

WESTERN CAPE ECONOMY INNOVATION AWARDS 2026

1. Contact Details

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Sub-sector: Private Sector
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Nominated Person: Pierre Johann van der Merwe
Nominated Organisation: La Grace Bio

2. Short Description

La Grace Bio has established a first-in-category, patent-protected industrial bioconversion platform that converts agricultural biomass into reproducible biochemical manufacturing outputs.

This innovation establishes biological manufacturing infrastructure in the Western Cape by controlling upstream biological conversion under defined process parameters. The platform enables the province to transition from agricultural commodity exporter to advanced biochemical manufacturer and licensor, creating long-term export potential, industrial resilience, and globally competitive biotechnology capability.

3. Detailed Description (a–j)

(a) Target business groups: Global cosmetic, nutraceutical, and pharmaceutical manufacturers requiring reproducible bio-based inputs.

(b) Utilisation: 40+ distributed evaluation samples; ongoing international technical engagements and licensing discussions.

(c) Access: Direct B2B engagement, structured sampling, analytical validation packages, and licensing pathway.

(d) Improvement: Reduced variability, improved reproducibility, enhanced regulatory and ESG positioning.

(e) Performance Impact: Potential increased exports, reduced manufacturing loss, enhanced competitiveness, and improved sales performance.

(f) Innovation: Process-defined, IP-protected industrial bioconversion system manufacturing fingerprinted metabolite-lipid matrices.

(g) Novelty in WC: Establishes advanced biochemical manufacturing infrastructure rather than exporting raw agricultural commodities.

(h) Advantage: Controls biological conversion upstream, ensuring reproducible industrial phenotypes.

(i) Availability: Licensing, joint development partnerships, ingredient supply, cross-sector scalability.

(j) Sustainability & Longevity: Protected by international patents; licensing-based revenue model; expected longevity 10+ years.

Results Chain

Output: Advanced biological manufacturing infrastructure established in the Western Cape.

Outcome: Improved industrial competitiveness and circular agri-processing capability.

Impact: Export growth potential, IP ownership, advanced manufacturing development, and provincial economic upgrading.

Longevity: 10+ years supported by patent protection and scalable licensing architecture.

4. Declaration of Evidence (Available under NDA)

The following supporting evidence is available and can be supplied under a formal Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA):

Output Evidence:

- International PCT patent filing documentation
- Independent analytical fingerprint validation reports
- Technical dossiers and platform documentation

Outcome Evidence:

- Partner correspondence and engagement records
- Institutional collaboration letters
- Controlled sample distribution documentation

Impact Evidence:

- Economic value-add and export potential projections
- Carbon and circular-economy modelling
- International licensing and industry engagement documentation

Longevity Evidence:

- Patent architecture documentation
- Licensing framework and commercialisation model
- Platform extensibility and scalability documentation

All documentation can be made available for review under NDA to ensure protection of intellectual

property and commercial confidentiality.

5. Award Category Selected

Private Sector – Catalytic innovations that contribute to growth.