

# A woman's place in agriculture

Agriculture is traditionally regarded as a male profession, but those in the industry know that women are playing an influential role in developing the growth of agriculture in Africa. Magda du Toit, the corporate engagement and communication manager for Monsanto SA is one of those women - what sets her apart is her passion for agriculture.



Magda du Toit

## How long have you been in agriculture and where did it all start?

About 30 years. It all started when I was a journalist for a local newspaper in Bela-Bela where I had to attend farmer's day events and to report on various agricultural topics within the community. I was offered a position at the Department of Agriculture and I have never looked back.

## When did you join Monsanto SA and what is your role?

It's been 17 years now since July 2000. I know it's a long time for someone to stay at one company and some people may not approve, but I'm happy here and I love what I do. Monsanto is a wonderful company to work for and there are lots of opportunities for growth. I am currently the corporate engagement and communications manager for South Africa, responsible for media liaison and industry relations. I love interacting with farmers and the agricultural

community.

## What is fulfilling about your job and what has been your biggest contribution?

I love to tell the Monsanto story, especially about the benefits of technology for both small and large-scale farmers. I love biotechnology. A lot of people may disagree, but it's very good for food production. My husband and son are type one diabetic and every day I see the difference biotechnology makes to their health. It's so easy to have a negative opinion about something, even though you may not have all the facts. It saddens me that people criticise our technology and our farmers without truly understanding what we do and where their food actually comes from. As a company, and especially our farmers, we are constantly faced with challenges and we work hard to overcome them to ensure that millions of people don't go to bed hungry.

## Do you believe women have a place in agriculture?

Certainly! When I started my career there were not many women in the sector, but I believe women can farm, research, calculate and sell just as well as men. There is a lot women can do in agriculture apart from being actual farmers. They can be accountants, business analysts, biotechnologists, pathologists, veterinarians, marketers or journalists.

## What is your message for women's month?

Follow your heart, accept who and what you are and make the most of it. Use every opportunity to grow and empower yourself. You are strong and capable to do anything you want to. You are a woman, be who you are and follow your dreams.

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