

PRESS RELEASE
12 November 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TSHILIDZI MATSHIDZULA WINS MPO NEDBANK STEWARDSHIP AWARD 2020

Tshilidzi Matshidzula of Little Barnet Farm in Alexandria, in the Eastern Cape, was declared the winner of the fourth prestigious MPO Nedbank Stewardship Awards at the awards ceremony during the virtual annual congress of the Milk Producers' Organisation (MPO) on Wednesday, 4 November.

Coenraad and Candice de Jongh of Blomfontein in Groot Brakrivier were the second-place winners, with Ginkel Jordaan of Spekboomberg near Cradock in third place. Their prizes, sponsored by Nedbank, were R40 000, R30 000, and R10 000, respectively, to be used to pursue stewardship goals on their farms.

The MPO uses the three pillars of sustainability: profitability (economic), people (social), and planet (environment) to help dairy farmers be best positioned to operate successfully in the future. Stewardship is truly about meeting all three pillars, of which profitability is as essential as the two other pillars.

The judges were very impressed with the finalists' passion for the people and animals on their farms, their use of technology and regenerative agricultural practices to improve efficiency, their in-depth knowledge and hands-on approach, their focus on the training of farmworkers and the upliftment of the surrounding community, and the high level of innovation they displayed.

Matshidzula was lauded for his excellent farm management practices and attention to detail, which include extensive consultation with experts and peers to maintain best practice. His team of farm managers have all participated in his student mentorship programme. His outstanding work in empowering and uplifting the surrounding community through training, mentorships, and funding was unrivalled, the judges said.

The judges were very impressed by Matshidzula's innovative measures to clean the water of the stream running through his farm in order to have water of an acceptable quality for use on the farm and in the parlour.

Barbara Bieldt, manager of stewardship and regulatory services at the MPO, said, "Tshilidzi has extraordinary vision and definitely knows what is required for future sustainability."

Second-prize winners Coenraad and Candice de Jongh impressed the judges with their excellent herd management programme, and in particular, their extensive knowledge of animal health, welfare, and calf-rearing practices. The judges said their environmentally friendly farming practices and conservation of land and species were top notch.

Ginkel Jordaan's management of soil nutrients on his pastures and use of alternative energy were outstanding, the judges said.

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Daneel Rossouw, Nedbank’s divisional agricultural manager for the Southern Division, said Nedbank was very proud to sponsor this prestigious award, which recognises dairy farmers who are excellent stewards of their farming enterprises. “This talks to the sustainability in the wider context and encompasses aspects such as protecting our natural resources, fair and ethical treatment of people and animals, producing a safe and healthy product, and farming profitably. The standard of entries this year was outstanding and we heartily congratulate the deserving winners.”

“Congratulations to our well-deserving winners Tshilidzi, Coenraad, Candice, and Ginkel!” Bieldt said. “The MPO is proud of our outstanding dairy stewards.”

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From left: Dr Heinz Meissner, Barbara Bieldt, Jompie Burger, Tshilidzi Matshidzula, and Sue Viljoen