

KZN's Kwanalu 2018 Young Farmer announced

The KwaZulu-Natal Agricultural Union (Kwanalu) has announced the winner of the 2018 Young Farmer of the Year, Rustin Shawe at its annual Congress at the Royal Showgrounds in Pietermaritzburg. The ceremony was attended by Kwanalu members, farmers, agricultural industry leaders and multiple farmer's association representatives from across KwaZulu-Natal.



Guest speakers included President of Agri SA and farmer Dan Kriek, political analyst and freelance journalist Melanie Verwoerd and Dr Mark Manley, strategy, leadership and transformation specialist.

"This year's entries make us proud of the vast farming talent we have in KwaZulu-Natal," said Sandy La Marque, Kwanalu CEO.

The Young Farmer of the Year competition is open to farmers under the age of 40, male or female who are full members of their provinces' agricultural unions. The judging and evaluation of the farmers and their agricultural practices takes place at provincial level with the applicants being evaluated on all aspects of their businesses including their overall vision for the future of their farm/ business. The main features on which young farmers are judged is their management/ business philosophy as well as the technical competence with which their philosophy is applied.

Shawe farms with 1,850 commercial beef and Droughtmaster stud breeding herd, 1,000 follower heifers and 600 long yearlings on 8,600ha in Groenvlei near Utrecht, the northern mountainous region of KwaZulu-Natal. With 16 years of farming experience and 15 years on the current farming set-up, Shawe has brought noted improvements to the family business namely with the development of his Droughtmaster stud which impressed the judges.

"The focus on my Droughtmaster stud has increased my weaning weights in my herd as well ensuring uniformity thanks to the predictability of the progeny of the Droughtmaster. These Droughtmaster are fast infiltrating my Grassfields Beef herd," explains Shawe.

Livestock farming changes

Other changes implemented by Shawe include his decision to keep all his heifer weaners every year and have "nature takes its course" to increase his herd sizes over the summer months, a decision to keep all bull calves thanks to a loan from the Landbank, the purchase of a 700ha grazing farm for summer veldt grazing and the building of four dams on the properties which have transformed and prolonged the life of his grazing paddocks.



Currently, on Grassfields Farm, Shawe farms 1,500 Grassfields beef cows and heifers, 350 Grassfields beef Africa Droughtmaster stud cows and heifers, 470 Grassfields one-year-old heifers, 100 Grassfields beef Africa Droughtmaster one-year-old stud heifers, 600 long yearling oxen, 150 one-year-old bulls, 90 two-year-old bulls and eight Grassfields beef Africa Droughtmaster studs bulls. Along with his cattle, the farm has 30 riding horses, used by his herdsman, and 20 breeding mares, that are an important factor due to the size of the operation.

On receiving his award, Shawe said the title was an honour and a privilege and that he looked forward to representing KwaZulu-Natal farmers at the national event. "If we are proactive I believe we have a great future in this country but that we all need to address the land issue as a critical part of a successful future in farming in SA," said Shawe.

Shaw is an active community member and was the vice-president of the local farmers association, the Groenvlei Boerevereniging.

Shawe will represent the province for the 2018 Toyota SA / Agri SA National Young Farmer of the Year title. The winner of the 2018 Toyota SA / Agri SA National Young Farmer of the Year will be announced on October 18 at the Agri SA Young Farmer of the Year event to be held in Johannesburg.

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