

# Agricultural union launches platform to support women, children

The KZN Agricultural Union, Kwanalu, has launched their ground breaking Kwanalu Women in Rural Entrepreneurship programme (WIRE), a platform to provide women in rural entrepreneurship with knowledge, skills and tangible opportunities to support themselves and their communities, and to sustainably participate in the agricultural value chain.

The programme also coincides with the launch of Kwanalu's Youth in Rural Entrepreneurship programme.

Kwanalu believes that rural women and the youth hold the key to alleviating poverty, the growth of job creation and to developing food security, in rural areas of South Africa.

Both programmes, headed up by Dr Kathy Hurly, are the first of their kind in the South African agricultural landscape and will see women and youth in the sector, and beyond, interact on the platform, and be directly linked, with producers of technology, insurance, services, extension, training and education and new and potential markets.

"The tragedy of the Covid-19 pandemic has projected digital tools into every home and workplace, with every sector rapidly transforming into the digital age. This provides agriculture with an excellent prospect to leverage the digital wave, and we at Kwanalu have identified this opportunity," Dr Hurly told the *NN News*.

The platforms are building on the success of the 2020 Kwanalu Women in Agriculture Webinar, which saw 307 registrations and 116 groups of women come together with the intention of creating a valuable network of women in the sector to connect, collaborate, inspire and learn from one another.

"The Women in Agriculture webinar demonstrated the desire by rural women in agriculture to learn to be better business owners and successful entrepreneurs, and to successfully participate



Above: Dr Kathy Hurly heads WIRE. Right: Sandy la Marque is the CEO of Kwanalu.

in the broader value chain," said Dr Hurly. Kwanalu plans to use the digital platform to unite women and youth in the sector, but the fundamentals of entrepreneurship will be embedded at ground level by bringing the right partners, collaborators and funders together. Through the clustering of groups, either geographically or based on market opportunities, the platform will provide for critically-needed in-field knowledge exchange, skills sharing and allow for appropriate scales to be reached effectively.

"The voices of women and the youth are not heard clearly enough, and this platform will link rural women and youth to

## About Dr Kate Hurly

- Corporate Executive at SA Canegrowers
- The most rewarding part of what I do is the implementation of projects and the faces of those who benefit and the ability to progress the people who work for me through mentoring and coaching. In Africa, women grow the food for their families and for markets. These women are economic powerhouses and each make a contribution to our economy and the nutrition and well-being of their families and communities. This they do facing enormous challenges that range from climate change to patriarchy.
- I started off in a male dominated environment where even wearing trousers was frowned upon. Things have improved hugely in the workplace but we generally have to do a lot more juggling in terms of work home balance. You have to be resilient to survive to the level of the boardroom.



opportunities in agriculture that will disrupt and transform the sector. We at Kwanalu, are extremely excited to be launching this platform and to build upon the success of our Women in Agriculture campaign" Kwanalu CEO, Sandy La Marque, concluded.