

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2 October 2015

Grain SA celebrates Farmer Development

Grain SA celebrated the successes of its farmer development programme during a joyous event held in Bloemfontein yesterday. The function, which was attended by more than 200 guests included government representatives, agricultural stakeholders and approximately 140 emerging grain producers. Consisting of three categories, the Day of Celebration honours Subsistence, Smallholder and New Era Commercial farmers and their contribution to the country's food security. With so many success stories, the Day of Celebration provided Grain SA with the opportunity to celebrate farmer development, recognise excellence in the field and acknowledge transformation in grain production.

The **2015 Grain SA/ABSA/John Deere Financial New Era Commercial Farmer of the Year** was awarded to Solomon Masango from Carolina in Mpumalanga. And, for the first time in the history of the competition, Masango won a John Deere 5403 MFWD tractor sponsored by John Deere Financial in partnership with ABSA. "We are committed to the people who are linked to the land," Antois van der Westhuizen, Head Retail Finance: Sub Sahara Africa, John Deere Financial said celebrating this milestone. Masango farms on Brakspruit which belongs to Ubuhle Uyazenzela CPA. Joining the Grain SA Farmer Development Programme in 2012 and the Carolina study group in 2014, Masango planted 150ha of maize, increasing his average yield from 3,5 tons/ha to 6 tons/ha in the past year and planted 200 ha of soybeans with an average yield of 1,5 tons/ha. Overjoyed on learning he won, Masango thanked the Lord and his wife of 15 years for the support and encouragement. "All the other jobs that I have done before becoming a farmer, was just the start of my career, and where I am now, lies my passion", Masango said. The other finalists in this category were Vuyani and Lungelwa Kama from Maclear and Maseli Letuka from Kestell.

The **2015 Grain SA/Syngenta Smallholder Farmer of the Year** was awarded to Daliwonga Nombewu from Mthatha. Following a career as a taxi driver, Nombewu developed an interest in farming and joined a Grain SA study group called Siyakhula Gxididi Maize Project and attended various training courses. Nombewu planted 13 ha of maize and is expecting an average of 4,5 tons/ha. The other finalists in this category were Salphanius Motswenyane from Lichtenburg and Lawrence Mtsweni from Nigel.

The **2015 Grain SA/ABSA Subsistence Farmer of the Year** was awarded to Ngubengcuka Christian Moyo from Maclear. Realising he can make a living through farming, Moyo left his job at the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and started his farming career in 2008 on communal land. Ngubengcuka



Sponsored by:



planted 2,5 ha of maize on dryland. Implementing no-till practices from the 2013/2014 planting season, he believes that tractor implements destroy his lands and plants by hand. The other finalists in this category were Jabulani Abednego Mbele from Winterton and Musawenkosi David Ntombela from Bergville.

Recognising the vital role of those farmers who do not have large pieces of land to cultivate, Grain SA Farmer Development Programme Manager, Jane McPherson said the standard is rising every year in all three the categories and it is becoming more difficult for the panel of judges to choose the winners. “So many farmers want to enter and want to be included and each person’s story is different and inspirational. In this competition, men and women compete equally and the women are reaching the levels of excellence”, McPherson said.

A highlight on the Grain SA calendar, and fondly referred to as the “Harvesting of Farmers”, the 2015 Day of Celebration is a testimony of the organisation’s objective to assist farmers to produce enough food for an ever-growing South African population. In thanking the Grain SA partners, financiers, sponsors and stakeholders, Jannie de Villiers, CEO of Grain SA confirmed that “We won’t stop working to get finances for our emerging farmers to ensure food security. A most encouraging development is the fact that more and more of these farmers are getting a commercial yield when following the practices they are taught”.

Grain SA hereby wish to thank all sponsors for their contributions and convey our appreciation for their support.

Ends

Issued by:

Grain SA Communications
2 October 2015

Further enquiries:

Alzena Gomes, Public Relations Officer, Grain SA
086 004 7246 | alzena.gomes@grainsa.co.za
www.grainsa.co.za



Sponsored by:

