

Free State Agriculture Young Farmer of the Year 2017 announced

Free State Agriculture has announced Johan van Huyssteen as the winner of the 21st [Free State Agriculture Young Farmer of the Year 2017 competition](#) in collaboration with Standard Bank.



Johan van Huyssteen and his wife Juanita

The other two finalists who competed for the title are Willie Stols from Vierfontein and Herman Archer from Trompsburg. The team of judges say the drought provided some unique challenges to the finalists and they all showed what they are made of during a trying time.

Prof. Pieter Fourie, associate professor at the Central University of Technology (CUT) Free State's Department of Agriculture and convenor of the judges, says the drought conditions affected all three of the finalists and several aspects had to be taken into account. Fourie says it was challenging to choose a winner, as all the finalists performed well.

Van Hyssteen and his farming operation:

Diversification may be good, but I choose to specialise!

Johan and Juanita van Huyssteen farm on the farm Bloekom in the Virginia district. He farms with his father.

According to Van Hyssteen, he is a perfectionist and planner, characteristics he tries to implement in all areas of his farming operation. The best way of doing things is to think on and try and plan for everything. Van Huyssteen does, however, believe in simplicity - the easier, simpler and faster, the better.

The most significant change that he brought into the farming operation was the use of pre-planting preparation and precision equipment. Top dressing is no longer applied, which contributes to better root development.

Enterprise	% of the total farming enterprise	Scope (ha or LSU)
Maize	100.00%	2500ha
Cattle	0% still building herd	125

His future vision for the farming enterprise is to grow sustainably, manage risks and farm more effectively. Van Huyssteen would also like to use technology more effectively in future.

Some of the most significant risks that he has to manage include drought and the price of products. The 50% overlay-system that is used contributes to good yields and it counters drought conditions. With regards to price management, steps are followed in cooperation with companies that supply information. "With good information, informed decisions can be made that contributes to limiting risks."

Van Hyssteen is an active member of the community and farmer's association. He is someone who can take the lead and inspire others. Currently, he is the chairperson of Virginia Landbou as well as the local fire protection association. Previously he was also a member of Free State Agriculture's Young Farmer Committee.

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