

HORTGRO AWARDS 2024

The prestigious Hortgro Awards honouring outliers and stalwarts in the deciduous fruit industry was held on 31 May at the Lord Charles Hotel, in Somerset West. This is the second time that the Hortgro Awards was held in a new format, with a focus on the pome and stone fruit industries.

The "Awards" date back to 1972 when the Cape Pomology Association honoured industry leaders. This year's gala function was sponsored by Hortgro, First National Bank and Corteva.

Anton Rabe, Hortgro Executive Director, said that the agricultural sector tends not to give adequate recognition to people who serve the sector and respective industries over time.

"With the awards, some of which have a long history and have become prestigious awards, Hortgro seeks to recognise excellence and selfless service to the pome and stone fruit industries. The recipients of this year's award categories contribute to an already impressive list of individuals who made their mark in agriculture."

The winners of the categories were:

- Izithelo Media Award: Francois Williams, Die Burger
 - Daan Strydom Research and Technical Award: Dr Stephanie Midgley
 - Hortgro Transformation Award: Witzenberg PALS
 - Hortgro Chairman's Award: Johan Hopkins
 - 1662 Industry Award: Dora Ndaba
 - OSH Reinecke Frontrunner Award: Pieter du Toit
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Hortgro Izithelo Media Award

Francois Williams



Francois Williams of the of the Cape daily, Die Burger, received the media award for his reporting on the crisis at the Cape Town port, as well as other logistical problems affecting the deciduous fruit industry over the past year.

Francois' reporting is an example of high-quality journalism; balanced, impartial, creative, factually correct, and dynamic. Francois manages to continuously cover new perspectives and story angles from all role players, without falling into the sensation-seeking trap.

In a world engulfed in faulty reporting and lowered media ethics, Francois' work is a beacon of hope and an example for other journalists and proves once again the important role the media plays in holding all industry actors accountable and to keep the public informed.

Daan Strydom Research And Technical Award

Dr Stephanie Midgley

When one thinks of climate change and research, one involuntarily thinks of Dr Stephanie Midgley, specialist researcher from the Western Cape Department of Agriculture and professor extraordinaire at the University of Stellenbosch's Department of Horticulture.

Over the past 33 years, Stephanie has become a well-known name in the deciduous fruit industry. Especially when talking about climate change and the impact on Agriculture and natural resources.

Climate change is one of the biggest concerns for the South African deciduous fruit industry. Extraordinary weather phenomena, droughts and warmer weather are just some of the aspects that can hurt production practices.



Stephanie's career began in 1991 as a fruit technician at Unifruco's office in London. After this, she fulfilled various roles, among others at the South African Institute for Biodiversity, the SU, the University of Cape Town, and as an independent consultant.

Apart from her work on climate change, Stephanie has also conducted research on improving agricultural production techniques, product quality and the effective use of water in the production process.

Stephanie's research plays a leading role nationally and internationally. Her research helps the South African deciduous fruit industry to better understand climate change and thereby tackle future climate challenges with resilience and adaptability.

Hortgro Transformation Award

Witzenberg PALS (Partners in Agri Land Solutions)



PALS Board and delegates at the Strategy Session 2022

PALS is a private land reform and development initiative established in 2015 in the Witzenberg (Ceres) area by farmers in partnership with local communities and all three spheres of government (district, provincial and national).

PALS aims to create an enabling environment and thereby implement innovative land reform and inclusive agricultural growth that is in line with the Constitution and the National Development Plan.

The PALS initiative is based on sound business principles, solid legal structures, mentoring and training emerging black producers and agripreneurs to become successful business owners, while addressing issues of sustainability, mistrust, unequal relationships and exit strategies.

Therefore, PALS focuses not only on economic change, but also on socio-economic aspects, emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach to land reform and inclusive agricultural growth and development.

Through this, PALS has succeeded in carrying out several projects, not only in the stone and pome fruit sector, but also in other agricultural enterprises. Some of the pome and stone fruit industry successes include Eyethu Intaba, Kaja Farming, Thebelitsha Farming, Dwarsberg Farming, Bambisane, TSR Farming, La Vouere and KLP Agri to name but a few.

PALS initiatives have a lasting and far-reaching impact on the individuals and businesses established and clearly demonstrate their commitment to sustainable Agricultural development.

Hortgro Chairperson's Award

Johan Hopkins



After obtaining his degree in social sciences at Stellenbosch University, Johan worked in Stellenbosch's agricultural communities, including as personnel manager on several primary farms and then as Group Manager Human Resources at Unifruco (now Capespan). In 2001 he founded his own company where he is still the Managing Director.

During his career he received, among other things, a special mention from the then Cape Pomology Association for his contribution to their human resources programme, was nominated as a fellow by the Institute for Personnel Management where he served on the executive board and was also a founding member of the Cape Agri Employers Organization where he was the Chief Executive Officer for 5 years. He has served on various committees, including the Afrikaans Trade Institute and Agri SA's human resources committee.

Johan spent a lifetime in Agriculture, especially in the deciduous fruit and wine industry. His specialist knowledge of human resource management played a major role in establishing healthy relationships between employer and employee.

Johan's knowledge and understanding of humans within the agricultural environment also shows the love he has for this subject. His in-depth knowledge of agricultural labour issues makes him a mainstay of the industry. Johan Hopkins deserves the 2024 Chairperson's Award for a lifetime of dedication to the deciduous fruit industry.

1662 Industry Award

Dora Ndaba



The 1662 Industry Award commemorates the first two apples harvested in that year - April 17 to be exact - in the Company's Garden at the Cape of Good Hope. The picking of the two Witte Wijn Appels is regarded symbolically as the beginning of the deciduous fruit industry in South Africa.

This year, the 1662 Award goes to Dora Ndaba for her outstanding contribution to the deciduous fruit industry over several decades, specifically her contribution on operational management structures, and the transformation sphere of the industry.

Dora Ndaba's business career had humble beginnings in the informal sector in the 1970s. From there, she rose to the forefront of several important economic empowerment initiatives.

In 1981 she was appointed as the public relations officer for the Foundation of African Business and Consumer Services (FABCOS). FABCOS served as the umbrella body for 14 business and consumer organizations in the informal sector, including the South African Black Taxi Association, Black Builders Association, National Black Consumer Union, Tavern Association, Hawkers Association, and the National Stokvels Association.

In 1991, Dora was the runner-up in the prestigious South African Businesswoman of the Year award. Her aptitude and entrepreneurship are demonstrated in her highly successful business, Ndaba Fresh Cut. In April 2019 she received The Order of the Baobab in silver from the Presidency.

In 1998, Dora was appointed as Trustee of the Deciduous Fruit Producers Trust (DFPT) where she represented the Minister of Agriculture and the National Agricultural Marketing Council. In this role she was involved in several transformation initiatives and her expertise was an asset for the DFPT.

In 2005 she retired from the DFPT and was appointed as the first Trustee of the Fruit Workers Development Trust (FWDT) on which she still serves today. Under her trusteeship, the trust grew from R700 000 in 2005 to R25 million in 2024. Since 2005, the FWDT has paid around R9 million to its beneficiaries - black permanent farm workers.

Dora is still an industry advisor on matters related to agricultural products and government policy. She is being honoured for her tireless support, wisdom, and guidance to Hortgro and related structures. She is a worthy recipient of the 1662 Industry Award and a legend in her own right.

OSH Reinecke Frontrunner Award

Pieter Du Toit

The prestigious OSH Reinecke Frontrunner Award goes to Pieter du Toit, from the Dutoit Group.

Pieter is widely regarded as a visionary and strategic thinker. Someone who can develop large businesses successfully and profitably. One of his strongest qualities is to apply financial knowledge in a business environment.

In addition to his business expertise, Pieter is an energetic and passionate person with a great love for nature, photography, hot air ballooning and sports. Pieter is married to Deirdre; they have three daughters and eight grandchildren.

Background

Pieter is from the fourth generation of the Du Toit family business, which has been farming in Witzenberg since 1893. He matriculated at the Paarl Boys' High School in 1973 and obtained his B. Accounting Degree in 1977 and his Honours in 1978 at the University of Stellenbosch.

He completes his clerkship at Brink, Roos and Dutoit and during the period passes his Board exams and qualifies as a chartered accountant. In 1982 he joined Dutoit Fruits as administrative manager, and the following year was promoted to Managing Director for Dutoit Fruits. In August 1989 he was also appointed as Managing Director of Dutoit Vegetables and eventually progressed to Chief Executive Officer of the Dutoit Group.

During his 42 years at Dutoit Group, he made a major contribution to the growth of this business and its subsidiaries, Dutoit Agri, Dutoit Invest, Dutoit International and Libland.

Pieter especially took the lead in the business with the establishment of financial systems and disciplines. He was also involved in establishing the corporate structure and principles.



Leadership

Pieter plays an important role as a director on various agricultural entities, as well as in the deciduous fruit industry organizations - where he is a SAAPPA board member (SA Apple and Pear Producers Association - now Hortgro Pome) for about 10 years and serves, first as vice-chairman and then as chairman, from 1994 to 1996.

He plays a decisive role in the transition from the regulated one-channel marketing system to the deregulation of industry. In particular, the implementation of a stable financial base for the operating structures stands out.

Over the years, Pieter remained intensely involved in industry operational functions and his door was always open to those seeking his advice and to resolve sensitive issues.

Milestones under Pieter's leadership:

- The development and establishment of the Dutoit brand.
- The growth of Dutoit into a company that plays a role within SA and abroad with marketing in 42 countries.
- The conversion in marketing from a one-channel system to a deregulated industry.
- The establishment of various cooling plants at Dutoit and other companies where he served as a director.
- The modernization of packaging plants.
- The growth of Dutoit Group into a major leading agri business in primary agriculture.
- Establishing the corporate structure and principles.
- Apart from Dutoit, Pieter also spent a lot of time on operational matters as SAAPA Board Member and Chairman.
- Pieter also served on several boards, among others Unifruco, Capespan and on a large commercial bank's advisory committee.

As an industry leader Pieter du Toit embodies the spirit of OSH Reinecke Frontrunner Award and is therefore a worthy recipient.

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