

National cleantech innovation winners announced

Yolandi Schoeman of Baoberry took the top prize at the 2016 awards ceremony of the Global Cleantech Innovation Programme for SMEs in South Africa (GCIP-SA) for her innovation aWetbox.

aWetbox - or a wetland in a box - is a cost-effective, nature-based grey water treatment system that eliminates 99% of disease-causing micro-organisms and improves water quality for household use by up to 80%.



Pamela Alborough of SanAqua HCA, with a waste-water treatment enhancement solution, and Martin Ackermann of Thevia, with roof tiles made from 99% waste materials, were the runners-up.

Schoeman received a cash prize of R120,000 while Alborough and Ackermann each received R60,000. In addition to the cash prizes all three contestants will receive an all-expenses paid trip to Silicon Valley in the US where they will compete against top performers of other GCIP programmes from across the world in February 2017.

Schoeman also received the award for the most promising woman-led business, while the award for the most promising youth-led business went to Sandiswa Qayi of Amahlathi Eco-Tech, who developed the Hot Spot for geysers, an innovation that supplies 50-litres of hot water within 30-minutes. The Innovation for Social Impact award went to Louise Williamson for the safe and fuel-efficient Mashsha syngas stoves specifically designed for use in schools and community feeding schemes. The three special category winners each received R20,000 in prize money.

Showcasing an innovative nation

Delivering the keynote address at the awards ceremony in Pretoria, Minister of Science and Technology Naledi Pandor said that the GCIP-SA has been contributing to the development, promotion and deployment of clean technology innovations through its various activities and continuous engagement with stakeholders.

“The programme also creates a platform for linking South African entrepreneurs with investors, business and commercial partners, potentially resulting in the commercialisation of new products and services and ultimately job creation.

“This cleantech programme has showcased an innovative nation. Innovation adds momentum to the structural economic change that is needed for economic growth, job creation and an improved quality of life for us all,” she said.



Speaking on behalf of the director of UNIDO’s Energy Department and special adviser on energy to the director-general of the organisation Dr Pradeep Monga, James New said that South Africa was an opportune country where technological breakthroughs can create ample platforms of opportunity. “The GCIP-SA and UNIDO remain committed to find, foster, and connect South African innovators, inventors and problem-solvers who have found innovative, practical and commercially viable ways to address the national challenges of achieving sustainable development and creating green employment opportunities,” he explained.

South Africa at its best

In his address, TIA CEO Barlow Manilal applauded the GCIP-SA innovators for their contribution to addressing the environmental challenges facing the country and the planet. “Today is a real showcase of South Africa at its best,” he said, adding that these innovations were a mere sample of projects in TIA’s portfolio. “TIA’s mandate is to provide funding and non-funding support to exploit the great ideas and talent in the country to bring about effective change to the economy of South Africa and ultimately to the lives of its people.”

Legal firm Spoor and Fisher sponsored R30,000 worth of legal services to Thevia for the best pitch of the evening, while SKEG Product Development announced sponsorship of product development services to one of the GCIP-SA’s 2016 participants to the value of R40,000.

The GCIP-SA combines a competition and a business accelerator to help de-risk the businesses of participants by offering

them extensive mentoring, training, access to investors and opportunities to showcase their innovations. Over the past three years, there has been an increase of almost 50% in the number of entries, with 58% of the innovations focusing on energy efficiency and water efficiency. Of the nine 2016 finalists, five are women.

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