

Honouring excellence: PCS celebrates top seed growers of 2026

By HW Coen, Mashiteletse Mapheto, and Michael Schultze, Potato Certification Service

Hard work, innovation, and unwavering passion took centre stage on 22 July when the Potato Certification Service (PCS) honoured top producers. Held as part of the Seed Potato Grower's Forum and Potatoes SA Congress, the PCS awards evening celebrated the outstanding achievements driving the sector forward. The sculptures awarded during the event were created by Falconer Art Studios.

Bayer Seed Potato Grower of the Year and PCS Hat Trick Award 2026

Rudi Heinlein, Sirkel N Landgoed

The Bayer Seed Potato Grower of the Year Award recognises the grower with the highest quality performance over the past three production seasons. The PCS Hat Trick Award is presented in recognition of the exceptional achievement of producing the highest-quality seed potatoes over a six-year period and winning the Bayer Seed Potato Grower of the Year Award on three consecutive occasions.

Situated between Baltimore and Tolwe in Limpopo, Sirkel N Landgoed produces approximately 90 to 100 ha of seed potatoes annually. Farming in this challenging production region requires precision, careful planning, and disciplined management – qualities that the Sirkel N team consistently demonstrates.

Sirkel N is a diversified farming enterprise producing onions, tomatoes, citrus, and seed potatoes. Its commitment to quality is evident throughout the production process, from planting to final certification. Meticulous planning, strict quality control, and a focus on excellence remain central to the success of the business.

The professionalism and dedication of management and staff are evident during every visit. Farm manager



From the left are Dr Sanesh Ramburan of Bayer, Rudi and Jeany Heinlein, and Gerhard Posthumus, chairperson of the PCS board.

Abrie van Schalkwyk and the wider Sirkel N team create a conducive environment for performance while maintaining the high standards for

which the business is known. Congratulations to Rudi Heinlein and the entire Sirkel N team on this exceptional achievement.



The Hat Trick sculpture consists of three balancing potatoes, representing the three consecutive award-winning years. The composition celebrates not only agricultural excellence, but also the rare distinction of sustained performance at the highest level. The delicate balance of the three potatoes reflects the skill, judgement, and consistency required to produce outstanding crops year after year, while the ascending vine signifies growth, innovation, and the continual pursuit of improvement.

PCS Rising Star Award 2026

Phophi Simon Raletjane, The Clarence (Pty) Ltd

The PCS Rising Star Award recognises a new grower entering the seed potato industry who consistently produces high-quality seed potatoes.

Situated approximately 41 km from Vivo in the Limpopo Bushveld, agricultural enterprise The Clarence is led by Phophi Simon Raletjane, a dedicated and progressive seed potato grower. After producing commercial potatoes for processing and the fresh produce market, he entered the seed potato industry in 2024, multiplying seed potatoes for PepsiCo.

Raletjane's commitment to quality is evident throughout the operation. His administration, well-maintained seed potato fields, careful crop rogueing practices, and orderly packhouse reflect his high standards and close attention to detail.

He also follows an inclusive leadership approach by involving employees at every stage of production, from planting to final certification, and by investing in social development programmes with nearby schools. Since entering seed potato production in 2024, Raletjane and his team have consistently demonstrated professionalism, attention to detail, and a strong commitment to quality. This provides the team with valuable knowledge and experience while contributing to the farm's success.

Congratulations to Raletjane and the entire team at The Clarence on receiving the PCS Rising Star Award 2026. This recognition celebrates their dedication, professionalism, and commitment to excellence in seed potato production.



Gerhard Posthumus and Phophi Simon Raletjane.



The Rising Star sculpture depicts a young potato plant emerging from a single potato suspended above the earth. Its roots cling firmly to the potato from which it draws nourishment, while its leaves stretch upward toward new possibilities. The composition celebrates a pivotal moment in every journey: the transition from promise to achievement. The elevated potato represents the foundation of knowledge, hard work, and opportunity upon which success is built.



PCS Maverick Award 2026

Jakkie Mellet, Potato Seed Production

The PCS Maverick Award recognises exceptional technical expertise in producing a wide range of potato varieties across multiple seed generations while maintaining outstanding quality. Situated roughly 18 km outside Lydenburg, Potato Seed Production or PSP operates in one of South Africa's most challenging seed potato production regions. Variable weather, hail, and rocky terrain demand exceptional adaptability and expertise.

During the most recent season, about 1 800 mm of rain was recorded, compared with the region's annual average of around 650 mm. Despite these difficult conditions, the PSP team continues to maintain excellent production and quality standards.

PSP operates nine greenhouses where G0 mini tubers are produced from *in vitro* plant material. The company multiplies roughly 20 potato varieties, generally up to Generation 3, with around 25% of its mini-tuber production



Gerhard Posthumus, and Jakkie and Louné Mellet

exported across Africa. The business also produces kiwifruit and crafts premium vodka from its own potatoes and kiwifruit, reflecting Jakkie Mellet's innovative and entrepreneurial spirit.

Congratulations to Mellet and the entire PSP team on receiving the PCS Maverick Award 2026. This achievement reflects their technical expertise, innovation, and commitment to outstanding quality in seed potato production.



The Maverick sculpture depicts a young seedling emerging through a stack of three precariously balanced blocks. The blocks represent established assumptions, accepted practices, and the structures that shape an industry. Their unstable arrangement reflects the uncertainty that often accompanies innovation and change. Breaking through these obstacles, the seedling symbolises new ideas taking root. Though delicate in appearance, it possesses a quiet strength capable of overcoming barriers and transforming the landscape around it.



PCS Legend Award 2026

John Campbell, Ivanhoe Farming Company

The PCS Legend Award recognises more than 30 years of consistently producing exceptional-quality seed potatoes. John Campbell of Ivanhoe Farming Company in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands was awarded the prestigious 2026 PCS Legend Award. The award celebrates his longstanding contribution to South Africa's certified seed potato industry.

Farming is deeply rooted in the Campbell family history, spanning multiple generations. Building on this legacy, Campbell has developed a resilient and diversified enterprise spanning approximately ten farms. In addition to high-quality certified seed potatoes, Ivanhoe's operations include beef, timber, maize, property rentals, and tourism.

Environmental stewardship is central to the enterprise's sustainability. Ivanhoe applies a seven-year crop rotation to break pest cycles and protect the soil, implements regenerative practices to improve soil health and water retention, utilises precision farming to optimise resource use, and practices careful grazing management to improve natural veld conditions. These practices have reduced the farm's reliance on chemical inputs while supporting productivity.

Congratulations to Campbell and the Ivanhoe Farming team on receiving the 2026 PCS Legend Award. His exceptional leadership, dedication to quality, and responsible environmental management have made a lasting contribution to South African agriculture, demonstrating that commercial success and environmental stewardship can work together to support future generations. 



Gerhard Posthumus, and Jean and John Campbell.



The Legend sculpture depicts a single potato elevated within a wreath of potato foliage. The potato, the foundation of the industry itself, stands as a symbol of enduring excellence, while the surrounding wreath recalls the ancient tradition of honouring individuals whose achievements transcend their own era. Unlike a trophy awarded for a single season or accomplishment, this one celebrates a body of work accumulated over many years. It acknowledges the growers, innovators, mentors, and leaders whose commitment has strengthened the industry, advanced standards of excellence, and contributed to the success of countless others.

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