

## Agri's got Talent 2016 winner crowned

The search for the fruit and wine industry's golden voice came to end with Neville Fortuin from Little Oaks, Villiersdorp, crowned as the Agri's got Talent 2016 winner.



Abraham Erasmus (2nd), Neville Fortuin (2016 winner) and Josephine Karelse (3rd).

Ten finalists battled it out at the gala event held at the Kronenburg Estate outside Paarl. The finalists gave it their all, but it was the young Fortuin who impressed the judges with his solid performance. He won a cash prize and will have the opportunity to sing at agricultural events over the next year. The 19-year old Fortuin said music is his life. "I study music where ever I go. On the internet, television, where ever the opportunity arises. If I could speak about music the whole day long, I would be happy."

The runner-up was Abraham Erasmus from Zandvliet Indigo Fruit Farming near Ashton, while Josephine Karelse from Robertson Winery near Robertson was third. The judges agreed that it was very difficult to choose a winner this year as each contestant clearly had a lot of talent. Agri's got Talent is an annual song competition for workers in the fruit and wine industry. This year's event was sponsored jointly by Hortgro, the VinPro Foundation and the Western Cape Department of Agriculture.

The artists Andriëtte Norman, the rapper HemelBesem, and Frieda van den Heever joined the finalists on stage in what has become the most entertaining event in agriculture. The two previous winners, Ayabonga Mhobo (2014) and Armando Baartman (2015), also made a welcome appearance.

### Growing talent

The finalists were selected from 75 video entries. In the week before the gala evening, they received intensive music/voice, stage and media training by Frieda van den Heever and her team. A life skills component, presented by Procure Western Cape, included interpersonal skills as well as conflict and stress management.

“The Agri’s got Talent project gives fruit and wine industry workers a platform to showcase their musical gifts while developing skills with which they can make a difference in their communities,” said Anton Rabe, Hortgro executive director. Hortgro is an umbrella body servicing the horticultural fruit industry of South Africa. The Agri’s got Talent project is Rabe’s brainchild and he hopes that the show will take root in the bigger agricultural arena in South Africa.

Rabe considers the competition as an example of the multi-dimensional nature of agriculture and rural communities as a whole and the contribution that this sector can make to unlock the potential of this country. “Given the popularity of reality television and the opportunities created for those who participate in this show, the next step is to produce a CD with songs by the winners. Who knows where it could all end?” said Rabe.

Rabe also thanked the employers of the farm workers who gave them time off from work and who helped to create the opportunity to develop their talent. “Through this competition, they develop self-confidence and grow as people with dignity.”

According to Jana Loots, Agri’s got Talent organiser from VinPro, the competition is extremely valuable with previous contestants becoming true ambassadors for their employers and communities. “They have made a real difference in their communities, some becoming involved in youth and other upliftment projects, or sharing their singing skills. In this regard, the project has been a huge success.”

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