

Uniting the farming fraternity

Larry Bentley

KZN's Agricultural Union (Kwanalu) held its 20th annual congress at the Royal Show Grounds in Pietermaritzburg on Thursday, 20 September.

The event was attended by Kwanalu delegates, farmers and agricultural leaders from all over the province, who reflected on the past year and deliberated on the future as an agricultural community.

The congress theme 'Harnessing our collective power to be an authoritative force', was addressed by all speakers on the day.

The theme focused on the importance of strategic planning, change management, leadership and the role farmers and the union play in influencing the economic, legal and social environment 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 struc-



Rustin Shawe with his wife, Monick with the 2018 KZN Young Farmer of the Year award

tures of organised agriculture.

Kriek called on all to support their leadership to support Kwanalu and the chairpersons of 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' said Kriek.

'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 Constitution and I will demand respect for our farmers, for the industry and the valuable role we play in

the country.'

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 with, 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,' he said.

The Kwanalu 2018 KZN Young Farmer of the Year award went to 37-year-old Rustin Shawe, a commercial beef and Droughtmaster stud farmer from Groenvlei, Utrecht.

Shawe will go on to compete and represent KZN at national level later this month for the title of 2018 Toyota SA/Agri Young Farmer of the Year.

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

Kwanalu President, Andy Buchan, ended proceedings by 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.'