

Winners of Toyota Young Farmer and New Harvest Of the Year announced

Winners of the Agri SA Toyota Young Farmer of the Year and Toyota New Harvest of the Year awards were announced at a gala event in Johannesburg on 27 October 2016, with each of the winners driving away with a brand new Toyota Hilux.



New Harvest Of the Year winner, Andre Cloete with (on left) Casper Kruger, VP of vehicle sales and dealer network for Toyota SA and (on right) Prof Carlu van der Westhuizen

The competition starts with regional competitions which saw all nominated farmers put through an arduous process of evaluations. Once the regional winner - one from each province - has been chosen, they then compete against each other in the national competition.

Finalists were nominated based on their performance in their respective region. They also have to be between 18 and 35 and must have been a member of Agri SA's provincial organisations for at least two years. All finalists were nominated by their respective Agri SA provincial councils and were tested on a multitude of aspects, including their financial and business skills, farming skill and proficiency in management focusing specifically on their own contribution, independence, and decision-making authority.

The evaluations were done by a panel of well-known agricultural specialists led by Prof. Carlu van der Westhuizen, Agricultural Production Economist, Department of Agriculture and Central University of Technology; Prof John Annandale, Agronomist, Department of Plant Production and Soil Science and University of Pretoria; Prof Louw Hoffman, Distinguished Professor in Meat Science, Department of Animal Sciences at the University of Stellenbosch.

Toyota Agri SA Young Farmer of the Year

Jacques Beukes, a table grape and pears farmer from the De Doorns region of the Western Cape received the 2016 Agri SA Toyota Young Farmer of the Year award.



Jacques Beukes

He has also purchased several farms in the Hex River valley area since 2012, which he has optimised to their full potential. Beukes is both technically inclined and environmentally friendly which has enabled him to install a dripper irrigation system, implement improved water control through the installation of electronic scheduling systems as well as add various energy saving mechanisms including the installation of solar geysers to all staff houses, underground drainage systems and the use of environmentally-friendly products.

Beukes regards his workforce as the foundation of his business. He is focused on their development and regularly supplements their internal training with formal training courses. He has also ensured his staff has hygienic and adequate housing, a creche situated on the farm for their children, safe transport to and from the farm for staff and some of his long-serving staff have been awarded shares in his farm and received dividends every year.

Beukes is also actively involved in organised agriculture by being the Deputy Chairperson of the Hex River Table Grape Association, the regional representative of Agri Western Cape and Chairperson of the Producers' Forum of the Breede Valley Municipality.

"In witnessing the scientific, meticulous and professional way in which Beukes performs the functions in this farming business, he is a prime example of a farmer who is dedicated to ensuring intrinsic success and sustainable farming and profitability," commented Prof van der Westhuizen.

"We would like to congratulate Beukes for his outstanding performance in this year's Young Farmer competition. Farming, as a profession, is very difficult and requires full commitment from farmers as they tackle all areas of the business including administration, sales and marketing and the complete supply chain in addition to the day-to-day running of the farm. Extraordinary businesses require extraordinary management and visionaries to elevate the business to the next level.

Beukes is a sterling example of exactly that," says Kerry Roodt, general manager of marketing communication at Toyota South Africa Motors.

Toyota New Harvest of the Year

André Cloete, a farmer from the Overberg area in the Western Cape, won the 2016 New Harvest of the Year award. The New Harvest competition recognises the most promising young farmer from a previously disadvantaged background.



André Cloete

All entrants are nominated by various businesses or associations in the agricultural sector. Cloete farms with apples, pears, oats, barley, sheep and cattle on the Klein Ezeljacht farm situated close to Greyton. Cloete was nominated by the Western Cape branch of the African farmers' association of South Africa.

Cloete, who has 28 years of practical farming experience, started as a farm manager until he entered into a rental agreement with the Klein Ezeljacht to farm and manage the land himself. After this change, Cloete introduced a few changes to the farm including a revised irrigation system as well as a new crop protection strategy. The farm's main pear varieties are Forelle and Packham's Triumph, while the apples include Golden Delicious and Royal Gala. Through his many changes and consistent hard work, Cloete now exports his fruit through Tru-Cape and delivers fruit to Elgin Fruit Juices.

Cloete is also actively involved in the farming community and is the chairperson of the Caledon North Farmers' Association, a director of Deciduous Fruit Development Chamber (DFDC) and the South African Apple and Pear Producers' Association (SAAPPA). Furthermore, he is a mentor for other upcoming farmers in the area and often looks for opportunities to employ more people and uplift their social status.

"We commend Cloete for his dedication, motivation, and determination to succeed. He and so many farmers are challenged every day by factors out of their control and instead of giving up, they rise to the challenge and feed our nation. Farming and agriculture as a whole is a very important sector in the South African economy as it provides sustenance and contributes to the country's GDP," adds Roodt.

AFASA describes Cloete as "a professional farmer who understands all the different facets of business. He manages his business like a corporate business and takes great care of his product and people. He is recognised by the industry and government as a role model for other farmers."

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