

MEC Alan Winde on launching annual awards for agricultural workers

Minister of Economic Opportunities, Alan Winde has officially opened the 2018 Prestige Agri Awards. This year marks the seventh year that the Department of Agriculture has partnered with supermarket giant Shoprite to sponsor the awards. The competition aims to celebrate excellence among those working in the Province's agricultural industry, across 11 categories and in 16 districts.



Countbik via [Fxabay](#)

The awards were originally started in 2002 by the Hex River Valley Association. Since then, over 10 000 people have participated.

Speaking at the launch of the awards, Winde paid tribute to those who worked hard to ensure that the province's agricultural industry continued to be one of the biggest economic and job creation sectors in the province. "The awards are recognition for people who put so much of their energy into ensuring that there is food security, that there is foreign exchange coming into the country from exports, and that they can provide for their families," he said.

Dr Johan van Deventer, general manager at Freshmark, Shoprite's fruit and vegetable procurement and distribution arm, said that they have been a proud sponsor of the competition for the past seven years. "Agri workers are the reason we are able to sell fresh, quality produce in our supermarkets on a daily basis and the Agri-Worker of the Year Awards are a great way to acknowledge and reward their hard work," he said.

Inspiring agricultural workers

An independent study into the impact of the awards conducted in 2015 found that the awards inspired pride in agricultural workers, encouraged them to learn new skills and created positive perceptions around agricultural work.

Last year's winner - Hermanus Bienen from Vredendal - said he had been learning since being awarded the top prize last year. He travelled to Germany as part of his prize, where he was exposed to agricultural and supermarket fresh produce practices in that country.

Winners of the regional awards will receive a cash prize, a certificate and trophy, and Shoprite vouchers. They will also go on to compete at the provincial awards to be held in November, where the overall Agri-worker of the year will be selected. The overall winner walks away with a R25,000 cash prize, an overseas trip valued at R60,000, an iPad, Shoprite vouchers, data and a place on the prestige Agri-worker board which meets with Winde each quarter to discuss issues in the sector.

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