



South Africa's leading dairy steward is a Nedbank client once again

Nedbank heartily congratulates its client, Dean Biggs of Suiderland Farm in the Tsitsikamma area in the Eastern Cape, for winning the Milk Producers Organisation (MPO) Nedbank Stewardship Award 2022 at a ceremony in Pretoria on Wednesday 30 November 2022.

The highly respected award recognises dairy farmers who are excellent stewards of their farming enterprises. Stewardship addresses sustainability in the wider context and encompasses aspects such as protecting our natural resources, fair and ethical treatment of people and animals, producing a safe and healthy product, and farming profitably.

John Hudson, Nedbank's Head of Agriculture, says this is the third year that a Nedbank client has won this important award, reflecting mutual values and a shared vision for a sustainable future. 'At just 24, Dean is a fifth-generation Biggs farmer who is as driven by his passion for animals and dairy as he is by his family's belief to always leave something in a better position than you received it. Suiderland is a superb example of what can be achieved through sustainability and stewardship, and Dean is an inspiring and deserving winner of this prestigious award,' he says.

Hudson adds that Nedbank, which has sponsored the Stewardship Awards for the past four years, aims not only to be good with money but, more importantly, to do good with it as well. 'Our sponsorship of these awards, which recognise and reward those who are adopting and raising awareness of best practices, is closely aligned with this strategy. Our sponsorship objectives are to recognise and reward the climate-smart practises that are successfully applied on each farm; to share this knowledge and these successes with others; as well as to create greater awareness about climate change among dairy farmers and equipping them with the knowledge needed to farm climate-smart in a manner that promotes excellent stewardship,' he says.

For Biggs, sustainable farming and conservation practices have always been the norm as Suiderland is a dryland farm. 'We currently milk 1 200 cows on this dryland farm system, and by farming sustainably, we have reached our goals quicker and can more effectively manage our operations. Our main strategies for success are to nourish the soil, and research and grow the right grass cultivars that are an optimal match to our environment and climate. This enables us to fully utilise what nature has to offer and ensures that our cows are well fed and happy,' he says.

Biggs is a hands-on farmer who is actively involved in his community. He helps emerging young farmers and dairy farm managers develop their skills and assists the MPO by inviting young learners to receive training on his farm. 'I love farming, I love to teach people about farming, and I love to teach others how to get the best out of the land by putting so much back into the land.'

'It is an honour for me, and all the Biggs who came before me, to receive this award as recognition of our passion for farming and being good dairy stewards, and it is an accomplishment to be recognised as a sustainable farm. As Nedbank clients, the award that I received today shows that sustainability is at the heart of what Nedbank does – they understand our farming and our business needs, and have always been there to support us,' says Biggs.

Hudson says that Nedbank believes it has a significant role to play in helping the agricultural sector evolve to a more efficient and productive model through sustainable business practices. 'Climate change, soil health, water efficiency and renewable energy are key focus areas and we have created innovative financial products designed to support our clients with sustainable farming interventions.

But we believe that our role goes beyond simply financing the transition – we use our banking expertise and understanding of the sector to raise awareness about climate risk and the business case for sustainable farming, and we have frank discussions with our clients to advise them on future-proofing their businesses and to package funding solutions specific to their needs. We are proud to use our core business to drive the sustainability of the agricultural sector, while partnering with clients like Dean, and our collaborators who focus on sustainable agriculture and stewardship,' says Hudson.

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