

9th annual Leadership Academy for Agriculture programme under way

Twenty-eight agriculturists, from grain producers and agri-researchers to a Brahman stud manager and even a beekeeper, make up the 2021 class of the ninth annual Leadership Academy for Agriculture programme, sponsored by Syngenta South Africa. The curriculum is developed and facilitated by Thinking Fusion Africa, with the Northwest University Business School as academic partner.



Image source: Gallo/Getty

“The academy is our investment in the future of South African agriculture, especially now when food security is more important than ever as we deal with a global pandemic,” says Ben Schoonwinkel, head of marketing for Syngenta South Africa.

“Our objective is to help shape the future of agriculture by equipping the next generation of leaders across the agriculture spectrum to address the real-life challenges that confront our industry.”

The Leadership Academy for Agriculture programme is supported by Grain SA and is presented in three modules of three to four days each, during which the candidates work in groups to research and present solutions to topical issues facing the local agriculture sector.



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Baz Ratner 23 Feb 2021



Aimed at young agri-professionals

In his address, Jannie de Villiers, CEO of Grain SA, emphasised the importance of the programme being aimed at young

agri-professionals. He recalled experiencing the leadership development programme Syngenta presented for senior American producers in August 2011. “I was hugely impressed, but it was clear to me that we shouldn’t pour resources into teaching old dogs new tricks.”

Professor René Uys from Thinking Fusion Africa, who was recently appointed as a professor of practice at the NWU Business School on the strength of her work with the Leadership Academy, says that personal attributes and diversity were taken into account in the selection process.

“This business leadership development programme serves the entire agriculture sector, and we have seen in previous programmes that the more diverse the group is, the more the delegates are able to engage with real-life industry challenges in innovative ways,” she says.



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Tackling industry challenges

While the purpose of the programme is to equip agri-professionals with the skills to tackle the industry’s challenges, its dream is for agriculture to be the unifying force and leader of economic growth in South Africa. “I believe that agriculture can heal this country, and my mantra is that leaders make things better,” said De Villiers. This, he said, is achieved when individuals change their mindset and behaviour, learn to listen and are open to participate and develop.

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