

Mondstuk van die Suid-Afrikaanse aartappelbedryf • Mouthpiece of the South African potato industry

# CHIPS

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# Deserving bursary recipients get a glimpse at the potato industry

By Nomvula Xaba

Every year, the Potato Industry Development Trust (PIDT) awards bursaries to academically deserving undergraduate and postgraduate students from various tertiary institutions throughout South Africa. These students, who are engaged in agricultural studies, are invited to a bursary induction programme. The 2020 academic year came with unprecedented challenges as Covid-19 restrictions and regulations prevented the induction from taking place.

This unfortunate matter was rectified this year as Potatoes SA (PSA) decided to host two groups of students on different dates for the induction. Twenty students in two groups of ten attended this year's induction programme. The 2020 intake group attended their induction on 29 March 2021, while the 2021 intake group attended on 12 April 2021.

## First stop: Joburg market

This year's programme started with an early morning visit to the Joburg Fresh Produce Market, where the students were welcomed by Lesego Pooe, the potato hall manager, who shared some exciting information on how the market operates. After a short, intense presentation, Pooe gave the group an informative tour of the market, detailing the roles of the producers, market agents and retailers, and how these function in relation to one another.



The 2020 intake group with PSA's chief executive officer, Willie Jacobs, seated in the middle.



This year's programme commenced with a visit to the Joburg Fresh Produce Market, where the students were welcomed by Lesego Pooe, the potato hall manager.

After concluding the market tour, the group was whisked off to the Potato House where they were treated to a well-deserved breakfast. PSA's chief executive officer, Willie Jacobs, welcomed the students and congratulated them on their bursaries.

Jacobs then gave a clear overview of the potato industry, explaining the different divisions and their roles. This was followed by a string of presentations from all the core business managers, ensuring the students had a clear understanding of the different roles and services within PSA. Potato Certification Service, which always supports this good cause, also had an opportunity to present its role and responsibilities.

"As a plant pathology and genetics student, I thoroughly enjoyed the outings to Plantovita and the ARC's gene bank. I also gained valuable insight into the potato industry and the opportunities it offers, especially in the field of plant pathology ... I can confidently say I now have a greater appreciation for the work and research taking place in the potato industry."

– Anika Keuck, fourth year BSc Plant Pathology, University of Stellenbosch.

“The visits to the Joburg market, Plantovita and the ARC reignited the love and passion for the career I have chosen. It was a pleasure to have the executives from the Potato House address us as well. I learned a lot from the expertise and information they shared with us.” – Londeka Mbatha, MSc Plant Pathology: University of KwaZulu-Natal.

**Getting to know the top brass**

The second group of students were welcomed by Bernice Manana, PSA’s chief operating officer, who gave an overview of the potato industry on behalf of Jacobs. They had the pleasure of meeting the bursary committee chairperson, Dr Ben Pieterse, who shared some words of wisdom. The next visit was to Plantovita where the technical

manager, Anel Espach, gave a brief tour of the laboratory and discussed seed testing and disease control.

The 2021 bursary induction ended on a high note with a tour to the Agricultural Research Council’s (ARC) gene bank at Roodeplaat. The students were warmly welcomed by the gene bank manager, Zanele Noqobo, and learned about how the gene bank contributes to the entire potato industry, and why it is important to produce disease- and virus-free potato seed that meets market and consumer standards.

The students undoubtedly found this experience informative and it gave them an opportunity to think carefully about a career in the



The 2021 intake group, with bursary committee chairperson, Dr Ben Pieterse, seated in the middle.

potato industry. PSA and the PIDT wish the students every success with their studies. 🍀

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