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NEWSLETTER • NUUSBRIEF 69

DES/DEC 2014



Acting Dean, Danie Brink (middle), is pictured here with six of the nine recipients of doctors' degrees – from the left, Nadia Sitas, Diane Mostert, Greta Geldenhuys, Hamman Oosthuizen, Minette Karsten and Elsje Kleynhans.

Nine doctorates among 268 degrees awarded

December marked the graduation of 268 undergraduate and postgraduate students who completed their studies in the Faculty of AgriSciences. Among them were 28 students who did research at master's degree level, and nine students who received their doctorates.

Four doctorates were awarded in the Department of Conservation Ecology and Entomology to Berlize Groenewald, Minette Karsten, Elsje Kleynhans and Nita Sitas.

Dr Groenewald completed an in-depth study of precisely how insects exchange gases, under what conditions these processes work best, and how they are strictly controlled. In turn, Dr Kleynhans' results will help to manage a major sugar cane pest, *Eldana saccharina*.

Dr Karsten focused on the population genetics and abundance of two *Ceratitis* fruit fly species that cause problems in the South African agricultural sector.

Dr Sitas' work focused on the Eden District of the Southern Cape, and provides guidelines on how local

decision makers can incorporate information on ecosystem services into their planning.

For his doctorate in agricultural economics, Dr Hamman Oosthuizen combined various climatic and hydrological models to simulate how climate change will impact the financial bottom line of farmers around Hoedspruit, Carolina, Moorreesburg and Vredendal. Two doctorates in Plant Pathology were also awarded, both for work on specific species of the disease-causing fungus *Fusarium*. Dr Glaudina Mostert investigated the diversity and distribution of *Fusarium oxysporum* f. sp. *ubense* (Foc) in Asia. Dr Aneen Schoeman studied the *Fusarium verticillioides* fungus which causes ear rot to maize and contaminates the kernels with toxic residue.

Through her studies in Food Science, Dr Greta Geldenhuys investigated the qualities of Egyptian geese meat and Dr Ignacio Serra-Stepke's studies in Viticulture investigated how Pinotage vines lose water through their leaves.
