

**News Release
Stellar Winery/ Stellar Farming
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Stellar Farming Manager Wins Prestigious Award

The awards ceremony for the prestigious Sanlam Farmworker of the Year competition was the setting for a night of triumph for Maria Malan, farm manager of Stellar Farming, who walked off with the title. Stellar Farming is the farming arm of Stellar Organic Winery.

The competition was launched seven years ago in the Hex River Valley, with Sanlam and the Western Cape Department of Agriculture as co-sponsors. The purpose of the Farmworker of the Year Competition is to acknowledge farmworkers for their specialised knowledge and excellent work, and it plays an important empowerment role in the farm communities that are involved. The competition currently takes place in 10 regions in the Western Cape. Regional heats take place first, after which the winners compete in the provincial competition.

For Maria, known to all and sundry at Stellar as “Marie”, the award is a timely recognition of an astonishing record of achievement in spite of the odds that have been stacked against her.

Capable, compassionate and determined to make the best of her opportunities for herself and her community, Maria has risen from domestic worker to manager of an organic table and wine grape farming operation exporting to countries across the globe. Along the way she has found the time to become a leading light among South African Fairtrade producers and is on the committees of various local community organisations. She is a board member of the Stellar group of companies and the Waitrose Foundation.

Marie’s fierce commitment to improving the living and working conditions of her fellow farmworkers has borne fruit: Fairtrade is firmly established and flourishing at Stellar and beyond. There are now more Fairtrade wine producers in South Africa than in any of the other wine-producing countries, setting a great example for ethical production and trading.

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