

# PULA IMVULA

>> GROWING FOOD >> GROWING PEOPLE >> GROWING PROSPERITY >>



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MONSANTO





# PULA IMVULA

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**E**ach one of us has been given the greatest gift of all – the gift of life. On this earth we are given opportunities and it is up to us to take them and make the best of every situation. If our society is to function well then each one of us has to take responsibility for our actions, and make a positive contribution to our society. The government and the politicians are not responsible for any of us – we are responsible for ourselves, our thoughts and our actions.

Running a government can be likened to running a 'stokvel'.

- The members of a stokvel elect the leaders (office bearers) – this is like the general election when we elect the leaders of our country.
- The members of the stokvel make a contribution to the 'money bag' (this is the same as the citizens to contribute their taxes to the government).
- How the money is to be used is negotiated by all the members of the stokvel and each member has

to abide by the rules (the laws that are made by parliament).

- In a stokvel, the only money that can be used is the money that has been deposited by the members, and only used in accordance with the rules of the stokvel. The only money that a government has is the money that is collected by SARS from the tax-paying citizens of the country.
- If you are not a member of the stokvel and you do not contribute to it, you are not eligible to claim from it.
- If the money runs out then there can be no further spending.

We all understand the functioning of a stokvel but it would seem that we do not all understand the functioning of government – the income and expenditure. We are developing a society when the general population feels that the government must pay for everything – free medical attention, child grants, various pensions and grants, feeding schemes, free education, just to mention a few. The huge question is

– from whence will the money come? Jobs are scarce – when you are employed, or self-employed (as a farmer) then you contribute to the economy – you pay VAT, and income tax, and the fuel levy etc. However, if you are not financially active, then you are not making a positive contribution to the country. We fear that we are reaching a point where the government (like a stokvel) will simply not have the money to pay for everything. What will we do then? How will we stop the mass action of the dissatisfied and disillusioned members of our society?

Let us take responsibility for our lives – our choices, our children, our families and our society. Ultimately the individual is the smallest unit of our society and each of us has to make a conscious choice to become an active part of our economy and a responsible citizen of our country. Keep farming – you are making a very valuable contribution to South Africa! 🍌

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Front page photograph  
taken by Johan Kriel.



# REFLECTING on the past season



**Weed control is crucial to conserve soil moisture, especially when plants are under stress.** (Photo taken by Jerry Mthombothi)

**A**s farmers we should always be striving for improvement. Every year we need to work on doing things better than we did the year before. This year has been an extremely tough year for most South African farmers. The drought has been the biggest limiting factor. Many farmers were not even able to harvest a crop at all. This is very sad, but the only option is to dust ourselves off and start again.

Farmers are extremely resilient, and many will find ways to start again and re-build. The key to bouncing back into production is not to

suffer in silence. Remember that most farmers will be in a similar situation to you. Talk to your fellow farmers, talk to your agricultural representatives and talk to your extension officers. Discuss strategies and methods to be better prepared for future droughts. Learn from your mistakes and your neighbours mistakes in order to be better prepared for tough times ahead.

#### **How to strategise based on your observations in the drought?**

One thing that I observed during this drought year was that the people who were diligent

about things such as weed control and general good practice still managed to produce a bit of a crop even with the small amount of rain that fell. Something is always better than nothing, especially when crop prices are high. It all comes down to moisture conservation.

“Farmers are extremely resilient, and many will find ways to start again and re-build.”





It is in dry times such as the year that we have just experienced that you can notice the immense impact that weeds can have on a crop. It is crucial to make sure that your spray programme is effective in ensuring this. Where

weeds were prominent, crops were stunted and where weeds were controlled, many crops looked much better. Weeds are the biggest enemy of the crop farmer, especially in a drought.

Another factor which I observed this past season was how much water is lost due to runoff. You might have noticed, especially in the western parts of the country, where in the low lying areas maize was always greener and grew much stronger. If your lands are uneven and poorly contoured, you can lose a significant amount of water due to runoff. We need to try and prevent this as much as possible. Every drop counts.

*“Drought years will come again and we as farmers need to be adapting, improving and learning from the tough years in order to do better in the years ahead.”*

Another factor which comes into play is fertilisation. This is a delicate matter as it requires a good understanding of climatic conditions in order to make vital decisions. During the drought you may have noticed some lands of maize that grew relatively well but did not produce any cobs or grain whatsoever. This may have been due to the fact that the farmer top dressed his maize before entering into a very hot and dry weather spell when the maize plant was starting to take strain. Sometimes we can place our crops under unnecessary stress when we apply fertiliser.

If you believe that drought will prevail, it may be a wise decision to refrain from applying a top dressing of fertiliser until there has been significant rain and the crops are growing vigorously again. By doing this you may still have a chance to reap something as the plant would not have been exposed to that stress. Remember that if a plant is under stress and we apply top dressing, it will place it under further stress, but if the plants are growing actively and vigorously then the fertiliser will have benefits. Timing is everything.

When driving around during the drought it is incredible to see the variation in crop potential from one plot of maize to the next. Apart from weed control, much of this is due to cultivar selection. Some cultivars of maize cope better in drought than others. This is why it is important to keep in communication with the different seed representatives and to attend farmer days where they look at trials of different cultivars. Keep your finger on the pulse of cultivar development. There are a number of seed companies that are on the verge of launching official drought tolerant cultivars.

When speaking to different farmers about their concerns over the drought, many will tell you that they are afraid of the threat it places on food security and food prices. This is the ultimate concern. Farmers need to continually be working on improving their methods of production and management, not only for their own business sakes but also in order to feed the nation. Drought years will come again and we as farmers need to be adapting, improving and learning from the tough years in order to do better in the years ahead. 🌱

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## Pula Imvula's Quote of the Month

*'In essence, if we want to direct our lives, we must take control of our consistent actions. It's not what we do once in a while that shapes our lives, but what we do consistently.'*

~ Tony Robbins



# Grain SA – how it works

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Photo 1 - 2: The annual Grain SA Congress was held at NAMPO Park on 2 - 3 March 2016.

**G**rain SA held its annual Congress early in March this year. It was well attended by farmers who were sent as delegates from their regions. Many farmers understand the process but some newer members of the organisation may be wondering how it is decided who gets to attend Congress as a delegate.

## What is Grain SA and how does it work?

Grain SA is a voluntary association of grain farmers. This means that farmers in the business of grain production who share common interests, can decide to join up as members by paying the required membership fees/levies as decided upon by the Congress.

The mission of Grain SA is to provide support and services to grain producers but also to represent the combined voice of grain producers to address commodity issues as well as matters with government and other role-players in the sector. This support is diverse and involves monitoring all matters which have an influence on the well-being and sustainability of the sector – from inputs to tariffs, diesel rebates, research and development projects and government policy which affects the agricultural sector.

Clearly if farmers have experts working for them full time, a team which is monitoring the business environment and acting as a watch dog when necessary, it means that farmers are better positioned

to concentrate on their own farming. This is why it is so very important to have such an organisation in place. In fact it is common practise for different commodities to have similar interest-group organisations. So Grain SA is basically like an exclusive club. Members pay 'membership fees', which we call 'levies'. This gives them access to the privileges and benefits produced by the organisation and they earn the right to influence decisions of the body through a constituted and democratic process.

It is important to understand that there is absolutely no place for politics in the organisation. The Grain SA constitution clearly states it is an **apolitical** organisation, i.e. not controlled by any political party. Grain SA was founded on four very strong principles:

1. Grain SA is a **voluntary association of grain farmers** established to represent the interests of its members.
2. Grain SA wants to be recognised as an **autonomous and independent** grain producers' organisation. It wants to be involved in all matters bearing on the wellbeing of the industry and to be consulted about policy issues relating to the industry.
3. **Grain SA is strongly apolitical** and issues are dealt with only on merit and sound business principles without any party political consideration.
4. **Grain SA is controlled by farmers for farmers** and structured to ensure members' democratic control over their elected office bearers.

Any grain producer, who produces grain for marketing, who pays the prescribed membership fee or levy to the organisation and who supports the objectives and Constitution of Grain SA, can be a fully-fledged member of Grain SA.

In Grain SA's Farmer Development programme there are two levels of membership. The first is the 'Study Group Member'. A study group member must be a farmer who produces less than 250 tons of grain. All other members must be farmers who produce grain for marketing. Study group representatives from each of the regions are nominated annually to serve on the Farmer Development Working Group. The term of office for these study group representatives on the working group is one year, and these persons are eligible for re-election for a

*The mission of Grain SA is to provide support and services to grain producers but also to represent the combined voice of grain producers to address commodity issues as well as matters with government and other role-players in the sector.*





following term after the year term. Study group representatives who are nominated from their regions to serve in the working group have the power to vote in the working group. Study group members are not delegated to attend Congress. Every study group has at least ten members who produce grain and each farmer may only belong to one study group.

This is different from the levy paying member and is a special dispensation agreed to by Congress. This is because it is the intention that the organisation is **more inclusive** by including and giving a voice, to small scale producers and developing grain farmers; and to consciously empower them through the skills development, training and mentorship. The aim is to help every individual who wishes, regardless of the size of his or her operation, to farm their land in the best way possible and to achieve the best production possible.

The long term goal is to help those farmers with potential to become fully commercialised. These farmers are recognised by the numbers of tons of grain they produce and become '250 Ton Club Members'. In fact many members of this club are producing much more – some produce up to 1 500 tons. These farmers effectively graduate from the farmer development programme because they are successful New Era Commercial Farmers. Grain SA hopes all these farmers will join the organisation as full levy paying members and participate in the structures. 250 Ton Club members produce more than 250 tons of grain a year, pay the full membership fee or levy and endorse the objectives of Grain SA. Members of the 250 Ton Club may be delegated to attend Congress. **To serve on the National Executive of Grain SA a farmer must be an elected delegate to Congress and must 'earn a substantial portion of his farming income from the production and marketing of grain. (12.3).**

### How does Congress work?

It is very important to understand that **the Congress is 'the highest authority of Grain SA'**, according to the organisation's Constitution. People often make the mistake of thinking that it is the national executive and the steering committee which are the highest authority whereas this is not the case at all. This is significant and makes it even more important for every member to carefully consider who to nominate as delegates from their region and who will best represent farmer interests at the Congress. Delegates have the responsibility of voting on very important matters which influence the activities of the organisation in terms of work done, leadership of the organisation, and even changes in the Constitution.

Your delegate must be a bona fide farmer producing grain to market, a person who knows farming issues in your region, who is

able to understand the business of the organisation and who will speak up for your interests. The farmer who attends Congress as a delegate must be **a leader who will be your voice to the general meeting** and who will return home to tell farmers in your region what was discussed and decided there. Your regional delegates are essentially your champions at a national level.

It is important to note the special dispensation included in the Constitution regarding New Era Grain Producers which was laid down as a sign of Congress's intention to integrate with black grain farmers: *'With regard to delegates from commercial black grain producers to Congress, a delegation of 32 (thirty-two) shall be allocated. These delegates shall not be determined on the basis of production or the payment of the commodity levy in their regions'.* – (Note: This applies to delegates to Congress but not to members elected to serve on the National Executive). *'The 250 Ton Club shall annually elect thirty-two delegates to Congress, during the annual meetings held before Congress. 16 delegates shall be elected from the eastern service area and 16 delegates shall be elected from the western service area. The delegates appointed to Congress must satisfy the qualifications for membership as stipulated in article 5.1.4'.*

### 250 Ton Club members (developing producers)

Members of the 250 Ton Club who:

- 5.1.4.1 Produce more than 250 tons of grain for marketing;
- 5.1.4.2 Pay the stipulated membership fees and commodity levy to Grain SA; and
- 5.1.4.3 Endorse the objectives of Grain SA; qualify for membership of Grain SA.
- 5.1.4.4 Membership is obtained in the manner set out in the Regulations.



### 5.1.4.5 Members of the 250 Ton Club may be delegated to attend Congress.

All the delegates to Congress will vote for the key leadership positions of one chairman and two vice-chairmen. The delegates to the Congress have the responsibility of voting for one representative per region to serve on the National Executive.

### The National Executive

The National Executive is the highest authority when Congress is not in session, and, subject to the control and general policy of Congress. The members of National Executive then choose special areas of interest in which they will serve the organisation such as the different working groups. They also elect a **Management Committee**. In order to conduct the day-to-day affairs of Grain SA, the Executive must elect from its ranks a Management Committee consisting of the chairperson and 2 (two) vice-chairpersons of the Executive and at least 3 (three) additional members, with such powers as the Executive may delegate from time to time.

The Management Committee exercises all the powers of the Executive when the Executive and Congress are not in session but are at all times subjected to the authority of the National Executive and the highest authority of Congress.

### Conclusion

In future we will take a closer look at the different departments and functions of the organisation. It is in the best interests for all farmers to understand and nurture our organisation so that it can effectively fulfil its vision to protect the interests of all farmers in a competitive global marketing environment, while facing many challenges of change on political and environmental fronts.

**Article submitted by Jenny Mathews, Pula Imvula contributor. For more information, send an email to [jenjonmat@gmail.com](mailto:jenjonmat@gmail.com).**

# IT PAYS TO BE A GREAT EMPLOYER

Irregular weather patterns and drought; volatile and unpredictable markets for our produce – recent years have been tough as farmers have felt the big squeeze on farm profits.

With the economies of the farm affected, farmers have been forced to reduce input costs.

## One of the key inputs on a farm is labour.

The steadily rising wage costs have not been accompanied by improved profitability in farming businesses so farmers have had to trim their labour force down to the minimum. It has become important for the farm manager to build a strong team of workers who are motivated and view their employment as a career which can be fulfilling and have future prospects which contribute to their family security. These individuals should ideally be committed to agriculture and be passionate about farming as a career. Of course this can only happen under good leadership.

## A good boss is a good leader

A leader is someone who has vision for the future. He can instil confidence in his team and make them believe it is possible to achieve more than they ever thought they could. A good leader inspires his team so they want to work hard to achieve the goals of the business. American President Eisenhower said: 'You do not lead by hitting people over the head. That's assault, not leadership!' A good leader is focused on excellent communication and makes a point of getting along with people. He makes employees feel they are valued and affords them dignity and respect at all times. A good leader is also only as good as the team he picks to work with him.

## Recruitment – pick a good team

Good labour relations begin at the interview with the prospective employee. As the HR manager, it is important that you make very sure the individual has the necessary skills to help you and make your life easier by joining your team. Farms can no longer afford to carry unmotivated or aimless workers. At the same time it is every HR manager's responsibility to clearly describe what will be expected from the employee in terms of the scope and hours of work so discuss the terms and conditions of employment and ensure there is no room for confusion at a later stage. You need to be clear about the job description and the salary which

is paid for the position. There is nothing wrong with being firm with an employee who is not delivering according to the agreed upon terms of employment but all disciplinary procedures must be fair and founded on clearly laid down and understood guidelines.

## Do the right thing

In South Africa the basic conditions of employment of farm workers in the agricultural sector are entrenched in the law and it is the responsibility of every farm manager to ensure that he is familiar with it and that he abides by the law. The minimum wages are also set and are reviewed annually. This is not something which can be negotiated between farm manager and employee since it is law and must be complied with.

## Motivation

While salary is important, it is not the only motivator and it is important to recognise this factor. Studies into human behaviour have discovered that while people do indeed go to work for the money, they also work for meaning in their lives. In other words job satisfaction and incentives increase motivation and productivity. As the manager of the farm you need to identify other possible incentives for your labourers. Time to attend to personal matters ranks high on the list of non-cash motivators. Can you give them extra time off after they have worked hard to get the crops planted or harvested? Can you allocate some of the crop as a reward for them so they can harvest their own maize? It is important to recognise each employee as an individual with unique characteristics and culture, and different needs and ambitions. Another important non-cash motivator is in the form of recognition and praise for a job well done or simply taking the time to hold a one-on-one conversation.

## In-service training

Business man and entrepreneur Richard Branson says: 'Train people well enough so they can leave, treat them well enough so they don't want to.' Skills development and training also falls into the category of motivation. Many workers are encouraged and excited by the opportunity to learn a new skill and receive a certificate for a course they have attended. Have you ever considered sending your employees on one of the Grain SA Farmer Development Tractor Maintenance courses or one of the

Introduction courses into the Basics of Cropping? Many chemical and fertiliser companies offer training courses and will up-skill your labourers to use their products. Personal growth and a sense of pride fulfil a basic human need.

## People matter

There is a delicate balance which needs to be found between what is good for the business and what is good for the people employed to get the business done. It is possible for the farmer to build a thriving business and create a happy healthy working environment that is a great place to work. It is founded on the premise that people matter and acknowledges they are not only employees – they are individuals who need to feel appreciated. People like to feel that they have been heard and that their suggestions are important. As a manager you want individuals who do not want to stagnate but rather want to learn and grow. If you can't offer your employees such opportunities you will find that the motivated individuals will look for greener pastures – and that will be your loss! If a team is treated well and is offered rewards in more ways than just a good wage, soon others will hear that your workers are happy and you will be able to build an excellent team who will add value and help you achieve your objectives.

A world-wide survey on top employers highlighted five common characteristics namely:

1. Inspired leadership;
2. A unique company culture and identity which employers are proud to be part of;
3. A focus on growing talent;
4. A strong sense of accountability which means everyone knows what is expected of them and performance is rewarded accordingly; and
5. Excellent HR practices which communicate the value of people and listens to employee feedback.

Being an HR manager is a non-stop journey which is constantly evolving but without a doubt, a strong workforce will always deliver a consistently better performance – and better financial results. Make the effort, it's worth it! 🍷

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# Practical aspects of marketing management

**B**y the time of reading this article we could either still be experiencing the drought or perhaps experience relief from the drought. Whatever the case, it will not be possible to plant a crop at this stage, except perhaps some vegetables or fodder. So one could ask why an article about marketing management. Regard this article an extension of the previous article regarding when things go wrong in your business.

Those of you who have survived the drought up to the time of reading this article should realise that you will have to adapt your farming business to accommodate drought conditions. Droughts are part and parcel of our farming environment in South Africa.

Use your time on hand to re-think and re-plan your business including your marketing management. A key aspect of a farm's profitability is to stay on top of marketing trends.

When considering to adapt your farming business as well as possibly considering to produce other products, remember to never, ever produce any quantity of a product before the marketing of the product has not been secured. It is very, very important to be able to market your product when it is ready for marketing.

## How to improve marketing management

Let's attend to some practical hints to improve marketing management.

- If there is uncertainty about the market and you feel to test the market, do it on a small scale.
- As part of a market plan, a market analysis must be done – get information from consumers regarding their possible expectations for a specific product. In South Africa better-off consumers shop at big retailers while poorer people buy from the informal 'convenience' outlets of hawkers and spaza shops because of different needs.
- Gather as much information as possible regarding the marketing of the products you are considering. (Read, attend farmer days, visit other producers, etc).
- Visit marketing venues such as a silo, cattle sales, fresh produce markets, abattoirs, and so on. It is important to be familiar with the functioning of these marketing channels.
- Be very careful to chop and change a market plan in an effort to obtain the highest price. Rather be satisfied with a good average, but stable price.



*Do everything that is in your control to ensure a good start for every plant.*

- If possible try and diversify the marketing of a specific product via two or more channels.
- If production costs are known it is far easier to decide on a minimum price for a product. It is actually an absolute requirement to determine your production costs and calculate the break-even point regarding price.
- Control the marketing of your products by keeping proper records of products harvested and sold.
- Look for, investigate and exploit niche markets – a small specialised market for a specific product can be very lucrative.
- Lastly, compile a market plan which should then be part and parcel of the production management program for the particular enterprise.

The market plan must contain a description of the way or ways you are going to market each product as well as when and where and possible quantities and expected price. Bear in mind that products can be marketed in different ways. Such as:

1. Out-of-hand sales including variations such as selling from the road side, selling in town or selling at a 'boeremark'.
2. Auctions also known as sales. Products such as vegetables, fruit, flowers and cattle can be marketed per sale/auction. Most of us will be aware of fresh produce markets in the bigger centres. Contracts – a contract being an agreement between a seller and a buyer for a specific product of a specific quality and quantity traded at a specific price.
3. Hedging and option contracts. This is a very specialised form of marketing certain

products and requires a thorough knowledge of the system.

4. Value adding implicates that something is done to the basis product to add utility for the consumer to it, such as packing in smaller quantities, to peel vegetables and pack it, to produce chutney, maize meal, yoghurt, and so forth.
5. Exporting – today the exporting of agricultural products is at the order of the day. The major challenge of export markets are quantity, quality and reliable, constant delivery.
6. For the grain farmer, other alternatives are available such as to sell your product directly to your nearest silo on a daily basis, as you harvest at a price determined per day – the so-called 'spot market'.

The latest tendency of marketing of farm products is that producers, whether as a single person or as a group, are becoming more and more involved in value adding to products and/or the exporting of products.

Should you wish to make a success of the marketing of your product/s – regardless of quantity – you have to produce a quality product, pack it properly, deliver it on time and adhere to any other arrangements regarding the marketing. 🌱

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# Controlling winter weeds in summer rainfall regions is important



*White-flowered Mexican poppy must be controlled in winter.*

One of the definitions of weeds is that they are plants that grow where they shouldn't. All plants that are regarded as weeds usually have characteristic features like a long life, rapid germination, rampant growth and production of thousands of seeds.

Weeds compete strongly and can flourish in varying environmental conditions. According to literature, roughly a third of the world's weed populations are annual plants, while the rest are regarded as perennials.

Annual plants complete an entire life cycle (germinate, grow, produce seed, die) in one year, while the life cycle of perennial crops range over more than one year, and they are characterised by vegetative reproduction, for example with tubers/bulbs, and even runners/cuttings.

Annual as well as perennial weeds include plants that complete their life cycle in summer (summer weeds), but there are also quite a number of weeds that start their life cycle in winter, in other words winter weeds. Most farmers are familiar with weed species that emerge and have to be controlled in summer, but when winter starts, many farmers think that they have won the battle. Unfortunately this is not the case. With increasingly uncertain rainfall patterns and the emphasis on poor rainfall in some areas, it becomes critical to preserve soil moisture for sustainable crop production.

Because winter as well as summer weeds are strongly competitive, they must be controlled to curb lush growth and seed depositing in winter. In the first place winter weeds can consume soil moisture and reduce it

2



*Ragwort must be controlled timeously when they are still small.*



significantly. In the second place the winter weed seed bank in the soil is supplemented every year, which will only aggravate the problem over time. Winter weeds are not killed by frost either, while summer weeds do die after frost (see **Photo 1** of the white-flowered Mexican poppy).

The most common winter weeds in the North West and the Free State in particular are ragwort (*Senecio consanguineus*), tall fleabane (*Conyza spp.*) and white-flowered Mexican poppy (*Argemone ochroleuca*).

Some weed species can also start germinating late in summer and deposit seed throughout the winter. These include khaki weed (*Tagetes minuta*), dwarf marigold (*Schkuhria pinnata*), blackjack (*Bidens spp.*) and devil's-thorn (*Emex australis*).

More than two-thirds of all weed species are broad-leaved species (*dicotyledons*), and problem winter weeds are also mainly broad-leaved weeds. The only grasses that can in fact be problem weeds in winter are perennial grasses (*monocotyledons*) such as couch grass (*Cynodon dactylon*) and bushveld heringbone grass (*Urochloa mosambicensis*).

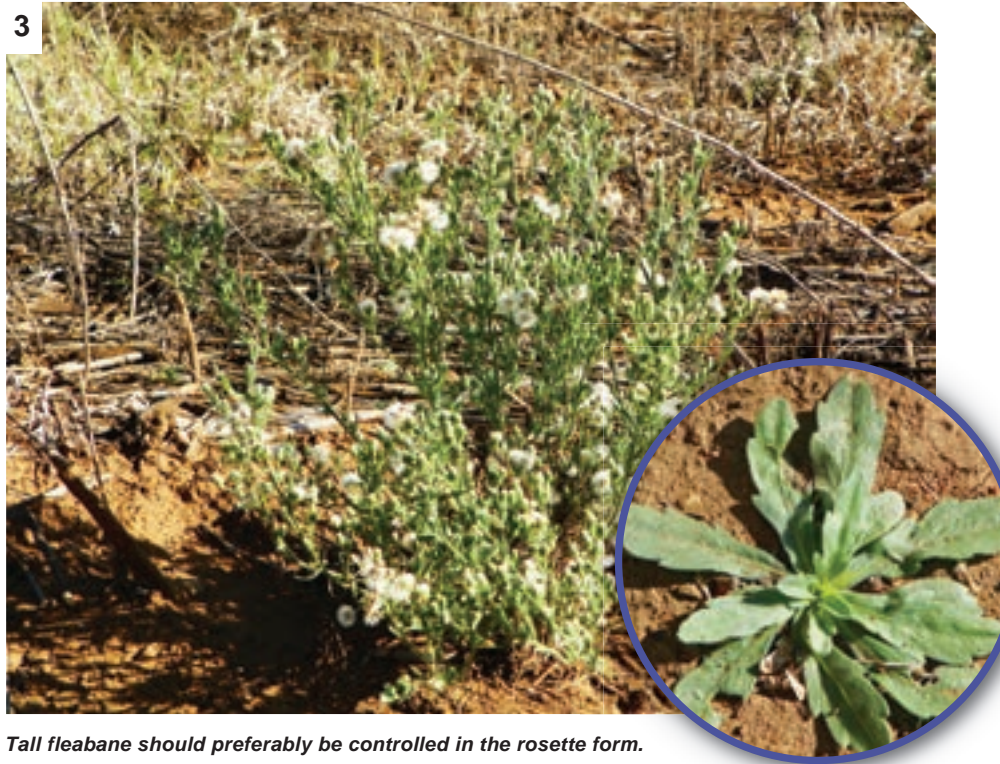
One also finds grasses that still germinate successfully late in the summer season and that can flourish until late in autumn, for example crab finger grass (*Digitaria spp.*), african finger millet (*Eleusine coracana*), guinea-fowl grass (*Rottboellia cochinchinensis*), Johnson grass (*Sorghum halepense*) and wild grain sorghum (*Sorghum bicolor*). These annual summer grasses should be controlled to prevent/reduce seed deposit in autumn or early winter.

Controlling the above weeds is a headache to most farmers across the maize production areas (summer rainfall areas). When these weeds grow well and actively, or even just start to germinate, most of the summer crops are still in the fields and it is impossible to apply chemical weed control with ordinary tractor sprays.

Farmers who do have a high-clearance sprayer can control these weeds timeously before the combine harvester has run through the fields. Tractor sprays and/or implements will probably only get into the fields after the harvest, which usually is too late. This means that the weeds have become too big and this can negatively affect the efficiency of post emergence herbicides. It is a well-known fact that the smaller the weed is, the more effectively it can be controlled. This also applies to winter weeds that usually first have a rosette shape as seedling before branches start. The rosette phase is the ideal phase for controlling these weeds (tall fleabane and white-flowered Mexican poppy).

Herbicides that can be applied successfully after the crop has dried, include glyphosate (systemic herbicide) and paraquat (contact her-

3



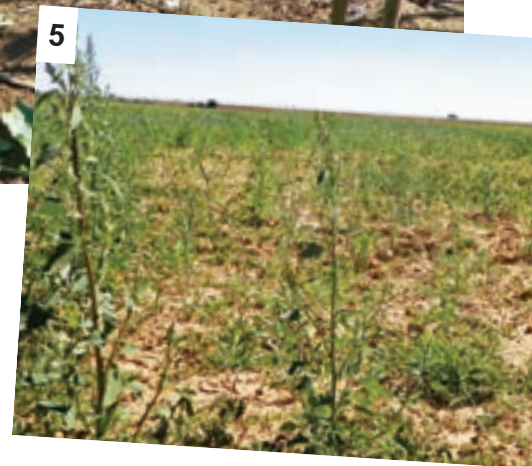
**Tall fleabane should preferably be controlled in the rosette form.**

4



**Devil's-thorn infestations in sunflower fields.**

5



**Weeds should not be allowed to grow uncontrolled on fallow land.**

bicide). It has also become common practice among farmers applying conservation farming to do at least one winter spraying, whether before or just after harvesting. These sprayings are very valuable as the fields remain clear of any weeds during the winter months, the soil moisture is preserved and no new seed is added to the seed bank.

Weeds cannot be regarded as a 'cover crop' in winter months, as the actively growing weeds compete too strongly for soil moisture. Tillage during winter months is not recommended, as the loss of soil moisture is too great.

**Article submitted by Elbé Hugo, ARC-Grain Crops Institute, for SA Graan/Grain June 2015. For more information, send an email to [HugoE@arc.agric.za](mailto:HugoE@arc.agric.za).**



# Is value adding meant for **you**?



Grain SA/Sasol photo competition

***Adding value to an agricultural product requires a lot of planning, sustained quality production, very good management and – surely the most important – very good marketing.***

**F**armers are thoroughly aware that the profitability of the primary sectors is under pressure. The Tigers and Premiers of the world run businesses in which high dividends are paid every year. These businesses process many primary agricultural products with which they earn these profits. Should farmers themselves not perhaps also add value to products and thus claim a bigger portion of the consumer's rand?

This plan sounds very good in theory, but in reality it is not easy as it seems. Adding value to an agricultural product requires a lot of planning, sustained quality production, very good management and – surely the most important – very good marketing.

To a current farming operation, introducing a value-adding enterprise will ensure that the pressure on the management of the business increases. Value adding is nothing more than an additional extremely management-intensive enterprise. This new enterprise will definitely take its toll of the other enterprises.

The most important aspect to be kept in mind is that the consumer is king. They have the money in their pocket and he will decide to whom and for what they want to give it. If the consumer likes a product a lot, he will perhaps be prepared to pay more for it, but otherwise he will always look for value for his money. No matter who you are, the client is the person with the money and he makes the decisions.

If you are considering adding value at all, you should realise that this is a business with very high risks. Usually considerable capital is required for this value-adding business, and if this capital is borrowed, it will be at relatively high interest rates.

There will also generally be many other businesses that manufacture the same type of product and that already serve the market for this product. Unless you have a definite competitive edge or a natural barrier to entry, new entrants will be able to enter the market easily and serve your market too. Economies of scale immediately play a major role in protecting the business against the opposition.

Farmers who want to enter this value-adding industry should definitely do their homework well and get as much help as pos-



sible from experts. A complete business plan that covers all aspects and the accompanying risks should be drafted before you enter the world of value adding. If it does not work on paper, the chances of it working in practice are virtually zero.

The process of determining whether you should enter such an industry should start with an analysis of the market, specifically the need your product will satisfy, as well as the marketing environment. You should determine the broad field within which the business will operate. The actual size of the market, who and how big the competition is against whom you will compete, and what your competitive edge is, are some factors that are important.

Because the business will be run over the long term, it is important to determine the demand for the product correctly. It is important to correctly determine and predict the number of potential clients, where they live, their expected change in preferences for the product, and the annual consumption of the product.

This will constitute the demand for the product. The buyers in the market change over time, as do their requirements, tastes and preferences. Clients' means also change over time. They can move from being the poorest consumers to the middle class, and this would change their tastes and preferences and the products they use.

It is vital that you know the market, what influences buyers to buy, and what their likes and dislikes are. You should know how they think, for example: are they price sensitive, concerned with quality, convenience oriented or technology minded? For marketing it is important to get the right product out there at the right price, at the right time, to the right consumer with the particular need.

When you have analysed the market demand, the supply side should also be analysed. How much competition there is, who they are and how much they can produce are all important things to know. It is also imperative to analyse their strengths and weaknesses to determine what influence they will have on the new business.

For example, if there is a major role-player who can destroy the profitability of your business simply by reducing their prices, they will be a major threat to a new business. Remember that the effect of imports should not be forgotten.

When the market analysis has been done, you can decide which products should be produced. This product must reach the consumer, and the issue of distribution is therefore important. The acquisition of basic inputs should also be kept in mind. Among other things this will determine where the

processing plant should be constructed and what the capacity of the plant should be. All these questions will be answered on the basis of the demand for the product.

The way in which the product is to be marketed is the next aspect to investigate. Consumers demand that you communicate with them – how will you do this? Will you use printed media or the radio, or will you employ social media to advertise the product?

The price of the end product is another decision that will help determine the survival of the business. If the price is too high, it affects sales; if it is too low, it threatens the profitability of the business.

It is vital to find the happy medium. In order to maximise profit most primary agricultural products are more about selling high volumes at low margins. This applies to value-added grain products too. As soon as the location, marketing, product range and capacity have been sorted out, the relevance of the business should be assessed continuously. If the business wants to remain on a growth path, the products may have to be adapted to comply with market demands. This could mean searching for new markets and doing product development.

A question that is often ignored is how external factors will affect the business. These include political, economic and social factors – factors over which grain farmers have no control. What will the business do, for example, if trade unions start becoming involved? If minimum wages rise? If imports increase? If price fixing takes place?

As was mentioned earlier, sustained, consistent production remains of key importance. In other words: production of a product that is produced repeatedly, but that always has the same quality and that will always be available on the shelf.

Timeousness is essential for effective production. The right raw products or materials should be available at the processing point in time. This means that purchases (raw materials and packaging) must be managed. If you process your own products, they will have to comply with quality and time requirements for processing, which will place more pressure on the farming production.

However, any business requires funds, whether to purchase capital items or for operating capital. Without the necessary funds to run this business, everything is just a pretty fairy tale. Cash flow is king here too. Sufficient funds should be available to purchase raw products, keep production going and carry products on a shelf.

Provision should be made for debtors and processed stock – both elements that devour cash. Sometimes it can take a while

to break even and any start-up losses must be financed or carried by the owner.

Yes, it is true that if production is in full swing, cash flow will become steady, but all input costs and operating expenditure have already been incurred and the business must therefore keep running. If capital expenditure was incurred, it naturally has to be repaid, and will form part of the production costs.

Another aspect to keep in mind is the effect of this new processing business on the cash flow of the farm. The farm may have to wait for six months before funds start coming in to pay its creditors.

Finally, just like with the farming operations, record-keeping is extremely important. The business should also be run effectively and efficiently. Obligations towards creditors and the state have to be met. The tax man has to be paid, loans have to be serviced and, above all, the business must also create well for the owner. Profitability should therefore be sufficient at all times.

From the above it is clear that it is not easy to enter the processing industry. However, if grain farmers are prepared to carry out these actions with discipline and dedication, the outcome can be positive and opportunities for adding value can be freely developed.

If finances are a problem, yet it makes sense to add value, institutions like the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) and many others can be approached for assistance. However, in view of the requirements involved, it is not possible for everybody to add the value themselves. Does this therefore mean that all farmers are completely excluded from this consumer rand? The answer is abundantly clear: 'No'.

There are several ways in which you can still share in the profits from the processing markets. By buying shares in processors, the farmer is sure to share in the consumer's rand. Farmers can also work together and jointly establish such a plant and thus acquire the benefits of economies of scale and constant production.

The business can typically be managed by an expert, while the grain farmers focus on producing grain. As owners of the business the grain farmers can determine the strategic direction, and management has to act within these guidelines. This is just a summary of some of the requirements for production.

**Article submitted by Pietman Botha, for SA Graan/Grain June 2015. For more information, send an email to [pietmanbotha@gmail.com](mailto:pietmanbotha@gmail.com).**

# Another look at herbicide resistance



compared to previous years. Where only five species were resistant in the past, more than 30 species with resistance against glyphosate were recorded in 2014.

## Resistance in South Africa

The first confirmed instance of herbicide resistance was recorded in wild oats in 1986. This wild oats biotype was resistant to diclofop methyl. Resistance to triazines in pigweed was recorded in 1996.

Wild radish showed signs of resistance against chlorsulfuron in 2001, and paraquat-resistant rye grass coming from a vineyard was also recorded in 2001. A fleabane biotype resistant to glyphosate and paraquat was found in January 2003. Dock with glyphosate resistance was found in May 2003. Paraquat resistance was also reported in a rye grass population in the Western Cape in 2004. A wild buckwheat species with resistance to glyphosate was found in 2011. Confirmation of resistance in South Africa occurs more often on an informal than on a scientific level, therefore it would be a misperception to believe that resistance does not exist in South Africa.

Various weeds that are resistant to several herbicides are found annually in many crops cultivated in South Africa. South Africa is one of the countries with the biggest incidence of herbicide-resistant rye grass.

## How do we prevent/control resistance?

Resistance is controlled or prevented by introducing the following measures:

- Herbicides should be alternated to prevent the same herbicide from being used on the same weed population year after year.
- Apply crop rotation if possible. Across the world, this is the factor that is regarded as the best solution to resistance. Crop rotation means that different weed species occur in the various crops that are planted, and different herbicides with different actions can then be used.
- Never make unregistered mixtures. Adhere to label instructions at all times. Note the substances with which the herbicide can be mixed and remember to add the registered additives to the herbicides.

Everyone knows the definition of herbicide resistance. It is the inherent ability of a plant to survive a dose of herbicide that would normally kill the wild type of the plant, and to continue producing viable seed.

## Resistance across the world

Herbicide resistance against 2,4-D was reported as long ago as 1957 in Hawaii. However, the first official report of herbicide resistance was published in the USA in 1968. This resistance was recorded against triazines in *Senecio vulgaris*.

Paraquat resistance in tall fleabane was reported for the first time in the late 70s and early 80s. The first incidence of sulphonyl urea resistance (ALS inhibitor) was reported in *Kochia scoparia* L. and prickly lettuce (*Lactuca serriola* L.) in 1990.

Since 1975 there has been a sharp increase in the number of resistant species. Currently, resistance against herbicides from the ALS inhibitor group (Group B) is the highest in the world. Resistance against other herbicides has also increased.

Rye grass is the most widely distributed and problematic weed in Australian and South African agriculture. It occurs in high densities, has high genetic variation and resistant biotypes have been selected intensively over the years by the repeated use of herbicides with the same active ingredient.

Glyphosate resistance has developed relatively slowly since the product was released, despite the fact that glyphosate is the herbicide used most often worldwide. Resistance against glyphosate was found in wild buckwheat in Australia and horseweed fleabane in America.

Resistance was also recorded against horseweed fleabane in reduced tillage systems. Roundup-resistant rye grass was found in 1996 in a field that had been sprayed with glyphosate ten times in the preceding 15 years.

This incident once again emphasised the importance of varying the herbicides used in a certain agricultural system. Since then several species of weeds with a resistance against glyphosate have been recorded.

However, since 2003/2004 resistance against glyphosate has increased sharply



# SOUND LABOUR PRACTICES and relations in the spotlight

**C**ongratulations! The fact that you have started reading this series of articles on labour relations is already proof that you have a winner's attitude. Winners are people who are always willing to learn and work hard to improve their performance continuously – even if they later win by only a fraction of a second (in the case of swimmers and athletes).

The farmer who focuses on improving his knowledge and skills with respect to labour and labour relations is definitely on the way to victory.

I have the privilege of personally knowing a few of the top farmers in South Africa. What strikes me every time is their – and in many cases that of their wives too – attitude towards their staff. On occasion I have been astonished on seeing a great farmer (literally and figuratively) squatting on the grass outside the farm offices and starting a conversation with one of the workers' children (still a toddler).

Staff coming and going on that farm receive a very clear message: They are viewed as people and even their children are important to that farmer.

By the way: wasn't that the characteristic of former President Nelson Mandela that astonished us all? No matter how full his programme was, he always had time for people, because people were important to him. This enabled him to make friends even of his enemies.

Spending time, money and energy to improve your skills with respect to relationships is an excellent investment on which you can expect a promising return. Even though working with people comes more naturally to some of us than to others, we can all learn to improve our labour relations.

Labour relations in the agricultural sector are under enormous pressure. This I realised once more when I studied a farmworker's employment contract – it was thicker than any employment contract I had ever handled.

However, first of all, this does not concern race and colour. I remember a workshop for young producers held by Amos Agrimin (an agricultural ministry) in the East Free State about ten years ago. Fifty per cent of the farmers were Afrikaans and 50% were

Sotho speakers. In reply to a question on the biggest challenge they were facing (excluding money and cash flow), both the Afrikaans and the Sotho speakers replied: 'labour relations'.

Those who want to lay labour problems at the feet of race and colour only, are making a major mistake...it is not that simple. Working with people, regardless of the context, demands certain knowledge and skills, just like any other work on the farm. White farmers who appoint whites and Sotho farmers who appoint Sotho workers quickly discover that this does not mean the end of their problems.

Problems in the labour market have deep roots that often have nothing to do with labour itself. Let me give you an example. More than 80% of all violent crimes in South Africa occur within families. The conflict is therefore not in the workplace, not even just between people of the same ethnic group, but between people from the same family.

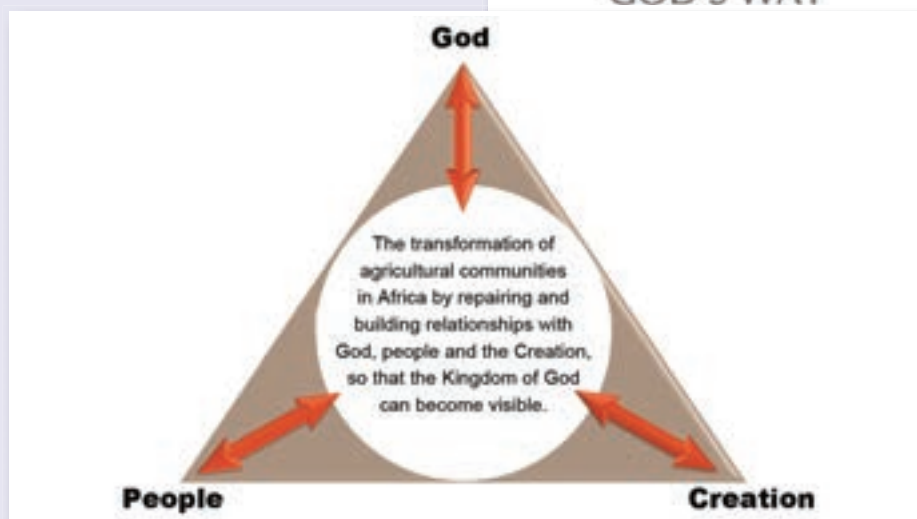
In his outstanding book, *The world needs a father*, Mr Cassie Carstens quotes Stephen Baskerville of the Howard University at the beginning of Chapter 2. Baskerville says: 'Virtually every major social pathology has been linked to fatherlessness. Violent crime, drug and alcohol abuse, teen pregnancy, suicide – all correlate more strongly to fatherlessness than to any other single factor.'

I would like to add: Many of the problems in the workplace can also be related to fatherlessness. According to Carstens the most recent census in South Africa indicated that only 33% of children grow up in homes where their biological fathers are present. Two out of three children therefore grow up without their biological father. Lack of a father leads to many and deep emotional wounds in people, regardless of whether they are employers or employees later. These emotional wounds affect people's interaction with one another – in the workplace too.

However, it is not just fatherlessness: Virtually all social, educational and economic problems in the country have an enormous influence on labour relations in agriculture. The great majority of people (employers as

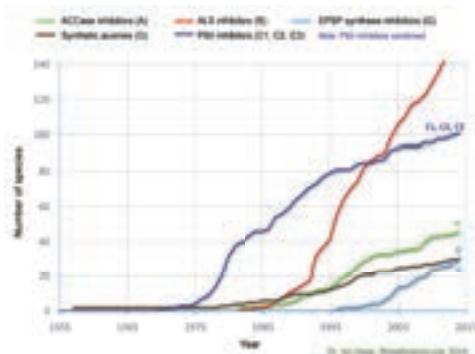


Figure 1: Transparency.

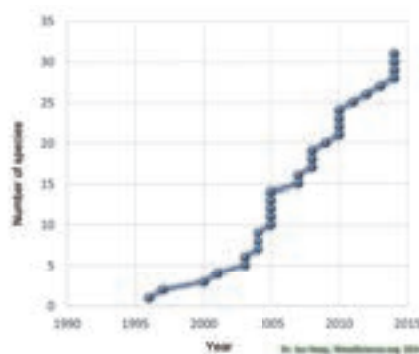


## 14 Another look at herbicide resistance

**Graph 1: Number of resistant species for various herbicide groups (HRAC codes).**



**Graph 2: Global increase in glyphosate-resistant weeds.**



- Keep a record of the herbicides used, as well as the dosage that was sprayed.
- The farmer must monitor the fields regularly so that resistant patches are identified and eradicated in time, for example by means of spot treatment.
- Make sure that the herbicide is applied at the correct growth stage at all times.
- Make sure that the correct dosage is used. Too high dosages and too low dosages can select resistant weeds.
- Make sure that the spraying equipment is

calibrated correctly and that the person responsible for the spraying process has received adequate training.

- Always follow the instructions on the herbicide label.

### Conclusion

Herbicide resistance is an unfortunate reality and should therefore be taken into account in all agricultural practices. The earlier it is identified in a field, the earlier effective control can commence.

The ARC-Small Grain Institute (ARC-SGI) recently introduced a service that can quickly test weed seed/seedlings for target area resistance against ALS and ACCase inhibitor herbicides. This is free at present and results can be obtained within 72 hours.

**Article submitted by Hestia Nienaber, ARC-Small Grain Institute for SA Graan/Grain May 2015. For more information, send an email to [deweth@arc.agric.za](mailto:deweth@arc.agric.za).**

## Sound labour practices and relations in the spotlight

well as employees) have never read a single book on marriage or the education of children.

Few study fields at universities and colleges include modules on labour and labour relations. At school, too, the matter receives very little attention. This leads to great ignorance and a lack of interpersonal skills in most people.

The inability to build good relationships in a constructive manner is aggravated by a number of divergent matters: Moral decay in the country, the gap between rich and poor, the distance between place of residence and work (migrant labour – which in turn leads to absentee fathers), political events in our own country as well as in neighbouring countries, the seasonal nature of many job opportunities in agriculture, expectations and/or fears with respect to land reform, unemployment (also among young graduates), the absence of a Biblical work ethic, demands for a minimum wage of R12 000 per month in the mining sector that is receiving a lot of attention in the media, and I can continue endlessly.

Even in 2 Timothy 3:1 - 5a Paul paints a picture that definitely does not promote good labour relations. He writes, under the guidance of the Spirit: But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power' (New King James Version of the Holy Bible, 1982).

There is therefore no quick fix for the challenges facing us because of labour and labour relations. Only the farmer who focuses on improving his knowledge and skills with respect to labour and labour relations is on the way to victory. Without this knowledge and skills the tide will turn against you sooner or later.

'Measure to know' is a management practice I learnt from Mr Tod Pienaar, Merino farmer from Colesberg, 20 years ago. Alas,

it is not only rain, money, production results and other technical data that should be measured to make good management decisions. Labour and labour relations should also be assessed and improved continuously.

In striving to acquire this knowledge and master these skills, Amos Agrimin is the right partner you are looking for. God willing, we will be focusing on labour and labour relations during the annual 40-Day Prayer Focus on Agriculture (1 September to 10 October) this year.

Like in the past Amos will publish a prayer guide with 40 daily readings. It will also be available free of charge from Amos's website (visit [www.amosagrimin.net](http://www.amosagrimin.net)). A series of DVDs on the topic is also envisaged.

**Article submitted by Hennie Viljoen, Amos Agrimin, for SA Graan/Grain May 2015. For more information, send an email to [hennie.viljoen@amosafrica.net](mailto:hennie.viljoen@amosafrica.net).**



# Do your planning in quiet times



**T**he period after harvesting is often regarded as a dead period on the grain farmer's farm. Yet this is the perfect time to sit behind your desk and do proper planning for the next season.

Grain cultivation is a cyclic process. When one season ends, the next is already in its infancy. That is why anything that happens in the fields after the harvest has an impact on the outcome of the next season.

In the process of preparing your fields for the next season after you have harvested, moisture preservation is your main priority. Controlling weeds should be attended to first. It is important to keep the fields clear of weeds and increaser plants. Weeds in the fields after the harvest not only create a seed bank, but also deplete the valuable moisture reserves that are available for the next season.

This is also the ideal time to make sure that all implements and tractors are in good working order. Calibrate implements that have not been used for a while, like your planters and sprays, so that they are ready when you start planting for the next season.

Like every season is unique, every field is also unique. Information from previous seasons is very important for planning for the next season. Study the yields realised in every field over the past few years in detail and determine how certain decisions regarding cultivar, weed control programmes, fertilisation, plant density and tillage could have affected the yield. Soil analyses to determine the nutritional status and fertility of your fields can also be done now. Well-thought-out planning is the basis for any successful production season.

Sometimes the grain price forces maize farmers to think hard about plantings for the next season, and farmers sometimes have to consider other alternatives. One of the options is to market maize via stock by making and utilising maize silage. Key management practices for the effective and profitable production of silage include:

- Choice of the hybrid.
- Timely harvesting.
- Remember that there is a fine line with respect to the choice between yield and the quality of the grain.
- Planting date.
- Higher plant populations than for grain production.
- Cutting height.

**“***In the process of preparing your fields for the next season after you have harvested, moisture preservation is your main priority.*

- Soil quality.
- Narrower row spacing can increase yield.
- Insect and weed control.
- Crop rotation.

## New cultivars

Monsanto has released ten new DEKALB maize cultivars – two white and eight yellow – with increased yield potential. The new cultivars are:

### White

DKC76-61B and DKC63-53.

### Yellow

DKC68-58BR, DKC68-56R, DKC71-44B, DKC71-42, DKC74-74BR, DKC74-26R, DKC65-52BR and DKC64-54BR.

Some of the outstanding properties of the cultivars are:

- New genetics with excellent yield potential.
- Wide adaptability.
- Stable performance across different conditions.
- Rapid drying.
- Good grain quality.
- Good disease-tolerance package.
- Good standability.
- Multiple ears.

DKC63-53, DKC65-52BR and DKC64-54BR are ultra-short growing season cultivars that are specifically suitable for full irrigation, with a plant establishment of about 80 000 plants/ha.

Now is the ideal time to contact input providers like your DEKALB seed representative or broker to talk about your choice of package and to look at new cultivars and seed treatments and how these can fit into your planning for the next season's plantings. 🌱

**Article submitted by Magda du Toit, Corporate Communication Manager, Monsanto South Africa. For more information, send an email to [magda.du.toit@monsanto.com](mailto:magda.du.toit@monsanto.com).**



# Grain SA interviews...

## Johannes Ntsimane

things that I do not know. In most cases when there is damage or something on the farm that I have never seen, I will call my co-ordinator to assist me. This way I am sure that things are going the right way. I made farming my life even though sometimes I do not have all the resources to do my own things.

### What training have you received to date and what training would you still like to do?

I managed to attend the following training course offered by Grain SA: Wheat Production, Barley Production, Farming for Profit, Tractor and Implement Maintenance, as well as Skills Development: Welding. These were really interesting short courses and I really enjoyed them. I feel I should still do the Pivot and Pump House Maintenance course. These courses are important to us because we farm under irrigation.

### Where do you see yourself in five years time? What would you like to achieve?

I want to see myself far ahead with farming and if possible leasing some land to increase my production. Grain production is important to me as I want to be the best small scale grain producer in Taung. In future I would also like to have my own mechanisation and to farm on my own. I would also like to move away from contracting – this way, I would have achieved quite a lot.

### What advice do you have for young aspiring farmers?

Most young farmers give up too quickly because they are not patient enough. Farming is not something that you can just wake up and do and become a millionaire. It takes time and constant focus on what you like and what you do. Doing things the right way, you can go far with farming. Young farmers just have to be patient, do things correctly and listen to advice from their development co-ordinators.

*Article submitted by Julius Motsoeneng, Development Co-ordinator of the Grain SA Farmer Development Programme, North West. For more information, send an email to [julius@grainsa.co.za](mailto:julius@grainsa.co.za).*

**W**anting to be the best small scale farmer from Taung, is Johannes Ntsimane's five year plan. This patient, honest and hardworking man has made farming his life and believes that if you do things the right way you can go far in life.

### Where and on how many hectares are you farming? What do you farm with?

I am from Taung in the North West Province and I currently farm on 10 ha of land which is a shared pivot of 20 ha. I share the pivot with another farmer of which we are each allocated 10 ha. Currently I have planted yellow maize on contract and in winter I am planning to plant barley.

### What motivates/inspires you?

I was just an ordinary farmer doing things the traditional way and without paying attention to minor things that could affect my farming. But since Grain SA came to Taung, it really motivated me a lot and also motivated me to pay attention to my farm as it brings food home. I was made aware that farming is a business and I need to treat it like a business. I was never aware that I should budget for my production and keep some money for the next season. It really helped me a lot to know how to weight things and to make the right choices in my farming.

### Describe your strengths and weaknesses

I can work independently if there is a need but I still work well in a team. I am a very patient person which gives me strength to hold on in difficult times and to have hope that things might change. I am an honest person and I also expect that from others, which is not always the case. If someone is not honest with me I get very angry and sometimes I feel I might overreact.

### What was your crop yield when you started farming? What are your respective yields now?

I used to plant lucerne but eventually got interested in grain production. I started with barley production which yielded around 67,8 ton in winter and my first maize production yielded 82 tons. The barley that was just harvested in December 2015 yielded 55,6 tons. I am currently expecting around 90 tons of maize – that is if there is no serious climate effect.

### What do you think was the main contributor to your progress and success?

I spend most of my time in the field looking at livestock damage which is a common problem. I also like to ask a lot of questions on



# THE CORNER POST

## ISRAEL MOTLHABANE

### When the going gets tough, farmers have to keep on going



**T**o Israel Motlhabane the Grain SA/ Absa Developing Grain Producer of the Year award he received in 2012 was the highlight of his farming career. It encouraged him to invest in skills and training to ensure a successful farming operation. However, as all farmers know, there are many ups and downs in this industry and success in farming depends on the weather, which is something that a farmer cannot control.

The past two years have been difficult ones for Israel, especially with the drought and extreme heat conditions of the past season. This has however not discouraged him and he firmly believes that conditions will change favourably so that the next season will be a better one. 'My wish for all the farmers of our country is good rains so that we can continue producing food,' he adds.

He feels that his story of good and bad times on the farm can inspire other emerging farmers. He shares the following advice which he learned first-hand:

- Love what you do – always be passionate.
- Learn from everyone who has more experience and knowledge than you so that you can become a better farmer.
- Work hard and follow the correct farming practises.
- Plan ahead to ensure that a bad year does not destroy you.
- Never think of money; focus on farming.
- Don't lose hope. Have faith that things will be better – because it will improve.

Becoming a producer of food, a farmer who owns his own land was a childhood dream of Israel's. This dedicated farmer grew up in the Hoopstad district where his father was a farm

worker on a commercial farm. 'I had to farm, because it is in my blood. I loved the land and dreamed of having my own farm one day,' he reminisces. In 1996 this dream became a reality when he purchased Annasvlei, a farm of 568 hectares, at an auction in Wesselsbron. On that day he made a conscious decision to do everything possible to become a successful grain producer and that is why he will keep on going even in these difficult conditions. Israel means God will prevail (triumph) and his strong faith that conditions will improve may have something to do with the meaning of his name.

In 2008, he expanded his land base with a further 328 hectares when he purchased another farm in the same district with the financial support from the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform. On Uitkyk Farm there is 200 hectares of arable land with the rest being used for grazing.

During a good season he managed a yield of approximately 5 tons per hectares on his maize and 2 tons per hectares on sunflower. Due to the drought he was not able to plant maize this year, but is hoping for an average sunflower crop at least. To Israel farming is a business and profit is of the utmost importance. He has therefore decided to sell more than half his Bonsmara herd to cover debt and living costs. 'It is also easier to provide grazing and feed for only 25 to 30 cattle in these conditions,' he adds.

Israel still attends Grain SA Farmer Development Programme study group meetings in his area. He has attended various training courses presented by Grain SA and the Department of Agriculture and has also empowered his farm workers through relevant courses. He


says that opportunities like these presented by knowledgeable, experienced people have expanded his knowledge of farming. He always keeps his eyes and ears open for any information about farming. He is especially grateful to Grain SA and Johan Kriel (Grain SA Farmer Development Co-ordinator in the Free State) who has played a major part in his development as a grain producer.

This 'man of vision' (as Johan Kriel describes him) is married to Nunu, a teacher. They have three children: Daughter Lipuo (a paralegal), and sons Gomoco and Kamogelo, whom he hopes will follow in his footsteps.

He is not a political man and feels politics is hurting farmers. 'Wrong decisions made by government affect us at ground level,' he says and adds, 'Government should start investing in the future of agriculture'. With money losing value and prices increasing South Africans are not positive about the future, but he is trying to remain positive. His dream for all developing and commercial farmers is that conditions will improve so that South Africans can buy local produce and not imported products.

There is an interesting Congolese proverb which says, 'When the leg does not walk, the stomach does not eat'. To Israel giving up is not an option – he will keep on working hard to help feed the people of this country.

**This month's edition of The Corner Post was written by Louise Kunz, Pula Imvula contributor. For more information, send an email to [louise@infoworks.biz](mailto:louise@infoworks.biz).**



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