



Vrystaat Landbou Free State Agriculture

The Free State Agriculture Young Farmer of the Year competition closes on 31 January, 2014, so it's not too late to enter. Here's a brief overview of the requirements and a sample of the questionnaires that need to be completed.

Requirements:

- * The candidate must be 35 or younger on the day entries for the competition close – 31 January 2014.
- * As the farmer's management philosophy and the technical skill with which it is executed are the main evaluation criteria, the make up of the operation and the size of the farm are not important. That is, a farmer who raises livestock and game and a mixed-crop farmer have the same chance of winning.
- * The candidate may have their own farm, or farm in partnership with others. In the latter case, the candidate must have specific responsibilities allocated to them, on the basis of which they will be judged. These must include the application of all management functions (planning, implementation and control) in all fields (production, marketing, finance and personnel management) the candidate oversees.
- * Candidates may only participate as individuals. For example, brothers cannot enter as a team, but can compete against each other as individual candidates.
- * At the closing date, the candidate must have been a paid up member of their agricultural union for at least one year.
- * Previous national winners may not re-enter.
- * The decision of the judges is final and no correspondence will be entered into with participants.

Judging criteria:

The following aspects are important when judging each candidate's management philosophy and technical skill: 1) *what* the farmer does; 2) *why* they do it; and 3) the available alternatives.

When farming with a partner (such as their father), the candidate must have specific sectors, where they are responsible for all management functions (planning, implementation and control) in all areas (production, marketing, finance and personnel management).

For example, a person who handles only the personnel and marketing functions on the farm will not qualify for the competition. If, however, the candidate's father is responsible for the sheep component of the farm, say, while the candidate handles the cattle and irrigation, then the candidate may enter the competition. They will be judged on the basis of these two branches only.

The panel of provincial and national judges is composed of unbiased experts in specific areas. They will use an objective, scientific method based on predetermined criteria, which includes the following:

- * The candidate's vision for the future;
- * Budget, records, finance, investment philosophy and filing system, as well as the candidate's understanding of these aspects;
- * Production methods;
- * Maintenance policies and practices;
- * Managing of personnel;
- * Involvement with organised agriculture and the local community;

Also important is the 'professional profile' of the candidate. This includes:

- * Changes made by the candidate;
- * The extent to which the judges' questions have been answered and the insight shown by the candidate;
- * A well-planned farm visit;
- * Candidate's exposure to research and trials done on a national and/or international level;
- * Layout (efficiency) and appearance of the farm;
- * Attitudes and actions related to land reform and black economic empowerment;
- * Environmentally-friendly practices that have an impact on the long-term survival of the farm;

The foregoing (and other) categories carry different weights. Points are awarded per category, and then totalled to determine the winner. It is impossible for an individual judge to affect the outcome of the competition.

In summary, while cognisance is taken of shiny new tractors, the size of the farm, the role played by parents or partners currently playing and related matters – the emphasis remains on the candidate's management philosophy.

Also remember you are initially assessed solely on the information contained in the questionnaire. Do not downplay your skills and achievements, but also beware of boasting!

Procedure:

* Complete Section A of the application form by hand and post/deliver to your provincial agricultural union.

* Identify someone (not a family member) who can act as a reference and can attest to the applicant's involvement on the farm and in the community. This referee should preferably be the

chairperson of the farmers' association and/or a member of the district farmer's union or provincial agricultural union.

* Section B should be independently completed by the referee and sent to the provincial agricultural union without the candidate viewing the contents of the report.

* Depending on the number of entries, in the first round of the competition, candidates must make a 10-minute presentation about their farming activities to the provincial panel of judges. Candidates will also be quizzed on aspects of their questionnaire (Section A). The finalists will then be chosen.

* Candidates selected as finalists must be willing to conduct the judges on a tour of their farm.

* During the on-site visit, the economists/financial specialists on the team of judges will inspect the farm's finances. Ensure that the last three years of audited financial statements are made available during the visit. (All information will be kept confidential.)

- Expected date for national assessment – September / October 2014.

- Entry forms are treated as confidential and all personal documents will be destroyed by the organisers after the nomination of the winner.

[FORMS BELOW]

SECTION A

1. Biographical information:

1.1 Surname:

1.2 Nickname:

1.3 Surname:

1.4 Date of birth: / / 19.....

Age: years months

1.5 Marital status:

1.6 Name of spouse:

1.7 Number of children:

1.8 Name of farm:

1.9 District:

1.10 Postal address:

.....

.....

.....

..... (Postal code)

Email:

1.11 Telephone: (Telkom) (Cell).....

1.12 Directions to farm:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

1.13 Farmer's union:

1.14 Provincial agricultural union:

1.15 Academic/technical qualifications:

.....
.....
.....

1.16 How long have you been farming? years

1.17 How long have you been farming on this farm? years

1.18 How did you come by the farm? (Leased, bought, inherited, etc.)

.....
.....

1.19 What position do you hold on the farm? / Who farms with you?

.....
.....

1.20 If you don't farm alone, what are your responsibilities?

.....
.....

1.21 What are the main changes on the farm you were responsible in the past 5 years?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

1.22 Which branches do you run, what is their percentage contribution in terms of turnover, and what is the size in terms of hectares, livestock units or small units?

Branch	% contribution to total turnover	Size (ha or LSUs)

2. Vision

2.1 What vision do you have for the future of your farm?

.....
.....
.....
.....

2.2 What are your priorities for the coming season?

.....
.....
.....
.....

2.3 What role do young farmers play in South Africa's economy?

.....
.....
.....

2.4 How are you making provision for land reform and BEE requirements in your business?

.....
.....
.....

3. Financial information (budget and records)

3.1 Describe the methods of recordkeeping you employ

.....
.....
.....
.....

.....
.....

3.2 What trend has your farm revenue shown in the past 3 years?

.....
.....

3.3 What trend has your real profits shown over the past three years?

.....
.....

3.4 Describe your methods of financial control/monitoring?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

3.5 What role do outside investors play on your farm?

.....
.....

3.6 What was your farm's net capital ratio (total assets vs total liabilities) over the past 3 years?

2011	2012	2013
: 1	: 1	: 1

4. Production management

4.1 What information sources / services do you use and why?

.....
.....
.....

.....

4.2 What resource conservation practices do you apply?

.....
.....
.....
.....

4.3 How do you ensure that the potential of your farm is optimally utilised?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

4.4 List five factors (in order of importance) that you take into account when making production decisions.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

5. Marketing

5.1 Describe your marketing policy.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

5.2 What market indicators do you use?

.....
.....
.....
.....

6. Risk management

6.1 What are the main risks related to your farming business and how do you make provision for them?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

6.2 What research is being done on your farm?

.....
.....
.....

7. Upkeep/maintenance

What is your policy when it comes to replacing vehicles, implements and equipment on your farm?

.....
.....
.....
.....

.....
.....
.....
.....

8. Organisation and management of labour

Describe your employment policies and practices (personnel management style) on the farm.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

9. Involvement in organised agriculture and the community

9.1 To what extent are you involved in organised agriculture?

.....
.....
.....

9.2 To what extent are you involved in community service and activities?

.....
.....
.....

SECTION B

NB. This section must be completed by the referee and submitted directly to the agricultural union. It is very important that this document is honestly/accurately completed. The candidate may not be informed of its contents.

Name of candidate:

Name of candidate's farm:

Referee's particulars:

Name:

Address:

Telephone:(Telkom)(Cell)

Office/position:

Association with candidate (if any):

B1. What is your overall impression of the candidate's farm?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

B2. To what extent is the candidate involved with organised agriculture?

.....
.....
.....
.....

B3. To what extent is the candidate involved in the decision-making process on the farm?

.....
.....
.....
.....

B4. To what extent is the applicant involved with farm security?

.....

.....

.....

.....

B5. To what extent is the candidate currently regarded as a young farmer leader in the region?
What do you think the situation will be in 5 years?

.....

.....

.....

.....

B6. Any other observations about the candidate:

.....

.....

.....