

Harry Gwala Agri launches to assist and upskill farmers

Harry Gwala Agri, a non-profit organisation, formed by commercial farmers and supporting partners in the Harry Gwala region of KZN was officially launched yesterday (Wednesday, March 8) in Creighton.

Harry Gwala Agri will focus on building relationships and through these relationships assist developing farmers in meaningful and practical ways.

As a collaboration between farmers and supporting partners from the areas of Kokstad, Highflats, Ixopo, Creighton and Swartberg, Harry Gwala Agri aims to facilitate the sharing of farming resources including knowledge, equipment, funding and training, with emerging farmers at a grassroots level.

Members from the local community, farmers, agricultural professionals, banks, businesses and experts joined government officials, including Zamo Mxumalo, Mayor of Ubuhlebezwe

municipality, and the media in the heart of the KZN countryside to learn about this inspiring initiative, which aims to unlock resources held by commercial farmers and channel these towards selected agricultural projects.

"Born of a need to redress past injustices and discrimination by giving back to the local community in a meaningful way, Harry Gwala Agri aims to make a difference by uplifting, upskilling, funding and facilitating developing farmers in the Harry Gwala district," explains chairman of the initiative, John Bredin.

As a commercial farmer in the area himself, Bredin has hands-on experience of the local economy and understands the community's needs.

"The land question, and more recently land reform, is a political football," says Bredin.

"We're not saying there isn't a need to redistribute land in this country. On the contrary, we know this needs to happen. What we



Seen at the Harry Gwala launch: Sandy La Marque (second from right), CEO of Kwanalu, proudly supports Harry Gwala Agri which launched in Creighton yesterday, along with other special guests. (l-r): Newton Cookroft (Director: Deloitte SA, head of Government Growth Initiative); Andy Buchan (Kwanalu President); John Bredin (Harry Gwala Agri chairman) and agricultural economist, Professor JP Landman.

are saying is that there should be structures in place to allow for a redistribution of skills to nurture the passion of developing farmers into successful and sustainable farming enterprises."

Speaking at the launch of Harry Gwala Agri, acclaimed agricultural economist, Professor JP Landman, praised the objectives of the initiative in a rousing address, saying: "In South Africa we are highly blessed with a world-class, best-practice, highly competitive agricultural sector."

"Agriculture in this country is strong enough and capable enough of carrying the process of land reform," but, he added,

"Land reform cannot happen without skilled farmers. Farmers need to step up to the plate to help the transfer of land to be a success," said Landman.

Andy Buchan, president of KZN Agricultural Union (Kwanalu) added: "An initiative like this reinforces my belief that there is sufficient goodwill in our communities to facilitate the transformation necessary to improve the livelihoods of every individual in our sector."

"The solution to the issues confronting the agricultural sector rests with us, the people on the ground. The sustainability of these types of initiatives will rest on a

genuine desire to be a catalyst in the transformation of lives – not only in agriculture. It needs to be built on relationships of trust over time, and not merely a motion of ticking the box or window dressing."

Concluding, Bredin urged all farmers in the district to adopt the spirit of Ubuntu and contribute in any way they can. Summarising the philosophy of Harry Gwala Agri, he borrows a quote from Ronald Reagan: "We can't help everyone but everyone can help someone."

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