

Pongola farmers once again donate to AgriSA Drought Fund

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Pongola farmers Rocco Höll and Ferdi Brecher handed over a cheque to Agri SA's deputy director, Christo van de Rheede, and Andy Buchan (Kwanalu president) at their 2019 annual congress.

Pongola farmers have for the second time this year dug deep into their pockets to donate to fellow farmers being crippled by the ongoing drought in the northern areas of South Africa.

Supporting the Agri SA Drought Fund

Heeding the call by the national body representing farmers, AgriSA, the Pongola Cane Growers Association collected and donated over R210 000 to the AgriSA Drought Fund after putting out a plea for assistance via WhatsApp.

“Aside from the money we donated, 2 500 litres of diesel was sponsored by Eco Fuels in Pongola for all trucks leaving town, transport for hay bales and feed was sponsored by various local businesses and farmers, and we had farmers who also offered their farms for grazing. The total value we sponsored was in the region of R210 000,” said Kurt Stock, chairperson of the Pongola Farmers Association.

Ferdie Brecher and Rocco Höll, two Pongola sugarcane farmers and members of the Suikerboer Rugby Club handed over a cheque for a further R5 670 to Andy Buchan, president of Kwanalu, and Van de Rheede.

Active on the field and in the local community

Affectionately known as Die Suikerboere, the group of farmers from the Pongola farming community are members of the Suikerboer Rugby Club who compete annually in the highly competitive Cape Town 10's tournament in the Pro Vet's league.

"We are all local farmers who are ex-rugby players, plus a few rugby legends from outside Pongola, older than 35 who still want to be active. We all love playing rugby and at the last Cape Town 10's, we only lost in the semi-finals against the eventual winners, the SA Legends," explains Jors Strydom, Pongola sugarcane farmer and chairman of the Suikerboer Rugby Club.

But more than just rugby, the now legendary Suikerboere, are also compassionate farmers whose vision includes strengthening their local community by hosting and raising money through various and regular sports tournaments in Pongola and then identifying projects and worthy causes to support and uplift those in need.

"Our vision at the Suikerboer Rugby Club is through hard work and sport to raise funds for worthy causes in our community, as well as influence the younger generations to lead fit, healthy and purposeful lives. We are ex-rugby players who still want to be active, plough back into our community and create a buzz in town while doing it," said Strydom.

Significant contributions

The Club's latest cricket tournament raised R5 670 which was donated to the AgriSA Drought Fund. The fund has been assisting farmers suffering from the ongoing drought in several parts of the country since 2015.

Kwanalu's CEO Sandy La Marque commended the farmers' initiative saying that when farmers get "thrown the ball" so to speak of any challenge they are quick to find a game plan that has a winning formula.

"The selfless commitment of these farmers to assist fellow farmers who are in dire circumstances must be applauded," said La Marque.

She encouraged and challenged more farmers' associations to tackle challenges with positive interventions. – *Press release, Kwanalu*

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