



The Agricultural Economics
Association of South Africa



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AEASA NEWSLETTER

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EDITOR'S NOTE



*Maremo Mphahlele

WELCOME TO THE FIRST QUARTER EDITION OF THE AEASA NEWSLETTER FOR 2026.

As we look ahead, preparations for the 63rd Annual Conference the Agricultural Economics Association of South Africa (AEASA) are well underway. This year's conference is positioned as a dynamic platform where ideas meet opportunities, and it promises to be more than just an academic gathering set against the distinctive backdrop of the Entabeni Safari Conservancy. Under the theme "Geopolitics in Agriculture: Striking a Balance Between Policy,

Markets, Food Security and Shared Prosperity," the conference invites critical engagement on some of the contemporary issues affecting and shaping the agricultural sector today. This edition of AEASA's Newsletter, carries a strong sense of reflection and appreciation of the role played by those who have retired and the one who has passed on. We pay tribute to two exceptional agricultural economists who worked as industry regulators whose combined years of service sum to 74 years at the NAMC. It is noted in the article that they have left an indelible mark on South Africa's agricultural marketing policy landscape. As we celebrate their legacy, we are reminded of the importance of continuity, mentorship, and dedication in building resilient institutions. At the same time, we welcome new leadership of the NAMC with the appointment of Prof André Jooste as Chairperson of the NAMC Council. His extensive experience (academia, parastatal, and industry) will surely play a huge role as he navigates the uncharted terrains with his whole Council and the NAMC team. This transition reflects both continuity and renewal in leadership at a critical time for the industry.

In the same spirit, we also honour the life and work of the late Prof Johann Laubscher, whose contribution to agricultural economics, particularly in farm management and student development continues to resonate across generations. His academic legacy and commitment to excellence have shaped many of the professionals who serve the sector today. Collectively, the stories in this edition reflect a sector that is evolving, grounded in strong institutional foundations, shaped by dedicated individuals, and driven by a shared commitment to inclusive growth, sustainability, and resilience. As AEASA, we must remain committed to fostering dialogue, advancing knowledge, and supporting the development of agricultural economists who will shape the future of the discipline as we (those who are already serving) call it a day one by one.

Newsletter editor

Maremo Mphahlele

63RD ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF AEASA TO BE HELD IN SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2026: PREPARATIONS UNDERWAY

Dr Lesetja Ledwaba

63rd AEASA 2026 Conference Spotlight: Where Ideas Meet Opportunities



**62nd ANNUAL CONFERENCE*

Join us for AEASA 2026 conference at Legend Safari & Golf Resort, set in the scenic Entabeni Safari Conservancy. Designed for academics, industry players, policy analysts, policy makers, researchers and emerging researchers in agricultural economics, this conference offers a unique space to connect ideas with real-world impact.

THEME: “GEOPOLITICS IN AGRICULTURE: Striking a Balance Between Policy, Markets, Food Security and Shared Prosperity”

Conference Dates: 29 September – 1 October 2026

Sub-themes:

- Governance, Policy and Political Economy of Food Systems
- Markets, Value Chains and Inclusive Rural Transformation
- Climate, Natural resources and Resilience Agrarian systems
- Innovation, Technology and Knowledge Systems

The conference will host the Simon Brandt Memorial Lecture, a number of plenary sessions including the Upgraded Contributed Papers, and numerous contributed paper sessions as well as the Posters and workshops. Includes four high-level plenary sessions with leading voices from academia and industry.

All presentations will be completed before the Gala Dinner on 1 October 2026, ensuring full participation and networking opportunities.

Call for Papers:

- First call released: 27 February 2026
- Second call: 15 April 2026

Located near Mokopane, the surrounding area features diverse agricultural activities including livestock production, game farming, and mixed crop systems offering valuable real-world context for discussions on markets, sustainability, and rural development.

63rd AEASA 2026 is where emerging scholars and industry professionals come together to shape the future of agricultural economics don't miss it.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO THE RETIREMENT OF TWO OF THE NAMC'S LONG-SERVING REGULATORS AND OUTSTANDING AGRICULTURAL ECONOMISTS

Mr Bonani Nyhodo



**Lizette Mellet and Schalk Burger*

The Marketing of Agricultural Products (MAP) Act (47) 1996 is the founding legislation in respect of agricultural marketing policy in South Africa as it facilitated the shift from the regulated marketing regime (single marketing channels), in terms of the MAP Act (59) 1968 to the free marketing regime (many marketing channels) in terms of the current Act.

The National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC), a creature of the MAP Act of 1996, as the coordinator of

the provisions of the founding Act, was and still is privileged to have amongst the remaining members who transitioned from the previous marketing regime (1968) regulation to the current legislative regime (1996).

Noteworthy, is a reminder that the NAMC as an organisation metamorphosed from being the National Marketing Council (NMC) as was established in terms of the Act of 1937 and 1968 into what it is now. Most of the provisions of the MAP Act of 1996 deal with statutory measures, a terrain Mr Schalk Burger and

Ms Lizette Mellet traversed with remarkable success for many years. It is fascinating that the two colleagues remember with great clarity how each of the institutions in the industry were established or how their functions were conducted during the days of the marketing schemes. The records they have in respect of the meetings of the control boards and marketing schemes leading to the signing of the business plans that paved the way to the industry institutional arrangement as we have today.

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The building of the department called Sefala Building has a story related to the Maize Board as well as the NAMPO farm in Bothaville.

It is a bittersweet moment to have said goodbye to these resolute members of the NAMC and astute administrators of provisions of the MAP Act.

On 28 February 2026, we as the NAMC had a farewell function that was befitting of their contribution the agricultural industry. Industries representing over 90% of the gross value of agriculture have been collaborating with these colleagues for well over 30 years without any drama. Their calm demeanour has prevailed over the period in the provision

of advice to the policy makers and directly affected groups in the agricultural sector. Mr S Burger left the employment of the NAMC after 38 years of service while Ms L Mellet was employed for 36 years. This means they collectively have worked for the NAMC for a combined 74 years. These are agricultural economists by practice and training even though they were not keen participants in events of AEASA.

Mr Burger was a co-author of one of the chapters in the 50th celebration book of AEASA. As AEASA, we need to be proud that the agricultural sector operated with assistance of the two for a lengthy period. With huge appreciation, and on behalf of those who saw them do their things – Ms Lizette Mellet and Mr Schalk Burger have served the sector with distinction.

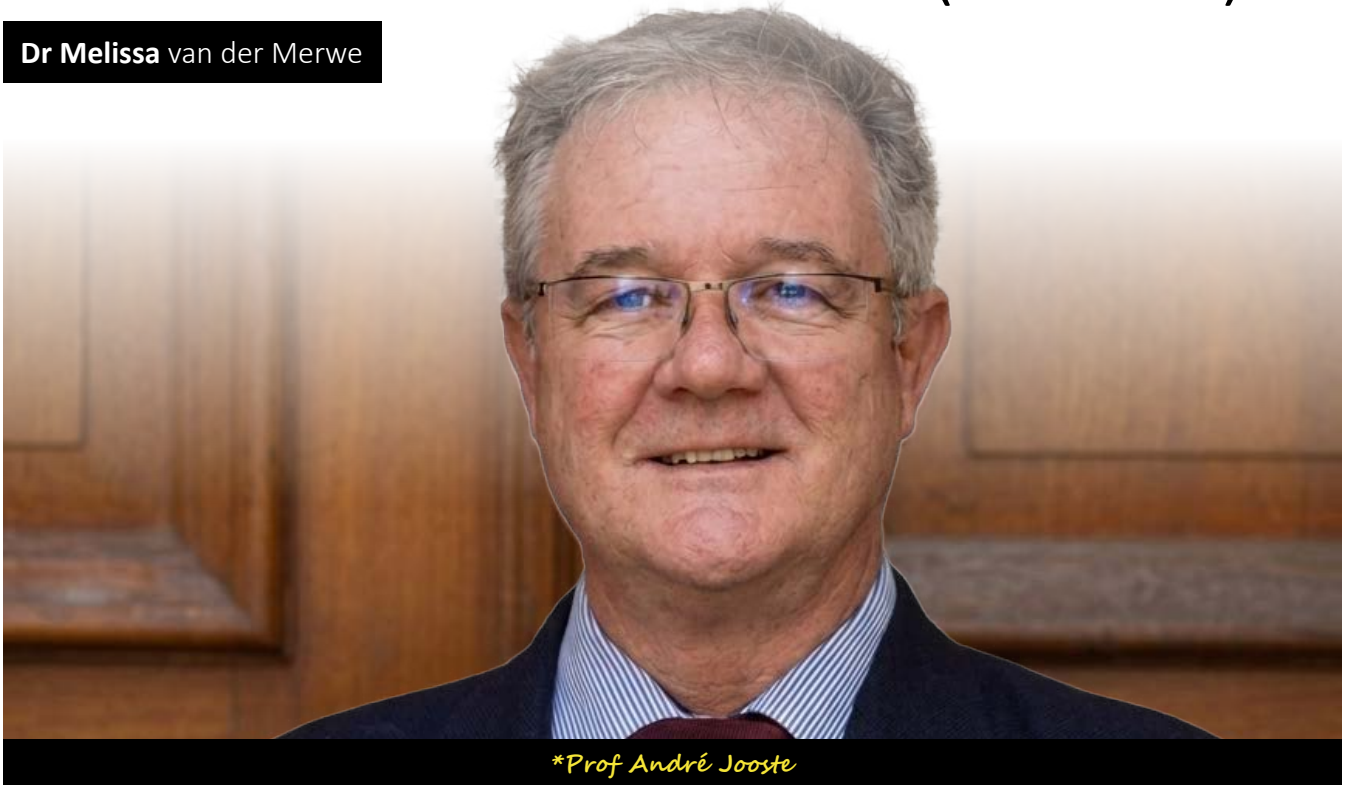
In the words of SEK kaMqhayi these colleagues fall within the category of what he called “amafanankosi” [the brave right-hand men (and I add women)] of the kingdoms in his writings. In his poem titled “uMambushe” he asks amafanankosi (as to why?) when the unfortunate event happened, [of the dog (uMbambushe)] having attacked the King in the presence of his subjects and his protectors. On the second occasion of the sinking of “uMendi” somewhere in Europe carrying South African soldiers – SEK kaMqhayi uses the categorisation of the soldiers as amafanankosi. In that poem he expresses his wish of wanting to rise with them (or be in their presence) on the day of resurrection.



**Schalk Burger and Lizette Mellet*

PROF ANDRÉ JOOSTE APPOINTED AS THE NEW CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL MARKETING COUNCIL (NAMC)

Dr Melissa van der Merwe



**Prof André Jooste*

Prof André Jooste has been appointed as the new Chairperson of the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC), a step that strengthens leadership in the agricultural sector across South Africa.

The NAMC plays a central role in ensuring that agricultural markets function efficiently, fairly, and in a manner that supports both producers and consumers. Established under the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act (1996), the Council is responsible for

monitoring market performance, reviewing regulatory measures, and advising the Minister of Agriculture. It also oversees statutory levies, which are widely used across agricultural industries to fund research, transformation, and market development initiatives.

Beyond its regulatory and oversight functions, the NAMC provides strategic advice on agricultural marketing policy, ensuring alignment with national economic and development priorities while taking into account global market

dynamics. Its work is guided by key objectives that include improving market access, enhancing marketing efficiency, increasing export earnings, and supporting the long-term viability of the agricultural sector. Through this mandate, the NAMC contributes to a more inclusive, competitive, and sustainable agricultural environment that supports food security and economic growth.

Prof Jooste's appointment to the NAMC is complemented

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by his role as Chairperson of both the Maize Forum (MF) and Wheat Forum (WF), including their respective Steering Committees since 2024. The Maize Forum serves as a voluntary and inclusive platform representing stakeholders across the maize value chain, providing a structured mechanism for engagement, alignment on strategic issues, and advisory input to institutions such

as the Maize Trust (MT), the NAMC, and relevant government departments.

Similarly, the Wheat Forum provides a coordinated platform for stakeholder engagement within the wheat industry and plays an important support role to the South African Winter Cereal Industry Agency (SAWCIA). Through this function, the WF helps ensure that industry perspectives are effectively aligned and communicated, particularly on matters related to

research, market development, and long-term sustainability. Together, the MF and WF strengthen coordination across the grain sector by enabling inclusive dialogue and strategic alignment between industry and policymakers. This integrated leadership approach enhances the sector's ability to respond to challenges, support informed decision-making, and promote a more resilient and competitive agricultural industry in South Africa.

IN MEMORIAM PROF JOHANN LAUBSCHER

Prof Theo Kleynhans



**The late Prof Johann Laubscher*

Prof Johann Laubscher passed away on 26 February 2026. He retired at the end of 2005 as an Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Stellenbosch University, where he made a lasting contribution to teaching, research, and the development of agricultural economists.

He was born on 29 July 1945 at Rust Station in the Swartland, where he completed his primary school education at a small two-teacher school. In 1958, he began his secondary education at Paarl Gymnasium and remained a devoted supporter of the "Gimmies" throughout his life. He began his studies at Stellenbosch University in 1964, obtaining his BScAgric degree in

1968, followed by a BScAgric Honours (cum laude) in 1970, an MSc Agric in 1971, and a PhD Agric in 1987.

He began his career at the Department of Agriculture in Pretoria in 1971 and joined the Department of Agricultural Economics at Stellenbosch in January 1974 as a lecturer.

Johann's lecturing and research focused on farm management, with expertise in strategic planning, futures studies, financial viability analysis, business planning, farming potential assessment, agricultural enterprise advisory, and environmental impact assessment from an agricultural economics perspective. Many graduates of the

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Department regarded his comprehensive farm budget exercise as one of the most valuable components of their academic training.

This keystone assignment required students to integrate knowledge across disciplines, reflecting the multidisciplinary nature of the BScAgric (Agricultural Economics) programme and leaving a lasting impression on generations of students.

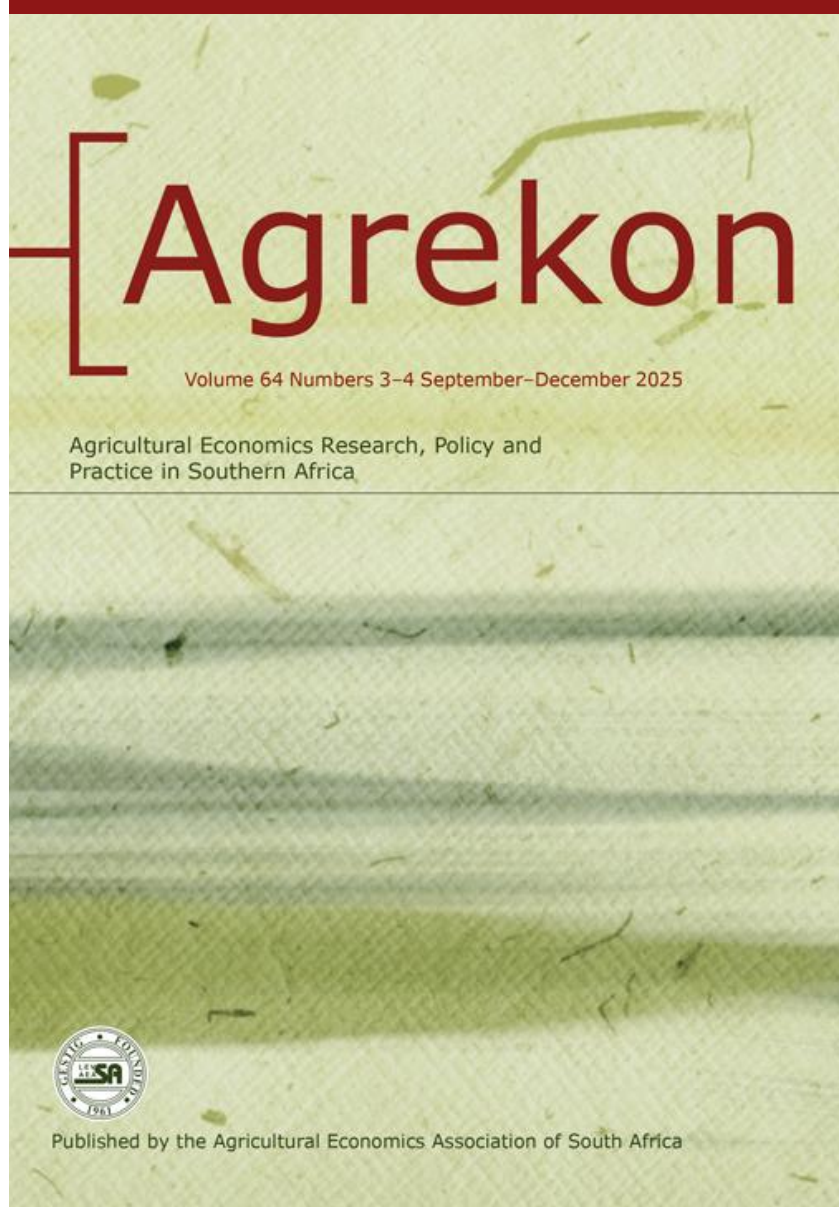
As an agricultural economics consultant, Johann contributed to several large-scale financial and economic viability studies of irrigation projects, including the Theewaterskloof irrigation scheme, which supplies water to Stellenbosch and Somerset West, and the Koekedouw Scheme near Ceres. In later years, he focused on assessing land-use changes associated with the development of solar and wind energy projects.

Beyond his academic and professional contributions, Johann was also a talented rugby player and later a coach at the Matie Rugby Club and Dagbreek Residence team, which won the Sauer Cup during his tenure. Furthermore, he coached Paul Roos Gymnasium rugby teams with great success. He was also a keen golfer.

Johann and his wife, Marleen, have three children—Adriaan, Annelize, and Christiaan—all qualified chartered accountants—and four grandchildren.

He will be remembered for his dedication to agricultural economics, his commitment to student development, and his lasting contribution to the Department.

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