

# Agricultural training initiative celebrates the future of KZN farmers

KZN-based agricultural training initiative, [Future Farmers](#), is a unique social programme which aims to cultivate the skills and development of young aspiring farmers from around the country. The programme recently celebrated its 11th anniversary at Cedara Agricultural College where farmers, farming students, and agricultural industry leaders came together to honor the achievements of current and past agricultural apprentices.



L-R Judy Stuart, Isaiah Mahlangu (Acting Chief Director for Agricultural Research and Development for KZN Department of Agriculture) and Sandy La Marque (Kwanalu CEO)

The brainchild of former Howick dairy farmer, Judy Stuart, the Future Farmers programme provides young people with real job experiences in the field of agriculture and the opportunity to “learn as they earn” by finding apprentice positions on local and then later, international farms, as far afield as the USA, Australia and New Zealand.

## Agents of change

Guest speaker, Isaiah Mahlangu, the acting chief director for Agricultural Services for the KZN Department of Agriculture, told the audience that it was encouraging, refreshing and inspiring to see as many young people in one room so passionate about something. “In front of me today I see the agents of change,” he said.

The event included many future farmers who shared impassioned tales of their experiences on farms locally and overseas all agreeing that, despite the hard work, the opportunity the Future Farmers initiative afforded them wasn’t just an agricultural experience but a life-changing one.

Over the years, Future Farmers has become a recognised role-player in shaping the future of farming in KZN and, with the backing of Kwanalu, gained overwhelming support from agribusinesses, AgriSETA, sponsors and the agricultural industry at large.



L-R Future Farmers Nsikelelo Baleni (Farm manager in Karkloof), Bobby Govender (Lecturer at Weston Agricultural College, Mboi River), Lerato Mantsi (Farm manager, Matatiele), Lungelo 'Batman' Mathenjwa (Farm manager in Swartberg)

### Setting future farmers up for success

Kwanalu's CEO, Sandy La Marque said Kwanalu was proud to be a part of the Future Farmers programme and commended the association's members for their mentorship roles in the programme.

“Congratulations are extended to the young people who have participated in this ‘earn as you learn’ programme with hard work and now the exceptional farming skills each one has developed. Coupled with the outstanding commitment by commercial producers this programme sets up the young future farmers for success.”



Farming initiative allows young farmers to earn as they learn

17 Feb 2016



“It is liberating to see the unfettered commitment to the future of agriculture by the commercial producers,” said La Marque.

The event culminated in an awards ceremony honouring those who had excelled in the programme and showed the most promise during their apprenticeships.

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