

Press Release: For Immediate Release

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Heading: Water Research Commission launches Water Innovations Report & the WRC-TIA Water Seed Fund

The Water Research Commission (WRC) has launched the WRC 2019/20 Water Innovations Report in conjunction with the WRC-TIA Water Seed Fund. The report comprises all innovations generated in 2019/20 for showcasing to sector stakeholders and potential investors/partners. The innovations are spread across the key strategic areas of the WRC's research and development arm, and range from low to high technology readiness levels. Moreover, the Water Seed Fund is a collaborative initiative of the WRC and the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) which will award up to R200,000 per project for innovation-oriented projects conducted by higher education institutions (HEIs) and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the water sector. The objective of the WRC-TIA Water Seed Fund is to support pre-seed and seed activities with the intention to develop innovations into next stage "investor fundable" opportunities.

The dual event, which kicked off with the launch of the WRC 2019/20 Water Innovations Report, was graced by the presence of notable stakeholders including TIA representatives, entrepreneurs, researchers, University Technology Transfer Offices, and others. Dr Valerie Naidoo, WRC Executive Manager: Business Development & Innovation presented an overview of the WRC Water Innovations Report & its implications for the water sector and the national system of innovation at large. Speaking on the potential of innovation to address the world's water & sanitation challenges, WRC CEO, Mr Dhesigen Naidoo, highlighted the critical role of innovation in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on water and sanitation, *"using the conventional systems that we have been used to thus far, in water, in sanitation, in agriculture, in energy, in fact in every sector, will not get us anywhere near the targets that we are looking for in 2030. Innovation is one of the core pillars for achieving the SDGs"*, he said.

The launch of the Water Seed Fund took place in the second half of the event. WRC Technology Transfer Manager, Mr Thabo Mthombeni, took the attendees through the purpose and objectives of the Seed Fund as well as the eligibility criteria for interested applicants. The significance of seed funding instruments for small businesses was

highlighted by Mr Mogale Maleka, co-Founder of Agang Bokamoso Farms, who alluded to benefitting from TIA seed funding from the University of Johannesburg during the initial stages of developing the company's hydroponics technology, and later receiving advisory support from the WRC Technology Transfer Office and experts as well as follow on funding from the WRC/DSI Technology Accelerator, WADER. He stated that *"the seed funding we received helped us develop a prototype and proof-of-concept, which opened doors for us to receive follow-on funding to demonstrate our technology at a larger scale"*. Mr Patrick Krappie, Acting CEO of TIA, emphasized the agency's enthusiasm to collaborate with the WRC through the Seed Fund and other avenues to drive innovation in the water and sanitation domain.

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