

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

CHIPS

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**BESPROEINGSBESTUUR VIR
OPTIMALE AARTAPPELPRODUKSIE**

Die ekonomiese
impak van 2020 op
varsproduktemarkte

**MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE
AND THE POTATO INDUSTRY**

Oranjeville en Ceres
kultivar-evaluasies
onder die vergrootglas

Sebenzangamandla
on its way to reach
commercial status

Chipping in on a growing industry

By Willie Jacobs, CEO of Potatoes SA



In this very first edition of CHIPS, of which I am part as the new CEO of Potatoes SA (PSA), I deemed it fitting to give a bit of background on myself – who I am and where I come from. So, for those of you whom I have not had the pleasure of meeting yet – glad to make your acquaintance!

I grew up in Bloemfontein. My wife, Renata, and I have two teenage sons and a ten-year-old daughter. In my free time I enjoy several outdoor activities, of which fly fishing and cycling are currently my favourites. Unfortunately, I cannot pride myself in being the family champion in either of these, as age and youth are starting to work against me – my progressing age and my eldest son's youth.

Seeing my children – and, for that matter, everyone I have the privilege of working with – become better than I could ever be with their talent and determination, fills me with pride. Some of the other activities I enjoy include golf, squash, hunting, and off-road adventures. And yes, I do own a full off-grid camping outfit.

My work life

I studied BSc Agricultural Economics at the University of the Free State and obtained my MBA at North-West University. Recently, I worked on several contracts as an independent consultant. Most of these were related to agricultural funding and management.

Previously, I worked as an executive at the Land Bank, serving corporate clients and later, as executive director of Obaro Financial Services, where we funded farming activities. I have a passion for management efficiency, especially the ability to enhance it with the latest technology.

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I enjoy being in a position where I can excel as an agricultural economist, combining all disciplines of farming and management into units that go above the norm. One of the greatest challenges I have faced in my career was becoming a successful business owner myself.

I achieved this by locking into a strong network of skilled individuals, as well as corporate business entities with the necessary infrastructure, which

includes people, equipment, and management skills. The biggest lesson I have learned from this is that you cannot operate any business without trust in your network, and in the skills and contributions of your team members.

The road ahead

I regard my role at PSA as that of spearhead, with a sharp focus and accuracy in terms of the outcomes we are aiming for, as well as someone who follows a management style of involvement, participation, and facilitation. I trust that each of the current staff members of PSA is, in his and her own right, the best the market has to offer for the specific role. I will find pride in building on that capacity.

I realise that in my position as CEO of PSA in 2021, there will be very little time to find my feet. I am going to hit the ground running and manage at full speed. I look forward to the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead, and I already feel part of Team Potatoes. 🍅