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*From left to right: Mark Manley (Strategic and thought leader), Sandy La Marque (Kwanalu CEO), Andy Buchan (Kwanalu President), Phenias Gumede (Kwanalu Vice-President), Dan Kriek (Agri SA President), Melanie Verwoerd (political analyst and journalist) and PJ Hassard (Kwanalu Vice-President).*

KwaZulu-Natal's Agricultural Union, Kwanalu held its 20th Annual Congress at the Royal Showgrounds in Pietermaritzburg on 20 September 2018. The event was attended by Kwanalu delegates, farmers and agricultural industry leaders from all over KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) who came together to reflect on the past year and deliberate on the future as an agricultural community.

The theme of the congress – Harnessing our collective power to be an authoritative force – was addressed by all speakers of the day and focussed on the importance strategy, change management, leadership and the role farmers and the union play in influencing the economic, legal and social environment in which the agricultural sector must function in order to ensure economic productivity going forward.

Guest speakers included Agri SA president and farmer, Dan Kriek who spoke directly to fellow farmers on the positioning of organised agriculture in the context of current issues affecting farmers, including expropriation without compensation. He encouraged farmers to communicate as a means of moving the industry forward and to support the structures of organised agriculture.

"I call on you all to support your leadership, to support Kwanalu, to support the chairpersons of your local farmers associations. It is an extremely difficult time to be a leader in agriculture in South Africa and we need you to trust that we have structures in place and that we will work according to our mandates as instructed by our members. I call on you to communicate and be part of the plan for the future of agriculture, to recognise the injustices of the past and, in doing so, please know that I will defend the whole of the Constitution and I will demand respect for our farmers, for the industry and the valuable role we play in the country," said Kriek.

Political commentator and leading South African journalist, Melanie Verwoerd spoke candidly to farmers about the critical role they play in ensuring the stability of the agricultural industry in the context of transformation and correcting the injustices of the past. She appealed to farmers to remain calm and not to become reactive to rhetoric in the media, advising them instead to be careful with whom they align themselves, encouraging them to support Kwanalu and Agri SA as a united, organised voice of agriculture.

Strategy, leadership and transformation specialist, Dr. Mark Manley reminded farmers that significant growth takes place outside one's comfort zone and called on farmers to take responsibility for the change that needs to happen in the sector.

"If we continue to think the same, we will continue to do the same and, as a result, we will continue to be in the same place. Unless you change your thinking, nothing is going to change," Dr. Manley told the audience.

The announcement of the Kwanalu 2018 KZN Young Farmer of the Year also took place with the title being awarded to 37-year-old Rustin Shawe, a commercial beef and Droughtmaster stud farmer from Groenvlei, Utrecht. Rustin will go on to compete and represent KZN at national level in October for the title of 2018 Toyota SA / Agri SA National Young Farmer of the Year.

"I am looking forward to the national competition and the chance to gauge myself against the top farmers in South Africa and hope that I can do KZN proud," said Rustin.

The president of Kwanalu, Andy Buchan ended the proceedings saying, "Agriculture needs to be resolute upon the principles which underpin our organisation and to exercise leadership in the pursuit of creating an enabling environment for future generations and to always have hope". – *Press release*