

Nestlé Needs Youth agri competition winners announced

Nestlé ESAR has announced its Nestlé Needs Youth Agri Competition winners, in partnership with the Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship South Africa. The inaugural agripreneurship competition for youth in the east and southern African region, saw winners walking away with mentorship and coaching opportunities totalling \$30,000.



Source: Supplied

The competition's winners were selected and announced at a media roundtable hosted in Johannesburg, South Africa, with participants from across the region and a dynamic youth panel that discussed the agripreneurship space under the theme *Realising Empowered and Enabled African Livelihoods through Unlocking Sustainable Agripreneurship Opportunities in Africa*.

The **Nestlé Needs Youth** initiative aims to help young people gain access to apprenticeships, traineeships, and job opportunities – empowering them with skills they need to thrive. The global ambition is to help 10 million young people around the world access economic opportunities by 2030 through employment and employability, agripreneurship, and entrepreneurship.

The prizes, courtesy of the Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship South Africa's Ignite Business Accelerator, will help the three lucky winners in getting their businesses investor-ready and, ready to go to market.

The competition, which ran from June to July 2022 called for youth agripreneurs to submit entries of their farming business. Over 600 entries were received from across the region and the top 10 finalists were from South Africa: Sahaba Projects, Imbewu Farmers, AgriNouri, Guwela Farming, Zsqared projects and Sekgale Trading Enterprise. From Kenya; Melmax Farm Fresh, Tuluk Honey Traders Baringo and Kokwa Island Beekeeper, and from Uganda; Kyega Valley Mixed Farms.

Speaking on the programme, Nestlé Esar HR director, Athol Swanepoel, said: "Young people are at the heart of regeneration and are our future. They are the entrepreneurs and innovators of tomorrow. In agriculture exists sustainable economic opportunities that youth can unlock and for a business such as ours, they are opportunities to partner with these agribusinesses."

Prize winners

Winning first prize was Fellistus Mmankopodi Sekgale, aged 26, of QueenAgri, based in Sekhukhune district, Fetakgomo Municipality in Mphanama Village, South Africa.

Sekgale was awarded the Ignite Investment for Scale Programme through the Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship South Africa. The prize is an intensive six-month mentorship and coaching programme, with access to industry professionals and business coaches across eight critical areas in business. QueenAgri is an agribusiness that offers services and supply goods mainly to retailers in the Limpopo province, South Africa. The company specialises in mixed farming on 20 hectares of a farm producing livestock and cash crops for supply.

Melvin Muna, aged 29, of Melmax Farm Fresh, took second prize. The business is based in Kibwezi Town, in the Makueni County in Kenya. Muna walks away with the Ignite Access to Markets Programme, a three-month programme that includes access to mentoring, and access to industry professionals and business coaches across four critical areas of business. Kyega Valley Mixed Farms specialises in livestock, breeding goats for sale to abattoirs and individual retailers, to meet the growing demand for improved Boer goats.

The third prize was awarded to John Wani, aged 29, of Kyega Valley Mixed Farms, from Kiryandongo district in the Bunyoro sub-region, Uganda. Wani's prize is the Ignite Ideation into Action programme, a one-month mentoring programme with access to industry professionals and business coaches across three critical business areas.

Opportunities for youth to thrive

"Being the most youthful continent, Africa's emerging status presents young people with myriad opportunities to reimagine the agricultural sector due to their affinity to innovation and technology.

"The Branson Centre Ignite business accelerator programme seeks to help entrepreneurs leave an impact on society, the environment, and the economy and this partnership with Nestlé Esar becomes most crucial in providing opportunities for our youth to thrive," said Nwabisa Mayema, strategic partnership director at Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship, South Africa.

[Read more about the Nestlé Needs YOUTH initiative here.](#)