

Women key to rural food production

By [More Matshediso](#)

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Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF), Senzeni Zokwana, says the contribution made by women in the farming sector cannot be under-estimated as this is how they put food on the table for their families.



DAFF Minister Senzeni Zokwana says the role of women in food production and agriculture cannot be under-estimated as they are transforming rural farming into successful businesses. Image: GCIS

"It is about time we highlight the contribution made by women in the sector that is often regarded as the terrain of men," he said, adding that efforts need to be made to open up export market opportunities for female farmers.

Zokwana was speaking at the DAFF Female Entrepreneur of the Year Awards held in Mafikeng, North West to recognise the role of women and their contribution to Africa's agriculture and food security. The awards were sponsored by Total South Africa.

Total South Africa's General Manager for Strategy, Pansy Mekwa, said the awards aimed to highlight stories of successful, emerging female farmers in the South Africa.

"Across Africa, female farmers produce more than 70% of the continent's food, but their efforts and ability are most often overlooked," said Mekwa.

She added that women told stories of hard work and innovation and their ability to overcome what are often seemingly insurmountable odds to transform rural farming from 'making a living' into running a thriving business.

Overcoming the odds

"They stand as inspiration to their communities, who benefit from their farming activities, either through food security or the creation of jobs," said Mekwa.

The awards were in line with government's Programme of Action, that seeks to contribute to the contribution of women, youth and people with disabilities in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors by increasing food security, creating jobs and stimulating economic growth thus alleviating poverty.

The 2014/15 Overall Winner was Ivy Nokwanele Mzamo from Eastern Cape.

Among those who clinched awards were Hawukile Makhanya from KwaZulu Natal who won best female worker in the sector, Thandeka Moseki from the North West for best subsistence producer, Sandra Kroutz from Gauteng for top entrepreneur in the smallholder sector and Anne Ruthford from the Western Cape who won the top entrepreneur processing.

Mponeng Lentoro from the Free State scooped the top award for top female entrepreneur in the commercial sector, while Nokwanele Mzamo from Eastern Cape received an award for being the top entrepreneur in the export sector.

The Minister's special award went to Linah Mahlangu from Mpumalanga, as a way of acknowledging the contribution of young women and women living with disabilities who were entrepreneurs.



Women are playing an increasingly important role in transforming rural farming efforts into business enterprises to create jobs, food security and alleviate poverty. Image: [Water Research Commission](#)

The Minister's special award on youth went to Leah Skosana from Mpumalanga, recognising her contribution to youth entrepreneurs.

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