

Press release 7 June 2023

The prestigious Hortgro Awards in honour of deciduous fruit industry champions was held at STIAS, Stellenbosch last night. This is the first time that Hortgro held its award function in the new format with a focus on the Pome and Stone fruit industries. To honour industry leaders, two OSH Reinecke Frontrunner winners were announced, for 2022 and 2023, respectively.

The winners in the different categories were:

Izethelo Media Award: Brand Republic for 'Meer as Grond'.

Daan Strydom Research and Technology Award: Henk Griessel

Hortgro Transformation Award: Western Cape Department of Agriculture

Hortgro Chairman's Award: Dr Leon von Mollendorff

1662 Industry Award: Joy van Biljon

OSH Reinecke Frontrunner Award 2022: Grant Smuts

OSH Reinecke Frontrunner Award 2023: Kobus Eigelaar

Hortgro Izethelo Media Award: Brand Republic

The production house, Brand Republic, received the Izethelo Media Award for the television series, Meer as Grond (VIA/kykNET). Viewers followed in-depth conversations on critical agricultural issues such as farm safety, drought, energy crisis, natural resources, transformation, water scarcity and many more. What agriculture means to our country, its people and how do we ensure food safety and security.

The issues investigated were complex with no simple answers. Hortgro offered programme proposals and Brand Republic ran with it. The result was four top quality television programmes about various aspects of the deciduous fruit industry. The quality of television improved the image of the industry and ensured constructive engagement between the fruit industry and the media. Read more about the Izethelo Media Award [here](#).

Daan Strydom Science and Technology Award: Henk Griessel

Hortgro's first Daan Strydom Research and Technical prize was awarded to Henk Griessel in recognition and appreciation of a career dedicated to the deciduous fruit industry in the field of postharvest quality of pome fruit.

Griessel, Quality Assurance Manager, at Tru-Cape, was described as a true industry servant who tirelessly and selflessly over many years provided direction and key technical and strategic input to various industry workgroups and advisory committees that determine research needs and priorities and assisted with the evaluation of the outcomes and results of research projects. Read more about Henk Griessel [here](#).

Hortgro Transformation Award: Western Cape Department of Agriculture

Transformation does not happen in a vacuum. Over many years the Western Cape Department of Agriculture was there to support Hortgro's transformation initiatives.

From the original "Boompie" Project to the latest Jobs Fund Initiatives, WCDA was always a valued industry partner. The WCDA also utilised Hortgro's capacity to act as an implementing agent as part of the commodity approach to promote black economic empowerment throughout the value chain.

Since 2011, the industry, in collaboration with the WCDA, has invested R325.m in economic development. Of the funds 60% were allocated to outright (100%) black owned entities, while 40% goes to shared equity initiatives. Successes include poverty alleviation through job creation that contributes to food security, increased production and exports and long-term sustainable economic and rural development.

The unique partnership between Hortgro and the WCDA became a recipe for success with similar initiatives being motivated in other provinces, as well as a model whereby other industries' funds are administered. With this award, Hortgro would like to acknowledge the Western Cape Department of Agriculture for their dedication and support in making transformation in the deciduous fruit industry an economic and sustainable reality. Read more about the Transformation award [here](#).

Hortgro Chairman's Award: Dr Leon Von Mollendorff

Leon von Mollendorff worked at the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) for several years in various leadership positions, before he was appointed as the first general manager of Culdevco in 2006, where he served until his retirement in 2022.

His research: Postharvest factors involved in the development of woolliness in nectarines is considered ground-breaking and for this, he received special recognition from the University of California in the USA.

In the industry, Leon is known as an excellent researcher, formidable negotiator, marketer, and someone who knows how to build networks. His work as a cultivar developer is highly

regarded worldwide. It was a privilege to work with Leon. Read more about the Leon Von Mollendorff [here](#).

1662 Hortgro Industry Award: Joy Van Biljon

The 1662 award commemorates the first apples that was harvested in the Company Garden at the Cape in that year – 17 April to be exact.

Joy van Biljon, one of the founding members of the Koue Bokkeveld Training Centre, also known as KBOS, had a vision to change agriculture through training. After 20 years as KBOS executive chief, she stepped down in 2020 and handed over the reins to Carmen Roberts.

Her legacy has made KBOS a beacon of inspiration and hope in the agricultural industry—envied by other regions and industries.

Over a lifetime of service, Joy van Biljon played a pivotal role in positioning training in the commercial sector in such a way that it makes both economic sense and empowers those being trained for a career in agriculture.

Joy also played a significant role in helping the deciduous fruit industry, and specifically in advising and assisting Hortgro, in sustaining the learning and development department. Read more about Joy van Biljon [here](#).

OSH Reinecke Frontrunner Award 2022: Grant Smuts

Grant Smuts, stone fruit producer and owner of Smuts Bros. Robertson, has served on the deciduous fruit industry's Research Council since 1998, later as chairman of the Hortgro Science Advisory Board. Today, he continues to provide valuable input on the Hortgro Stone board as vice-chair.

Grant also serves on several other industry boards and committees: Director of Hortgro Stone, as well as a board member of the Canning Fruit Growers Association (CFPA), and he also serves on the board of directors of the Ashton Fruit Producers Cooperative – where he played a leading role in negotiations with Tiger Foods last year.

Beyond decades-long service to the industry, Grant is also an industry leader in the Robertson region. During unrest between foreign workers in the Robertson area, Grant led the talks with the government and other stakeholders.

Over many decades Grant has been the flag bearer for the stone fruit industry. He is a great supporter of research in good times and bad, a sounding board that balances and always brings with him calm wisdom.

In addition to his service to the industry, he also expanded his own agribusiness from a family farm to a mega-business, where he is known for valuing the interests of his workers.

Grant Smuts is a worthy and deserving recipient of the OSH Reinecke Industry Leader Award for 2022. More about Grant Smuts [here](#).

OSH Reinecke Frontrunner Award 2023: Kobus Eigelaar

Achtervlei Farm on Piket-Bo-Berg is home to Kobus Eigelaar – pome and stone fruit producer of stature and selfless giver of his time and guidance to his community and to the industry.

Kobus has served on various industry boards for over thirty years. Hortgro Stone (formerly SASPA) - 1997 to present. Hortgro Pome (formerly SAAPPA) - since 2018 to present, as well as a Culdevco director (2007 - 2022).

His journey includes the deregulation of industry, and he therefore understands the value of industry organisations that must protect and promote the common interests of producers.

We know Kobus as a straight talker. But one that plays the issue on the table, not the man. He is someone who has his fellow producers' best interests at heart and acts in the interest of the larger industry. He understands the international trade and impact of geo-politics and over the years has made an important contribution to improve the producer's profitability and competitiveness through collective actions.

Kobus is an advocate and big supporter of research and the development of technology to help producers farm more sustainably.

It is a great honour to recognise Kobus for all the years of selfless service he has rendered at industry level. Kobus has tried to retire many times, only to be recalled. Kobus Eigelaar is the worthy recipient of the OSH Reinecke Frontrunner Award for 2023. More about Kobus Eigelaar [here](#).

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