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### PRESS RELEASE

#### KARAKUL PRODUCERS AND ROLE PLAYERS HONORED

The Karakul Producers Forum of 2010 will be remembered for a long time to come. At this meeting, the producers decided to work towards the sole use of the term **swakara** in the future because of the quality, good name and popularity of the brand. Highlights at the gala dinner on 22 September included: the Agra/Kopenhagen Fur Quality Award that was awarded to a female farming team; the Golden Lamb Award that was awarded to Friedrich Becker, who can be considered as the planter of co-operative marketing of **swakara** in Namibia, and Willem Johannes Kohlman, who is a mainstay for **swakara** in the communal area; and on 23 September a record price of N\$44 000 was paid for a karakul ram.

Jolene Meyer and her mother, Elma from Meyer Boerdery on the farm Perdevlei near Koës, continued with the good work of their late father and husband, Truter Meyer, who died shortly after last year's forum. They were awarded Overall Best **swakara** Producer 2010, receiving the Agra/Kopenhagen Fur Quality Award as well as third place in the 2010 Top 10 **swakara** producers listing. The Second Best **swakara** Producer 2010 was A & H Farmpartners from farm Vergenoeg in the Maltahöhe area.

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The 2010 Top 10 **swakara** Producers were as follows:

1. RH Losper
2. Lovedale Farming cc
3. Meyer Boerdery
4. JP Blaauw
5. MJ v Staden
6. JHK Vlok
7. GT Karsten
8. A & H Farmpartners
9. R Strauss
10. LJ Kotze

On 23 September, the Elite ram auction again showed that karakul farmers are dedicated to continue farming with karakul, whatever the conditions and hardships. Even more, karakul farmers continue to improve on the genetic quality of the karakul herds, focusing on the demand of the international market for the exclusive and ever popular **swakara**. The best price, N\$44 000, was paid by D Oberholster for a white karakul ram of GT Karsten.

### **Background info on winners of the Golden Lamb Award**

#### Friedrich Wilhelm Becker

Friedrich Wilhelm Becker came to the country in 1941 and in the early fifties he started his own business, West African Karakul Exporters, who marketed through Eastwood and Holt in London. He later acted as team leader for the pelt officials of Eastwood and Holt in Namibia. When BSB entered the country, Willie Becker was appointed as regional manager and served in this position until he retired in 1980.

Becker established a network of branch offices in strategic towns to make it easier for pelt producers to develop their farming interests. At this stage many agents made a living off the marketing of pelts. Becker thus continued to establish facilities in the karakul areas for the handling and controlled marketing of pelts and also started to add retail facilities where farmers could buy the necessary inputs for developments of their farms. Initially he rented facilities to use as offices and storing space for merchandise and animal medicine. Because he had so much confidence in the country and karakul, he started to build branch offices and houses. Before long, towns such as Karasburg, Aroab, Keetmanshoop, Bethanie, Maltahöhe, Aranos, Leonardville, Gobabis en Windhoek boasted with new BSB offices. Several branch offices were also established in the north because pelts were also produced up to the far north. Becker strived for excellence in the karakul industry and dedicated his life to achieve that.

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Becker's motivational slogan, which was displayed at strategic places in all branch offices said: "Do it now!" The family of Becker will later in the year receive the award on behalf of him. /more

#### Willem Johannes Kohlman

Willem Johannes Kohlman was born in 1957 in Berseba. In 1976 he was part of the first four agricultural students from the south who were sent to Bophutatswana Agricultural College for two and a half years.

From 1978 he worked in Gibeon as agriculture extension technician. During the droughts in the 80's and 90's he realized the value of the karakul in the south and especially in the communal areas.

As agricultural officer he made the improvement of karakul in the communal area his mission, he attended as many courses in lam description and sorting. He was instrumental in the development and implementation of the ram subsidy project and also later in the ewe subsidy project in the southern communal area and he was the link between the karakul board and the communal farmers. The drastic improvement of the quality of pelts from the communal area can be attributed to this project.

Kohlman never let a chance go by to step into the breach for the communal farmers. One example is the opportunity he used during the visit of the Karakul delegation to the honorable President Hifikipunye Pohambe to inform him about the situation in the southern communal areas. He also took initiative and responsibility to organize various information and training events in these areas as he realized that **swakara** can only be improved if the farmers are informed and trained.

Kohlman served on the Karakul Board of Namibia as producer and representative of the Namibia National Farmers Union and he attended various international shows and one auction.

**Ends.**

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