

Sugar industry reiterates commitment to transformation

South African Sugar Association (Sasa) vice chairperson, Joanmariae Fubbs, has commended the organisation for recognising the need to promote diversity by availing more land for black farmers in the industry.



Source: 422737 via [Pixabay](#)

"Sasa has been able to transform more than 21% of free owned land on the sugarcane from white farmers to black farmers without a shot being fired," Fubbs said.

Fubbs was speaking at the Women in Leadership webinar, hosted by Proudly South African on Wednesday.

As part of its Women's Month celebrations, Proudly South African will be hosting a series of four Women in Leadership webinars throughout August, focusing on industries that have Sectoral Master Plans dedicated to them.

The master plans have targeted specific action points relating to the respective industries, but there are also generic objectives, including a change in ownership and production patterns within each sector. The master plans aim to increase localisation, which will lead to re-industrialisation and growth, as well as to reclaim domestic markets lost to imports.

The clothing and textile sector, automotive industry, sugar, and creative arts sectors have been identified by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (dtic) as worthy of particular attention for their job creation potential.

Empowering women to take their rightful place

Fubbs said SASA has shifted its focus to women empowerment, compared to more than 20 years ago.

"[Sasa] has focused on empowering women to take their rightful place alongside their brothers in the sugar industry, from being farm managers, farm owners, to actually being on the financial and administration side of Sasa.

"Sasa has done so much for the milling companies by encouraging the ownership of black people in the industry. SASA also has a training establishment which provides training in the agricultural fields.

"People in the sugar industry [largely rural poor areas] are able to get bursaries, where they can go right up to get their doctorates. I was amazed to see how many women were pursuing a career in the agricultural industry and enjoying it," Fubbs said.

She noted that Sasa is also contributing to and supporting the energy sector through the production of ethanol.

While people often associate sugar to obesity, Fubbs said the product has benefits when "consumed in the right quantity".

"The danger is, if industries such as the sugar industry have to close down, you will get ghost villages and towns in South Africa. Sasa is determined to transform the profile of the industry from 100% white... to assisting black sugarcane farmers, especially sugarcane farmers," Fubbs said.

Consumer education

Nutrition Health and Wellness and Nestlé Nutrition Institute Africa (NNIA) Manager, Anne-Marie De Beer, said Nestle works very hard to help consumers make good decisions when it comes nutrition.

:What is important is to understand that we all enjoy food and it is very much part of what we do. When it comes to confectionery, our business is to provide guidance on product development, and encourage consumers to look at what they eat," De Beer said.

She said Nestlé also has consumer campaigns regarding confectionery.

Coca-Cola Beverages South Africa (CCBSA) Procurement Transformation Head, Busi Thusi, said the company is committed to true transformation, and that almost 80% of the sugar they use is procured locally.

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