet, Plantland, Grain SA, Landbou Radio, AgriNetwork-Consult, Magda du Toit Communications and Sanet du Plessis Art Design.

"After reviewing the entries, it is a pity that only five finalists could be chosen. The entries emphasised the meaningful role women play in the agricultural sector. Each of the woman who submitted an entry is a testimony of the value women can bring to the table" Corné Louw, Applied Economics and Member Services Lead, Grain SA, and convener of the adjudication panel said.

The finalists were:

- Lindi Botha: agri-communication specialist
- Yolandi Kruger: founder and director of Dunamis Agri Advisory Solutions
- Michelle Marais: project coordinator at Urban Farmer
- Prudence Thulisile Mokwena: farmer and founder of RBKM Chickens
- Karen Truter: agriculturist

In the various deliberations, participants focused on, inter alia, the following topics:

- Advocacy in the sector to support farmers
- Enabling development in rural communities
- Elevating agriculture's voice
- Support to farmers entering the sector
- Keeping agriculture real
- Succession planning
- The role of young people in agriculture

“By sharing their insights, the finalists shed new light on many aspects impacting on agriculture,” Andries Wiese, business development manager at Hollard, and master of ceremonies, pointed out during the event.

“Usually we hear women talk, and we do not always listen and take home the truths of what has been said. Today, this attitude is changing. We are focusing on what women in agriculture are saying and we are acting and taking these home truths home,” Hendrik van Staden, Syngenta Seeds business unit head in Sub Sahara Africa said during the awards ceremony.

During the event five women who played pioneering roles in agriculture were also honoured. “Being a pioneer is not easy. It is quite challenging as it involves breaking new ground and facing a great deal of uncertainties. The agricultural sector in South Africa, are privileged to have these women playing meaningful roles in their specific roles,” CEO of Grain SA, Tobias Doyer, pointed out.

The women who received special recognition as pioneers, are Prof Estie van Marle-Köster, associate professor University of Pretoria, Dr Langa Simela, business development manager at ABSA, Mariana Purnell, former general manager Agbiz Grain, Dr Lukeshni Chetty, general manager SANSOR, and Prof Hettie Schönfeldt, University of Pretoria.

“We would also like to announce that the entries will soon open for the 2024/2025 competition. More information on the competition, as well as the entry form will once again be made available on the main page of www.farmingportal.co.za,” du Plessis said.

Ends

Enquiries can be directed to: Marianna Du Plessis at mduplessis@agrixgroup.com

The video clips of all the entries are available on www.farmingportal.co.za

More about the organisers

Who is Future Agri Perspective?

Future Perspective is an initiative of like-minded individuals who are teaming together to present credible and scalable platforms for individuals in the agricultural value chain. These platforms facilitate a process for participants to present and voice insights and perspectives on relevant topics to stimulate debate and surface potential solutions, which might otherwise not have been tabled.

Meet the Team**Magda du Toit**

Magda has a demonstrated history and experience in agricultural communications, stakeholder relations and issues management of more than 35 years. She served on the executive of both the regional and national bodies of the Agricultural Writers SA where she was elected for 11 years as regional, and 9 years as the national chair. She currently serves as the South African representative at the international Federation of Agricultural Journalists (IFAJ). She is a well-known and outspoken advocate for agriculture. After many years in the corporate arena, she now operates as a freelance writer and communications consultant. She is well-known for her inspirational Women's Agricultural Diary that has changed the lives of many women in rural areas.

Marianna du Plessis

Marianna grew up in a family farming environment. She is an experienced facilitator and project orientated, with wealth of experience in linking agri-business to profitable projects, opportunities, and potential funding. She is the founder of the international Agribusiness Africa Conference and facilitates regular visits to some of the major international agricultural trade shows, co-hosts summits internationally, and speaker or chairperson at international conferences. Marianna is an invited member of the International Women in Agriculture Forum and an advocate for creating talent and opportunities for women in agriculture.

Johann Pretorius

Johann grew up in the countryside of the Free State. Johann was a full time commercial grain and cattle farmer for 25 years. He has more than 20 years' experience in national radio and television broadcast and media, and the founder of the online media Farmingportal.co.za and Agri News Net portals. He is the CEO of the CRA Group in Pretoria and the initiator of the competition to give recognition for the role of women in agriculture.

Koos Nel

Koos is the co-founder and CEO of the Agri X Group, is an admitted Advocate of the High Court in South Africa, a chartered marketer and certified financial planner with a 30 year career in Old Mutual, spanning various functions varying from legal advice, marketing, and business development. As head of Agri and a Strategic Marketing Manager he was responsible for the strategy and value proposition for Agri market.