

## Free State farmers to benefit from new support network

According to Gerhard Kriel, CEO of Free State Agriculture (FSA), the goal of establishing Friends of Free State Agriculture or *Vriende van Vrystaat Landbou*, was to create a unique support network for farmers in the province. Through this initiative, FSA wants to make the public aware of the circumstances in which farmers work and establish a network that enables money and expertise to become available to the organisation's membership network. This will then be used to benefit farmers and assist them in times of crisis.



Gerhard Kriel (left), Chief Executive Officer of Free State Agriculture (FSA), Andries Vermeulen, official ambassador of Friends of Free State Agriculture, Francois Wilken, President of FSA, and Tormie Esterhuyse, Vice President of FSA. Photo: Free State Agriculture

"Our ultimate goal is to extend Friends of Free State Agriculture to a national initiative, Friends of Agriculture, so that all farmers in South Africa can benefit from this," says Kriel. "We have already held discussions with other organisations in organised agriculture. Free State Agriculture will play a leading role in helping others get similar initiatives off the ground to benefit or support members in other provinces."

OppieStoep storyteller Andries Vermeulen is the official ambassador of this initiative and will help expand it nationwide. Vermeulen encourages everyone to proactively become part of it and "to move with us."

“ Media briefing about our new initiative, Friends of Free State Agriculture, with [@ANDRIESVERMEULE](#) as our ambassador. [@landbou](#) [@FarmersWeeklySA](#) [@volksbladnuus](#) [pic.twitter.com/xqrJgcnjtf](#)— Vrystaat Landbou (@vslandbou) [March 28, 2018](#) ”

Kriel says the idea is to take hands in a productive and meaningful manner to make people aware of the importance of the agricultural sector, as everybody needs a farmer at least three times a day during meals. The initiative forms part of FSA's overall vision of promoting a safe and sustainable agricultural environment in the interests of agriculture in the Free State.

"Diet foods of healthy eaters, burgers and chips of take-away meals and the formal dishes on our tables all came from the hand of a hard-working farmer," says Kriel. "With Friends of Free State Agriculture, we want to make the public aware of conditions in which food is produced."

### Support and assistance

The support and assistance provided by Friends of Free State Agriculture will assist farmers, among other things, with issues such as farm safety, land affairs, and the creation of a disaster fund for assistance in crises such as fires, droughts and floods.

Part of the initiative is the launch of a security application called [Die Plaaswag](#). The application or app, of which FSA is a partner, works with a panic button and will improve the safety of farmers and the public. It also aims to gather accurate crime statistics that FSA can use in combating crime in the Free State.

*For more information, visit [Friends of Free State Agriculture](#).*

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>