

Going **BEYOND** Awards

CORTEVA WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE PROGRAM

As part of its 2030 sustainability goals, project sponsor Corteva Agriscience has committed to engaging with and supporting women in agriculture across the globe; to help increase the productivity, incomes, and sustainable farming practices of smallholder farmers as well as to empower women in their communities.

**Gordon Institute
of Business Science**
University of Pretoria

Thirty-six women farmers were given the opportunity to attend the program on a scholarship basis. Women play a critical role in agriculture, and the effects of educating women benefit not only the current generation but have a multi-generational impact.

Women can produce and make money, uplift their communities, ensuring that their employees and their families have access to education which they need to be successful in the longer term.

The program was therefore designed to ensure that women in agriculture have the tools they need to be successful and will build a more inclusive agriculture and food system.

The 10-month tailor-made program enhances the entrepreneurial, business, and leadership skills of women in agriculture through classroom and online interactions.

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A baseline assessment helped us to understand participant demographics and a survey with the delegates gave us insights into their requirements of the program. This guided faculty to ensure that the program is pitched at the appropriate level and addresses topics that participants have flagged as key to their operations.

Topics such as Leading Self and Developing Entrepreneurial Competencies strengthen entrepreneurial and leadership capabilities, which are highly influential in the success of any venture, and therefore support improved entrepreneurial performance.

Meanwhile, business development topics such as Financial Management, Risk Management, Marketing and Sales, Managing People, Strategic Management, and Operations Management strengthen the ability of program participants to implement effective management practices that will support the growth of their businesses.

The program also addressed Farming for the Future, which gave participants insights into leading farming practices that they could implement to ensure productive and sustainable operations. Lectures were supplemented by integration sessions, which allowed for group reflection on the program content, and were critical to helping participants assimilate their newfound knowledge into their operations.

These integration sessions were held once every block by the lead faculty member. Five practical workshops were held to develop personal mastery in entrepreneurship and design thinking, scaling their businesses, and access to local markets.

In addition, individual mentorship and group coaching were used to facilitate personal learning and peer-to-peer engagement.

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PROGRAM IMPACT AND SUCCESS

The program aimed at 'building an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs in agriculture' commenced in February of 2021 with 36 delegates receiving scholarships to attend the program. Thirty-four delegates will be completing the program in November 2021.

The feedback from participants has been positive, and they have reported a positive impact on their business practices. Overall, the practical nature of the program has improved participant awareness of the principles and practices that will contribute to operational success and sustainability. Given the seasonal nature of farming, the intended consequences may only be visible in the longer term, but we are encouraged by the improvements in revenue and the fact that participants are thinking more strategically about their operations.

We have seen mean revenue for the group increase by just over 20%, with more than 80% of participants updating their business plans and strategies to improve operations and which can be submitted for funding applications. We are living in challenging times, and agriculture is central to many women's livelihoods across the globe.

Improvements in the way women run their farming businesses are crucial to improving global food security. It is estimated that globally, women comprise more than 50% of farmers, while in South Africa one out of every ten farmers actively running farms is a woman.

Unfortunately, it is widely acknowledged that women in the agricultural sector are not equal to their male peers in terms of economic return and employment. Therefore, empowering and investing in women, specifically in rural areas, will significantly increase productivity while ultimately contributing to economic growth and job creation and help feed growing populations.

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SDG IMPACT

This program addresses the following SDGs:

GOAL 4: Quality Education

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

GOAL 5: Gender Equality

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

GOAL 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable



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LOOKING FORWARD

The Corteva Women in Agriculture Program was a pilot program sponsored by Corteva Agriscience. Our ability to run the pilot has provided insights into the training needs of women smallholder farmers and has demonstrated that there is a high demand for practical entrepreneurship and business skills by women in the agriculture sector.

Based on the current program design it will be possible to further customize future programs to run over both shorter and longer periods, based on demand. Individual mentorship and group coaching are critical to ensuring individual success, and we will try to incorporate these elements in all future programs.

Program design improvements will include more field visits to give participants insights into other farm operations, which may spark ideas and encourage more successful practices in their own operations.

