

NEWS RELEASE

UP's Prof Lise Korsten Receives Honorary Doctorate from Ghent University



Prof Lise Korsten (centre) with her promoters, Prof Marijke D'Haese (left) and Prof Mieke Uyttendaele (right). Credit: Mirco Photo – [www.mircophoto.com/Ghent University](http://www.mircophoto.com/Ghent_University).

BELGIUM - [Professor Lise Korsten](#), an eminent scholar in [Plant Pathology](#) at the University of Pretoria (UP) and Co-Director of the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI), National Research Foundation (NRF), [Centre of Excellence \(CoE\) in Food Security](#), has been conferred a distinguished honorary doctorate by Belgium's [Ghent University](#) on 21 March 2025, in recognition of her transformative contributions to resilience in food security and safety. As the [first female President of the African Academy of Sciences \(AAS\)](#), she continues to drive equitable scientific excellence across the continent.

From humble beginnings, Prof Korsten's passion for science was ignited by her stepfather, Prof Jan Kotze, a plant pathologist who inspired her focus on agriculture and plant health. She earned her BSc and BSc Hons degrees at Stellenbosch University, where her interest in agriculture took root, but her MSc and PhD at the University of Pretoria shaped her ground-breaking career. This honorary doctorate from a globally esteemed institution underscores her lifelong dedication to advancing scientific frontiers for societal good. "Receiving this recognition

from a world-leading university is a humbling testament to a lifetime dedicated to advancing scientific frontiers for societal benefit,” she said. “It galvanises my resolve to foster equitable, resilient food systems that empower communities and drive global sustainability, particularly in Africa.”

Her PhD research at UP resulted in a world-first biological control product for avocado, which she patented and commercialized. This achievement established her as a leader in plant pathology and led to her role as a founding member and pro bono board member of the [South African Bioproduct Organisation \(SABO\)](#), advancing sustainable agricultural innovation.

As President of the AAS, a role she assumed in July 2023, Prof Korsten leads a pan-African organization established in 1985 to promote science, technology, and innovation across all disciplines. The AAS fosters scientific excellence, supports emerging scientists, and forges partnerships with global bodies like the African Union and European Union to advance transformative scientific progress across the continent. Under her leadership, the AAS champions equitable progress and interdisciplinary collaboration to elevate Africa’s scientific landscape.

Her global influence extends through her introduction of the African Frontiers Planet Prize to ensure excellence recognition across the African continent. In addition, she sits on the board of the University of Helsinki to enhance international collaboration specifically for the African continent. She also contributes to Africa’s scientific future through various boards and advisory panels, emphasizing sustainable food systems and ecological resilience.

Ghent University, ranked 83rd globally by the Shanghai Index, lauded Prof Korsten’s innovative approaches to sustainable food systems and food safety, which safeguard agricultural integrity and public health. This accolade highlights her profound impact in a field where she has redefined industry standards.

Her research has secured significant funding from sources like the Water Research Commission and the EU’s 7th Framework project, ‘Impact of Climate Change and Globalisation on Safety of Fresh Produce – Governing a Supply Chain of Uncompromised Food Sovereignty’. Further funding from the EU Horizon programme included ‘Food Safety for Africa’, ‘Fair Food and Trade Systems for Africa through Food Convergence Innovation’ (FCI4Africa), ‘Safe Food Systems for Africa’, and ‘Innovative Technologies for African Agriculture’. National Research Foundation-funded projects further support her work.

Prof Korsten founded a research group focused on fresh produce safety and phytosanitary trade within the One Health and One Food frameworks. Her research teams focus on developing diagnostic systems and a surveillance framework for food safety. Her expertise has informed policy, notably through her presentations to the South African Parliament, where she proposed a national Food Control Authority framework. She has also contributed to ministerial groups on antimicrobial resistance and nutrition security.

Globally, she has shaped food safety standards through her work with the World Health Organization (WHO) on expert committees addressing food safety and antimicrobial resistance. Following this, her involvement with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) includes serving on expert committees for food safety, contributing to risk assessment training, and participating in the Food Safety Training Initiative with Leeds University, paving the way for scarce skills development and training. She also serves on the Global Food Safety Initiative Expert Panel (STAG).

Her research programs, such as Produce Quality and Safety (PQS) and Postharvest Innovation Research, integrate industry support, student mentorship, and extensive publications. Over two decades, she has mentored 51 MSc students, 20 PhD students, and 11 postdoctoral fellows, building a legacy of excellence.

Her innovations in plant disease control and contamination prevention have set new benchmarks. Ranked in the top 0.31% of scientists globally and 0.22% in Agriculture and Natural Resources by ScholarGPS, she has an H-index of 50, 12,419 citations, and an i10-index of 154 per Google Scholar. Her research programs have secured nearly R90 million in funding.

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>> [Watch Prof Korsten's nomination video](#)

>> [Watch a recording of the ceremony](#)

Media enquiries can be directed to Mr Sashlin Girraj - Public Relations & Events Manager

Email: sashlin.girraj@up.ac.za | Cell: +27(0)72 447 3784

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

The University of Pretoria (UP) is one of the largest contact and residential universities in South Africa, with its administration offices located on its Hatfield Campus in Pretoria. This 115-year-old institution is also one of the largest producers of research in South Africa.

Spread over seven campuses, it has nine faculties and a business school, the [Gordon Institute of Business Science](#) (GIBS). It is the only university in the country with a [Faculty of Veterinary Science](#), which is ranked the best in Africa. UP has 120 academic departments and 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than 56 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes. It has the most academic staff with PhDs (70%), NRF-rated researchers (613).

The 2025 Times Higher Education subject rankings placed UP first in South Africa in the fields of [Accounting](#) and [Finance](#); [Architecture](#); [Electrical and Electronic Engineering](#); Law; Sport Science; and Veterinary Science. UP's Faculty of Law has been ranked as the top law school in Africa for a remarkable eighth consecutive year.

Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) ranked the University among the top five in Africa, as part of their [2024 World University Rankings \(WUR\)](#). UP was the only South African university featured in the [2023 World University Rankings for Innovation \(WURI\)](#), falling within in the 101-200 range of innovative universities.

For more information, please go to www.up.ac.za