

Mr Francois Cilliers from Nuy Valley, Breede Valley region wins the 2019 Western Cape Prestige Agri Awards

Francois Cilliers from Willow Creek Olive Estate, Nuy Valley, Breede Valley region was announced as the 2019 Western Cape Prestige Agri Awards winner. This is the first winner from the Breede Valley region, making it an exceptionally special award not just for Francois but also for this region.

The Prestige Agri Awards recognises the hard work, commitment and dedication of the province's agricultural workforce. The overall winners of the competition form part of the Western Cape Prestige Agri Worker Forum that meets with the Minister of Agriculture on a quarterly basis. The forum provides a platform for the sharing of information regarding good farming practices, identifying opportunities and improving productivity.

Western Cape Minister of Agriculture, Dr Ivan Meyer said: "The Prestige Agri Awards not only showcases the excellent work being done in the agricultural sector in this province, but also inspires pride in its agri workers encourages them to learn new skills and creates positive perceptions around agricultural work. Shoprite can certainly be proud of their sponsorship of a competition that has had such a significant impact on the lives of agri workers. Agri workers play a significant role in the Western Cape economy. Their energy, knowledge and expertise drives food security, brings foreign exchange into the country from exports, and enables them to provide for their families. My sincere congratulations to all the participants, finalists and winners."

A total of 1 393 agricultural employees from across 16 regions entered the competition this year. Regional winners were chosen in Piket Bo Berg, Durbanville, Stellenbosch, Central Karoo, Berg River, Franschhoek, Breede Valley, Swartland, Overberg, Langeberg, the Garden Route, Olifantsrivier, Hex Valley, Klein Karoo Region, the Elgin, Grabouw, Vyeboom and Villiersdorp region and Witzenberg.

As overall winner, Francois won prizes to the value of approximately R100 000 that includes an overseas study tour. When asked about his winning, Francois emphasised: "Agriculture creates opportunities, just believe in what you want to be and you can determine how you want your life to pan out. Always ask questions, look up to people that have potential and take ownership of your road to success"

"Agri workers are a key resource for this sector and I salute the hardworking men and women that contribute to a better agricultural landscape." said Meyer.

The competition saw its inception in 2002 in the Hex Valley Region by Ms Elsa Jordaan, CEO, Hex Valley Table Grape Association and what started off with 36 participants has grown from strength to strength with more than 13 000 entries received since. In 2005 the Western Cape Department of Agriculture saw an opportunity to expand the competition to a provincial level and since 2012 has partnered with Shoprite

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Picture caption (from left to right): Joyene Isaacs, Western Cape Department of Agriculture; Dr van Deventer, Shoprite; Minister Ivan Meyer, Francois Cilliers, winner; Executive Mayor of the Breede Valley Municipality, Antoinette Steyn; and Elsa Jordaan, CEO, Hex Valley Table Grape Association