

News release by the Western Cape branch of Agricultural Writers SA regarding the regional awards for the Farmers and Agriculturalist of the Year 2009

The Western Cape's candidates for Agricultural Writers SA's Farmer, Agriculturalist and Emerging Farmer of the Year was announced in the Paarl on Friday. The winners are Mr. Bernardt du Toit, Prof. Chrisjan Cruywagen and Ms. Wadea Jappie.

Ms. Wadea Jappie is the Western Cape's Emerging Farmer of the Year.

In 2003/04 she bought her smallholding in the Schaapkraal area of Philippi on the Cape Flats and decided to farm with eggs. She started with 50 laying hens and today she has 3 700 chickens laying 21 000 eggs per week.

She currently has a contract with Freshmark Shoprite Checkers, and she supplies them with pre packed radish and dhanya three times per week. She also signed an agreement with Cape Salads CC, a commercial farmer, and supplies them with 5 000 heads of lettuce per week and fancy salads which they in return package for Woolworths.



She's currently in the process of supplying a few family Pick 'n Pay stores close to her farm and also delivers fresh produce daily to the Epping Market.

Where she first only supplied eggs to a few local bakers and family and friends, she soon had to begin doing some marketing for the many extra eggs she had. She won a contract to supply fresh eggs to Mugg 'n Bean, she also has a contract with Nino's, a range of franchise coffee shop/restaurant, as well as the renowned Balducci's in the V&A Waterfront and other coffee shops in and around Cape Town. She supplies to them on a weekly basis.

She currently empowers the kitchen staff of the various coffee shops/restuarants to keep their boxes and clean egg trays and in return pays them something. They are still very neat and sturdy.

Every second week the chicken houses need to be cleaned out. On these Saturdays she gets additional help, thus creating jobs for people from the community.

Jappie also has a real heart for the poor in the community. She donates some of her vegetables to the Delft community every day who in turn sell some of it as a form of income and the rest they use in their own homes. The partially broken eggs are given to a food scheme in Philippi. Every winter she cooks soup for the local farm workers in the area.

Jappie has huge dreams about the future – and all of them involve her farm. “I would really like to expand some more. I have started to build a bigger shed, big enough to house an additional 3000 chickens and this will increase my production considerably. I would love to have more customers, more contracts. Ideally I’d like to supply my own label “Chamomile Eggs” to the retail grocers”

Mr Bernardt du Toit from the Langrivier Farm (Pty.) Ltd. in the Cold Bokkeveld is the Western Cape Farmer of the Year.

Du Toit converted his farm, a one-man enterprise since 1988, into a company with a turnover of nearly R50 million a year.

In the largest black economic empowerment transaction to date in the agricultural section of the Western Cape a total of 242 farm workers were made co-owners of the company. A third of this business now belongs to full-time and seasonal workers. The transaction cost more than R50 million and the money was made available by the governments’ LRAD programme.

During harvest time 600 people work on the farm.

Langrivier is an export farm which grows soft fruit (apples, pears, nectarines, cherries, plums, desert peaches, apricots en interspecie cultivars) on 240 ha, onions on 110 ha, potatoes on 100 ha and broccoli and cabbage on 20 ha. The orchards and broccoli and cabbage fields are under irrigation. Wheat is grown on 150 ha dry-land. He also has 1 500 Merinos en 60 Angus cattle.

On its own, the company exports 8 000 ton fruit (40 % of the crop) each year to Britain. Thanks to Colors, Dole, Capespan and Mack Multiples its trademark products are also on the shelves of shops in Canada, Europe, Spain, Germany, Russia, the Far and Mid East, Singapore en Hong Kong.

The farm has a contract to supply cauliflower and broccoli to large chain stores in South Africa and also supplies potatoes to Lambertsbay Foods and Simba. Langrivier is a registered seed-potato grower.

Du Toit knows what the market wants and he takes care to stay at the forefront to supply in its needs – AND he knows how to bring the two together.



It is also important to dream big dreams and to know where you are going to in life, is his philosophy.

Du Toit says: "I have only a few years of work left in which to achieve my goal of helping the shareholders understand how to take responsibility for that which is now their investment in the future. Many people say it might be hard, but great opportunities are brilliantly disguised as impossible situations. There can be no keener revelation of a project's heart than the way in which it treats its children."

He thanks the Lord for the opportunities along his way and the common sense to understand and utilise it to his best advantage and says would not have achieved it all by himself.

He is married with Louna and they have three sons, Ben, Jaco and Johannes.

Prof. Chrisjan Cruywagen is the Western Cape's Agriculturist of the Year.

He is regarded as an expert on melamine research and currently heads all melamine research at Stellenbosch University. In 2008, when melamine contaminated milk and milk powder were found in China, traces of melamine was also found in milk from some herds in South Africa.



Cruywagen and his research team made a breakthrough when they showed that the melamine was not added to the milk as was the case in China, but that it was transmitted to the milk when cows ate melamine contaminated feed. This was the first scientific evidence in the world to show that a pathway exists for the transmission of melamine from feed to milk. This work was recently published as "Hot Topic" in the Journal of Dairy Science.

Cruywagen and his team have also shown that melamine is highly absorbable and that the major excretion route of ingested melamine is via urine, that ingested melamine is deposited in meat and eggs and that it is absorbed from the soil by pasture grass when used as fertiliser ingredient.

His abstract on their recent melamine research was one of only eight abstracts to be accepted for a special "late breaking/cutting edge research" oral session on the opening day of the 2009 Joint Meeting of the American Dairy Science Association, American Society of Animal Science and the Canadian Society of Animal Science that was held in Montreal in July this year.