

# Empowering female farmers, awarding entrepreneurship



By [Cari Van Wyk](#)

16 Sep 2016

With the aim of empowering women and to recognise the role they play in food security, job creation, and economic growth, the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) in partnership with Total South Africa recently hosted the 16th Annual DAFF Female Entrepreneur of the Year Awards under the theme "Reaffirming the commitment towards women empowerment in the agriculture, forestry, and fisheries sector." We spoke to Nyameka Makonya, head of strategy at Total South Africa about Total SA's stake in female entrepreneurship and the importance of this programme that awards women who have challenged the status quo.



Nyameka Makonya

■ ***Total South Africa has supported and sponsored the awards since its inception. What is Total's stake in female entrepreneurs in this sector? Why support it?***

**Nyameka Makonya:** Total South Africa has four focus areas on CSI and one of them is social development. Under this pillar, we seek to encourage and support women, young females and the disabled. FEA is a perfect vehicle in which we are able to address these identified groups and partnering with DAFF was a strategic move as they have access to these groups in a more organised manner as well as resources to reach the farmers.

■ ***What did the programme look for in participating female entrepreneurs?***

**Makonya:** We looked for dedication, selflessness, professionalism, as well as development. Once a person is dedicated and selfless in their project they stay with it longer despite the challenges and the results that become evident. Some categories require that certain documentation should be available e.g. proof of registration, proper bookkeeping, etc. All this proof shows professionalism and the willingness to grow from a small farmer to a big business, it is vital that our entrepreneurs keep up with the requirements and standards of running a business. And finally, the importance of entrepreneurs is not only to open businesses for themselves but to develop others and create employment, particularly in the current economic climate.

■ ***Tell us more about the winners? What set these women apart?***

**Makonya:** The winners were awarded in the following categories:

- Best Female Worker in the Sector is Lindelwa Elizabeth Mabuya from Western Cape
- Best Subsistence Producer in the Sector is Nthabiseng Kgobokoe from North West
- Top Entrepreneur in the Sector: Smallholder is Makhosazana Sambo from Mpumalanga
- Top Entrepreneur in the Sector: Processing is Mabel, Cynthia Mothlale from Northern Cape
- Top Entrepreneur in the Sector: Commercial is Caroline De Villiers from Western Cape
- Top Entrepreneur in the Sector: Export Markets is Vanecia Janse from Eastern Cape

The competition first takes place at a provincial level, thereafter the provincial winners of different levels compete at National level. The National winners have already proved their worth at the provincial and competed amongst the best. Some of them have entered more than once – they may not succeed at first but they never give up. They learn from their mistakes, pick themselves up and move along. Others have been in farming for more than 10 years, they do it out of passion - the recognition becomes part of the bigger story. These have been the lessons for us.

■ ***The theme of this year's awards was "Reaffirming the commitment towards women empowerment in the agriculture, forestry, and fisheries sector." Why has this become increasingly important and how will awards such as this further support and encourage the equal participation of women in the industry?***

**Makonya:** The main aim of the awards is to honour the efforts and contribution of women, young females and women with disabilities for the role they continue to play in food security, poverty alleviation, job creation and economic growth within the sector. We want to acknowledge these women for entering into a territory that was not only "white" but "male" dominated as well. Acknowledging people, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds for their contribution is important, what these women are doing is addressing some of the challenges that South Africa is battling with.

■ ***Why is it important to attract, empower and celebrate young female farmers in particular?***

**Makonya:** For a long time farming has been a taboo for women, let alone young females. We want to encourage them because there is a lot that can be done in this sector. We also want to demystify the thinking that it is for the uneducated and poor, this is a growing sector with a lot of possibilities. It is only fair that young females are given an opportunity equal to others to showcase their skills and abilities.

■ ***What do the awards mean for its recipients? How will it change their situation and the situation of other female farmers who are challenging the status quo?***

**Makonya:** It means a change in the way they have been doing things, all winners receive prize money as well as other benefits. This enables them to buy more equipment, seeds, go for courses or any anything that may improve their working life for the better.

## ABOUT CARI VAN WYK

Cari Coetzee is a contributor to Bizcommunity Tourism, Agriculture and Lifestyle.

- #AfricaMnth: Committing to the digital transformation of agriculture in Africa - 17 May 2018
- How to put the youth back in agriculture - 26 Feb 2018
- Is sustainable agricultural production, food security possible? - 6 Dec 2017
- #Agrilndaba: Modernised, scalable agri-education is key in training and feeding the masses - 30 Nov 2017
- #EntrepreneurMnth: A different perspective on sugar from the sugarcane fields of Mauritius - 2 Nov 2017

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>