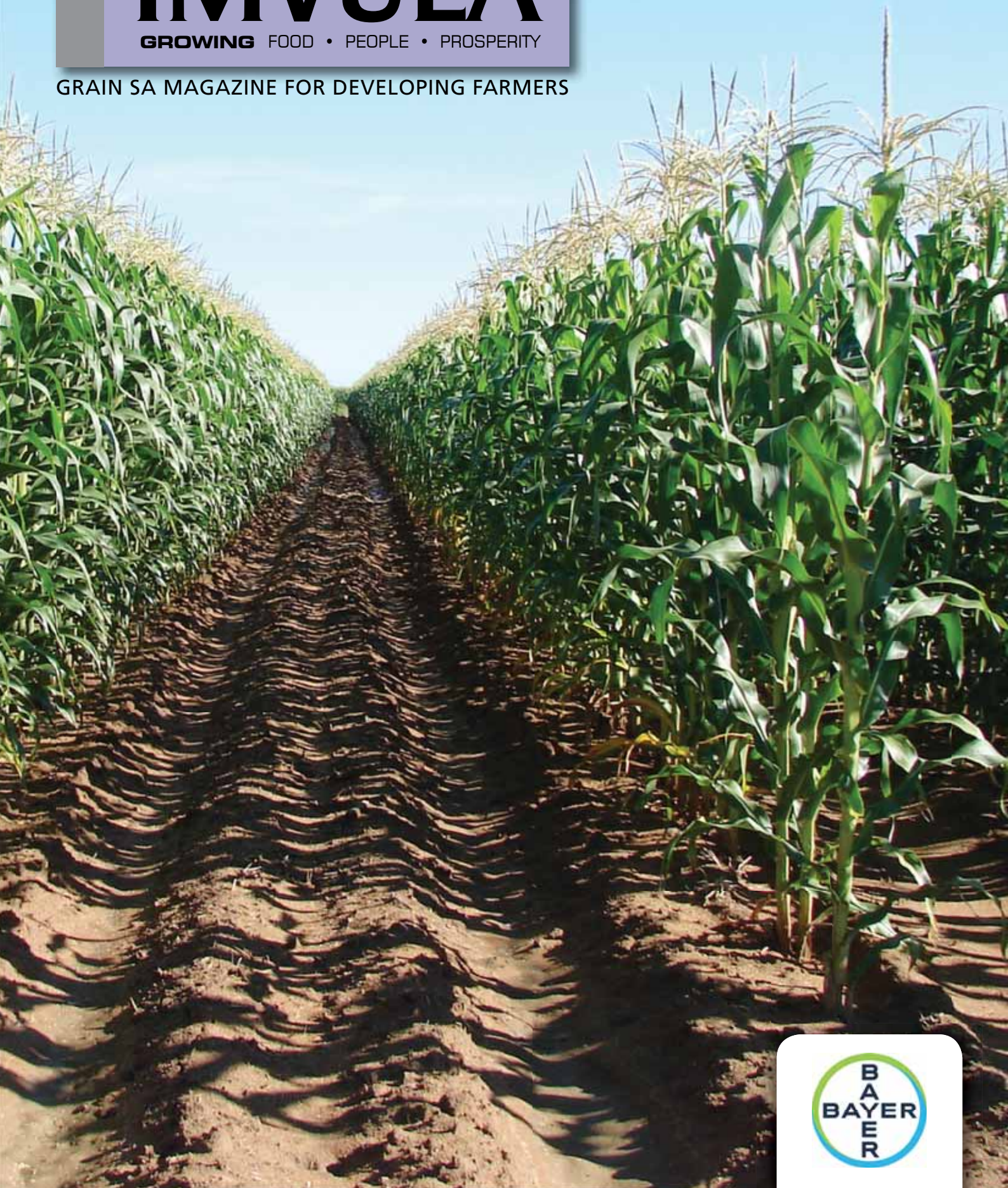


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PULA IMVULA

GROWING FOOD • PEOPLE • PROSPERITY

GRAIN SA MAGAZINE FOR DEVELOPING FARMERS



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A WORD FROM...

Derek Mathews

2 020 WAS A VERY DIFFICULT YEAR IN ALL RESPECTS AND WE ARE HAPPY TO SEE THE END OF IT. WE SHOULD NEVER LET THE DIFFICULT TIMES GET US DOWN BUT WE SHOULD RATHER TAKE THE LESSONS WE LEARNED FROM THEM AND BUILD A BETTER FUTURE AS A RESULT OF THEM.

At Grain SA we have also had a hard time in the past year, but our commitment to serve farmers has never changed. What might change from time to time is how we serve the farmers. We are dependent on funding for development and the funders' requirements and available funds change all the time. What does not change, is Grain SA's uncompromised commitment to quality service to our developing farmers. We can never give advice or push ahead with a project just because the funds are available but are for instance late – and planting a crop late will mean a failed harvest. As a farmer I understand well how important it is to get a crop in the land but failing all the time because we are late does not help us to grow, and establishes bad practice. It is important for us as farmers to be successful so that South Africa can have enough food.

At Grain SA we still find it very difficult to secure government funding on time for planting. I can't understand why it is so difficult for them to understand what is needed to farm successfully. Maybe it's time that we as farmers start demanding that our government officials listen to our requests.

The Grain SA Congress is scheduled for the first week of March and it is here that your voice must be heard, so think about who you would like as your representatives. Congress is also the time and place for you to put all your needs and suggestions on the agenda of Grain SA for the year ahead. It's your time to speak. Congress delegation is the highest authority of the organisation. The executive takes its directives and committees must always answer to Congress and carry out the congress mandate. So this is your time, use it well. ■

FARMING IS ABOUT MAXIMUM PROFIT PER HECTARE

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This FARMER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME is all about farmers and farming

GRAIN SA'S FARMER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME AIMS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE DREAM OF A UNITED AND PROSPEROUS AGRICULTURAL SECTOR. AT THE SAME TIME WE HAVE TO ADDRESS FOOD SECURITY AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY, INCOME GENERATION FOR THOSE WHO HAVE ACCESS TO LAND, PROTECTION OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES AND JOB CREATION. WE ARE BLESSED TO BE WORKING IN A SECTOR, WHICH HAS THE POTENTIAL TO CONTRIBUTE TO ALL THE PILLARS OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT.

We have adopted a multi-pronged approach and have a number of platforms that we use to meet farmers, identify needs in the different communities where we work and transfer skills and knowledge. The development communication specialist Nora Cruz Quebral says: 'The purpose of development communication is to advance development. This then is the job of development communication: To inform and motivate at the national, sectoral and project levels. The job of development communication is the process of development itself.'

Not all farmers are at the same level. Some are small farmers who wish to grow, some just want to grow enough food to feed their family while others wish to become commercial farmers and fully fledged entrepreneurs into the value chain. We do not discriminate. We will help a farmer on 1 ha or 100 ha. We aim to meet grain farmers where they are, and then walk beside them in pursuit of their goals. To do this we have embraced a number of different strategies which we keep in our toolbox.

- The farmers of South Africa either own or have access to land through various tenure arrangements.
- The aim of the Grain SA Farmer Development Programme is to equip individual farmers to use the land they have access to, optimally.

Every activity undertaken within this programme is tailored with the specific intention of transferring knowledge and skills; and each one is designed to target as many farmers as meaningfully as possible.



Farmer Harry Khumalo acquired new lands and asked mentor Chris de Jager to help him assess the soils and decide if they were suitable for planting in this season (13 November 2020).



Jenny Mathews, Pula Imvula contributor. Send an email to jennymathews@grainsa.co.za

WHAT IS IN OUR COMMUNICATION TOOLBOX?

Key development activities take place at:

1. **Study group meetings** where small groups of farmers in one region have access to information and expert advice from Grain SA coordinated by a local chairperson.
2. Region appropriate **demonstration trials** – Scientific research has proved that farmers learn best from seeing with their own eyes, in their own location – and they change more willingly to more effective farming practices.
3. **Farmers' days** are organised to bring farmers to see trial plots and learn from experts from Grain SA and the industry.
4. Support to **individual farmers** – A need was identified to support more advanced farmers who have grown beyond study groups and are already farming independently, but will likely benefit from a year's intensive one-to-one mentoring.
5. **Pula Imvula magazine** is a tool facilitating a widespread dissemination of relevant information and is the only sector specific farmer development magazine published in five South African languages.
6. **Training** – Courses are specifically tailored for developing farmers and balance theory with a practical hands-on approach.



Werner Vos demonstrates taking soil samples (13 October 2020).



Mentor Chris visited farmer Lucky Khumalo to check on the progress of their soybean planting (26 November 2020).

MONTHLY FOCUS: FARM VISITS

October and November

During October and November 2020, as the farmers prepared for the summer season, our managers and mentors paid **154 visits to 46 farmers** who are receiving one-on-one mentoring.

The reports from the mentors are insightful and assure us that significant support is contributing to growth and development of the farmers.

- Mentor Chris de Jager works with Graeme Engelbrecht from the Dundee office and reported after a visit to **farmer KB Mazibuko**: 'I delivered the chemicals for spraying the burndown. The soil is wet and the weeds are growing actively and the conditions are good for spraying.'
- After visiting **farmer SE Mthethwa**, he said: 'Sabatha is doing very well with some crops planted. We had a discussion on what herbicides he can add to the burndown as there seem to be some weeds in the area that is building up resistance to Roundup.'
- Chris de Jager also visited **farmer RT Masondo**. 'Farmer Reginald was busy planting when I arrived on the farm. He was having a problem with the one row on the planter that was using more seed than the other rows. After taking the unit apart and inspecting it I saw

that the seed scrapers were jammed and after we released it, the planter was planting as it should. The burndown has been sprayed and when the fertiliser arrives the farmer can proceed planting.'

- Mentor Martin Botha works with manager Jurie Mentz from the Louwsburg office. After visiting **farmer AM Gondo** he reported: 'I inspected the room where the chemicals are stored. We discussed the soybean spraying and we calibrated for Omnia's foliar feeding programme per hectare and decided how much to pour into the spray tank. Then we visited the soybean fields. Next week, the soybeans will be big enough so we can spray the weeds in between with Roundup.'
- Martin Botha also visited **farmer MB Skosana**. 'We met at the workshop and then inspected the fields. We discussed calibration of sprayers and looked at the new spray set. We checked that the spray pattern was correct to wet weeds then determined how much glyphosate should be sprayed to kill certain weeds and discussed the cost per hectare with glyphosate spray.'

The Grain SA Farmer Development Programme is striving to ensure no grain farmer gets left behind! ■



Selection of the best cultivars

is a difficult task

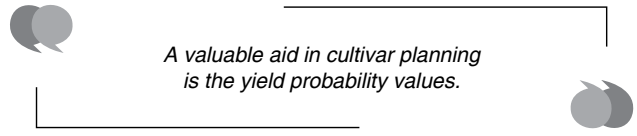
EVERY SEASON THE FARMER HAS TO DECIDE WHICH CULTIVARS ARE TO BE PLANTED DURING THE NEXT SEASON. A CORRECTLY PLANNED CULTIVAR CHOICE CAN CONTRIBUTE TREMENDOUSLY TO REDUCE RISK AND CONSTITUTES AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE PRODUCER'S PRODUCTION PLANNING.

Grain farmers always have to make difficult decisions that will influence their future. One of these difficult decisions is the selection of a seed package of hybrids to plant.

Cultivars differ in one or more number of characteristics. Each cultivar has a particular adaptability and yield potential that includes yield stability and compensation ability. Variability of cultivars provides alternatives, which can be utilised effectively.

The following are important guidelines in cultivar planning which must be considered:

- Never replace a reliable cultivar with a new or unknown cultivar in a single season. The risk is too high.
- Cultivar variability divides the risk factor. Use a series of cultivars, which differ in length of growing season and other characteristics. With a mid-summer drought the longer flowering period can help with pollination.
- Cultivars must be adapted to a specific yield potential but should be able to utilise increased potential conditions and still deliver an acceptable yield at reduced yield potential. Cultivars with a wide adaptability can play a role under these conditions.
- Because of new cultivars entering the market, cultivar choice should be revised annually.
- Remember that the soil potential and the farmer's management potential will always play a big role in the selection of cultivars.



A valuable aid in cultivar planning is the yield probability values.

CULTIVAR PLANNING

There are a few important aspects to consider in selecting the best cultivar which include yield performance and hedging of risk. It is complemented by the hybrid's agronomical characteristics and disease tolerance attributes. This is why it is important to attend cultivar farmer's days to go and see and evaluate the different cultivars. All the seed companies like for example Pannar, do have annual farmer's days with all their cultivars available on display.



Pietman Botha, Pula Imvula contributor. Send an email to pietmanbotha@gmail.com

It is important to evaluate the different cultivars according to certain criteria for example:

- Yield performance
- Stability of yield
- Compensation ability
- Growing season length
- Germination and vigour ability
- Disease, insect tolerance and weed control
- Standability

The ARC-Grain Crops Institute (ARC-GCI) in cooperation with agricultural businesses and the seed industry attempt to satisfy producers' requirements and evaluate the different cultivars. The responsibility is with the producer to test new or unknown cultivars first before replacing the known cultivars on a large scale. The ARC-GCI publishes the cultivar evaluation data on a yearly basis. This information is also available on the Grain SA website, www.grainsa.co.za.

A valuable aid in cultivar planning is the yield probability values, which are derived from information provided by the regression graph of a cultivar. The yield probability values means that the yield reliability value of a particular cultivar at a given potential is the minimum yield, which can be obtained in nine out of ten seasons. In the calculation of yield probability values (yield) the yield tendency, average yield and stability are taken into consideration.

In the yield probability tables of the ARC-GCI the following information is presented: Firstly, the yield probability values at different yield potential levels are shown.

Secondly, the average yield of the cultivar for the set of trials used is presented. Thereafter the yield tendency of the cultivar is described by the slope of the regression line. If the slope is greater than 1.0, it indicates a higher potential cultivar; smaller than 1.0 a lower potential cultivar, while a value near or equal to 1.0 indicates a widely adapted cultivar.

Lastly, the yield stability is indicated by the D²-values. With D²-values approaching zero, the cultivar can be expected to be more stable and predictable in terms of yield achievement, and the greater the D²-values are, the more the yield would vary between seasons.

The procedure to be followed in the making of cultivar recommendations is briefly as follows:

- Determine for which yield potential cultivar must be selected. This must be done by the producer. Aspects like soil potential rain season must be included.
- The next step is to consult the yield probability table at the determined yield potential.
- Select at the chosen yield potential those cultivars with the highest yield probability values. The cultivars with the highest values should provide one with the best chance for a stable, successful yield. The same procedures can be followed with yield potentials on both sides of the chosen yield potential for a more reliable recommendation.

CULTIVAR GROUPING

Cultivar grouping should be done according to the production region's adaptability and best practices. It is important to select a cultivar that suits your region's climatic conditions. Look at the heat unit, precipitation and production for which yield probability values were calculated.

Select a cultivar that can withstand the disease and insects in your region. It does not make sense to plant a cultivar and for instance grey leaf spot wipe out the total crop because the cultivar is not tolerant to grey leaf spot.

The farming practice applied will also rule out some cultivars. If you want to for instance incorporate roundup herbicide make sure that

the cultivar planted is tolerant to Roundup. If it is not the case the maize will be killed by the Roundup.

During harvesting time the maize must be able to dry off quickly. The longer the maize takes to dry off, the longer you have to wait to harvest and the longer it will take to finish harvesting. Also look out for the standability of the cultivar. The better this aspect, the less the loss will be during harvesting.

The growing season length is also a very important aspect. Frost will result in major yield loss. Make sure that the growing length of the cultivar will suit your planting date as well as the first date to expect frost.

The cultivar selection is a difficult task. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Contact the seed representative in your area and with their help make a selection of the cultivar you need to plant. Also discuss with them the best management practice to apply for the different cultivars. Some cultivars are difficult to emerge but with the best practices the yields are much better than the average.

Profit is the main focus point of a farmer. Compare the different farming systems profitability and select your seed to maximise the profit. Just remember with all said, timing will also play a major role in your success. Be on time plant within the best planting window and reap the success.

Because of the limited availability of stock it is essential to do your seed selection and order as soon as possible. The seed company will reserve some seed for your planting. ■



KEEPING ACCURATE WORKING HOURS IS IMPORTANT

MANY MIGHT CONSIDER KEEPING LOG OF WORKING HOURS TO BE SOMETHING THAT SHOULD RATHER BE IGNORED BECAUSE IT ENTAILS ADDITIONAL RECORD KEEPING – A WASTE OF TIME. HOWEVER THIS PRACTICE SHOULD RATHER BE READILY EMBRACED, AS IT OFFERS SEVERAL BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYERS AND SHOULD BE PART OF A PROFESSIONAL FARMER'S ROUTINE.

Firstly, one must understand that an employer is required by law to record all employee's working hours, even if you have only one employee or at times only one or two temporary employees.

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) stipulates that employers must record the working hours of all employees in an attendance register, sometimes referred to as a timesheet or time logbook. This applies to employees who are mainly employed to perform farming activities and domestic workers performing household duties on a farm.

The primary law requires that the working hours need to be recorded daily and every employee needs to confirm his/her agreement with a signature. An attendance register can be kept manually or computerised or using a clocking system or a specific software programme. You can even acquire an attendance register book from a stationery shop.

One of the main reasons to keep an attendance register is to ensure that an employee does not work more hours than prescribed by labour legislation. The regulation of working hours is also aimed at promoting the health and safety of employees by receiving adequate rest periods.

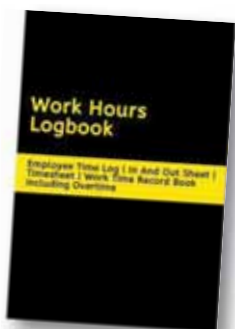
Arguments regarding possible incorrect payment of salaries can easily result in conflict. Remember, dissatisfied employees may even go so far as to report you to the CCMA for unfair labour practices. Should a labour inspector from the Department of Employment and Labour visit you, the attendance register (time sheet) will be one of the first documents to be inspected. Failure to produce such a register will result in action against you.

Being aware that this is a negative approach to keeping an attendance register, let us approach this from a positive point of view – you want to be a professional farmer.

ADVANTAGES OF AN ATTENDANCE REGISTER

One of the major advantages of keeping a proper attendance register are that it promotes positive working relationships and avoids unnecessary damaging conflict. It has been widely reported that the attitude of employees has a major influence on productivity.

US psychologist Frederick Herzberg divided the factors that motivate employees into two groups – the true motivators and the hygiene factors. The hygiene factors are for instance salary, working conditions, supervision and job security. Attending to these factors in the working environment are important because when employees are dissatisfied with one or more of these factors, they



The law requires all employers to keep a record of their employees' working hours.



Marius Greyling, Pula Imvula contributor. Send an email to mariusg@mcgacc.co.za

develop a negative attitude. Problems with salaries are very important and should be paid correctly. Keeping a proper attendance register ensures that employees are paid what is due to them and assists in promoting a positive working relationship. A positive attitude result in employees being committed to perform responsibly and being loyal employees. The result – improved productivity.

Other benefits include:

- The employer can save money and improve his/her profits, as hours worked are correctly calculated. This can thus prevent overpayment because of inaccurate recording of working hours. Bear in mind it could be a substantial amount of money involved. Salaries are normally one of the larger costs of a business.
- Whenever working hours are queried, the employer can refer to the attendance register to prove the correct working hours were calculated and the remuneration paid accordingly. Remember the employee must confirm these records daily per signature. Employers are advised that to keep these records for at least a period of three years, since an employee may refer any dispute regarding remuneration for conciliation to the CCMA within a three-year period after becoming aware of it.
- The employer can use the information from the attendance register for drafting pay slips, designing shift rosters, determining productivity, and gaining insight into the impact of working hours on employee's health and safety.
- You might have also already realised that an attendance register is an absolute essential document to resolve disputes and possible conflict in an amicable manner.
- Proper attendance registers will also advance improved communication between employer and employee/s. Accurate information is available and accurate information are always the building stones of proper communication.
- All in all, proper recording of working hours in an attendance register will assist in improving the overall management of your employees. You remain compliant with labour legislation.
- You need not be concerned about an inspection by the Department of Employment and Labour.

CONCLUSION

Proper record keeping and management can have a positive influence on your profits by directly saving you money and/or indirectly by improved productivity because of improved labour relations. Remember our basic formula: Profit/loss = income - expenses or costs. Thus, whatever you do or do not do on the farm has an influence on your profits. Keep proper records and be a champion farmer. ■

Good tractor maintenance

begins with your eyes

ONE OF THE MOST CHALLENGING AND COSTLY EVENTS IN A FARMER'S DIARY IS WHEN HE HAS TO DEAL WITH BREAKDOWNS WHEN THE MACHINES SHOULD BE DOING WHAT THEY ARE MEANT TO DO IN THE FIELDS. UNTIMELY BREAKDOWNS CAN AFFECT YOUR PRODUCTIVITY AND INCOME.

A lot of maintenance can be done in the quieter months but just as you eat, sleep and brush your teeth every day to maintain your own well-being, there are certain things that have to be a part of the daily maintenance routines of your equipment.

It is important to remember that the four things a tractor needs to work are:

- diesel;
- air;
- lubrication; and
- a water cooling system.

DIESEL

If you normally fill your fuel tanks from a bowser it should be clean. However many farmers will fill 'scoops' with fuel and fill their tractors at the edge of the field where it is working. It is very important to make sure the containers used are perfectly clean. If dirt and grime contaminate the diesel, the filters will be contaminated. If filters aren't changed regularly, you run the risk of damaging the engine. Dirty fuel affects the tractor's injectors. The engine will not function at full capacity. Injectors are a costly item to repair or replace. The injector sprays the fuel into the cylinders under very high pressure. When injectors wear, you could either get over- or under fuelling.

AIR

Air cleaners need to be cleaned regularly with high pressure air, but they can only be cleaned a few times before they should be replaced. This is to prevent clogging because if your air filter is dirty and prevents the flow of air into the engine, it will affect the running of the engine. Dust in the engine causes wear on bearings and rings which will result in the tractor using excessive oil.

Farmer John says: 'Look through your air filter from the inside, and hold up a light to the outside. If you see a good amount of light, your air filter is okay. If the light is dim or you can't see it at all, replace the filter immediately. Plan on checking the air filter every eight hours; more often if you are working in very dirty conditions.' Some farmers actually keep track by writing the hours worked on the oil and air filters.

LUBRICATION

Oil is your main source of lubrication in an engine. Oil must be replaced at regular intervals – about every 300 hours of work. A tractor driver must be trained to check oil levels every day. Low oil levels,

due to either an oil leak or worn rings forcing the tractor to use more oil, will cause oil starvation and ultimately the seizing up of the engine. This will require a total engine overhaul at great expense. The oil filter must be replaced with every oil change.

WATER COOLING SYSTEM

The key elements in the cooling system are the radiator, the water pump, rubber hoses and fan belts to drive the fan which cools the engine. A weak link in any of these is problematic.

A leaking radiator will cause the water to leak out and the engine will overheat and possibly seize – also leading to a complete engine overhaul.

The water pump has bearings that need to be checked and greased. The rubber hoses must also be checked regularly as they can perish and leak. This is a cheap and quick fix to avoid major damage. It is also necessary to make sure the clamps around the hoses are tightly secured. Fan belts do stretch and perish over time. The belt tension must be checked regularly to make sure there is no slipping and to ensure the fan is turning properly.

MAKE MAINTENANCE PART OF YOUR ROUTINE

We cannot afford to neglect any steps in our maintenance processes considering the huge capital outlay that we fork out to acquire our tractors and implements. The best practice when it comes to maintenance is routine.

Take time to familiarise yourself and your workers with maintenance on each machine or implement; identify the parts that take the most strain, such as bearings and belts and get them moving and grooving like they should. Usually the best method with regard to on the job checks is to have a 'pre-work' routine. Instil this routine into your labour force.

Make it a rule that before any tractor or implement enters a land:

1. Everything is fuelled up.
2. Everything is greased up.
3. Tyres are checked.
4. Oil is checked.
5. All moving parts are given a good spin.

It's all about being proactive to save time and money in the long run. ■

Did you know that Grain SA has a Tractor Maintenance Training course which it offers to its members and their farm workers?
It is so well worth the time invested!



Jenny Mathews, Pula Invula contributor. Send an email to jennymathews@grainsa.co.za



Photo: John Mathews

Tractor filters need to be replaced regularly.

Choose a **MARKETING CHANNEL** for your crop

Part 1

PRODUCERS CANNOT CONTROL THE WEATHER, NOR DO THEY HAVE ANY INFLUENCE OVER THE AMOUNT OF VOLATILITY IN THE MARKETS, THEREFORE GRAIN MARKETING IS A KEY FACTOR IN FARM PROFITABILITY AND MANAGING RISK.

The weather was favourable in most parts of the world for the 2019/2020 season, yielding good production. South Africa had a record crop last year and we are looking at another large crop this year. As a result, marketing is particularly important this year. It is also important that producers understand why and how marketing affects their risk management before jumping in.

Producers need to understand that a successful marketing strategy requires a commitment to a unique marketing plan, based on the farm's individual needs. Crucial to success is active involvement in all aspects of marketing, that is gathering market information, analysing market trends, preparing a plan and putting the plan into action. There are various direct marketing channels available to producers, which can be divided into non-futures exchange and futures exchange marketing channels. This article will focus on the former and part two will focus on the latter.

NON-FUTURE EXCHANGE MARKETING

Cash market sales

These are places where grain can be marketed for cash directly after harvest without a contract. The buyers include a neighbour, local miller, a cooperative, grain traders or anyone else who is interested to buy grain. This maize can be sold either unprocessed or already milled to the buyer, in bags or bulk. Payment occurs when physical delivery takes place. Price is determined on a supply and demand basis in a specific region and can vary daily. It is important for producers to have access to Safex prices as well as advice from extension officers, mentors or other support structures.

Storage

Storage is part of the marketing strategy a producer can use. The producer can either store the maize on his farm if he has storage facilities or at a nearby cooperative, but at a cost. Therefore, this strategy works well when prices are low and stocks can be stored to for sale at a later stage when prices are higher. This requires a producer to be informed about crop estimates and forecasts of prices. Storage and transport costs should be considered for this strategy. Interest also plays a big role in this strategy; the major cost of storing grain is the interest cost of either the money invested in the grain that could be invested elsewhere or in interest paid for the money borrowed to finance stored grain.

Forward contracts

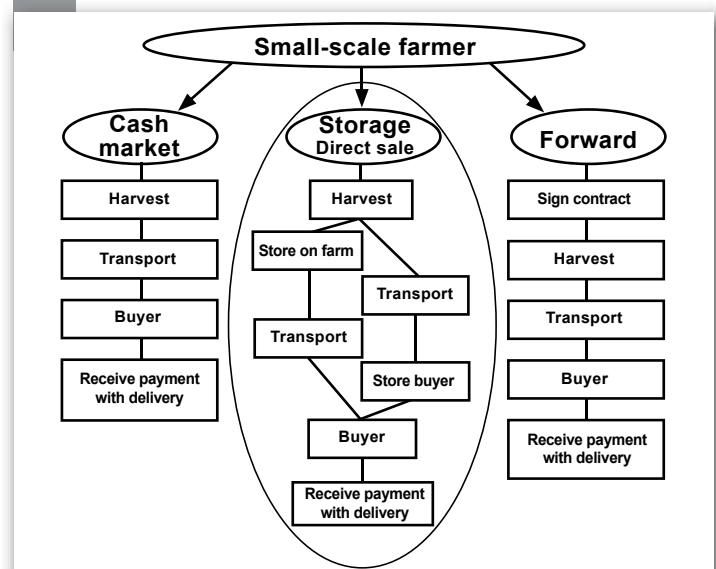
While crops are still growing on the land, a producer can sell his or her produce by means of a forward contract. In order to secure certain quantities of maize, buyers make these contracts available on a need to basis. Buyers such as millers, cooperatives, feedlot and exporters make use of forward contracts. The price on the forward contract may also vary daily, depending on what is happening in the market. The holder of the forward contract can sell his or her produce for the applicable contract price,

Ikageng Maluleke, Agricultural Economist, Grain SA. Send an email to Ikageng@grainsa.co.za



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Non-futures exchange marketing channels.



Source: Former NDA

regardless of the prevailing price in the market on the day of harvest. Producers need to be aware of different contract specifications that may exist from different buyers.

Producers need to consider the following when dealing with forward contracts:

- The basic price as specified in the contract.
- The quantity and quality required for the specific contract as well as price premiums for better quality maize.
- Date and place of delivery as well as method of payment.
- The producer must be able to meet the contract specifications and if not what are the conditions for non-delivery according to the contract.

Marketing costs for non-futures exchange marketing

Transport forms the biggest part of a producer's marketing costs and this varies according to distance, type of transport and quantity delivered. Even though the price can be attractive, transport costs could change things. Bulk transportation is usually cheaper compared to smaller loads, thus producers with smaller quantities can consider consolidating produce with their neighbours for deliveries. It is important that producers understand the payment conditions for the transport. Some buyers provide transport and then subtract the cost from the prices paid to producers. The price of maize is usually quoted as ex-silo prices, meaning that the producer needs to pay the silo cost. ■



What you need to know about the National Minimum Wage act

THE NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE ACT (NMW) CAME INTO EFFECT ON 1 JANUARY 2019 AND APPLIES TO ALL FARM WORKERS AND THEIR EMPLOYERS.

The purpose of the NMW is to advance economic development and social justice by improving the wages of the lowest paid workers, protecting workers from unreasonable low wages, preserving the value of the NMW, promoting collective bargaining and supporting economic policy.

So, what does this mean?

- Every worker, except those specifically excluded, is entitled to at least the minimum wage.
- Every employer may not pay wages that are below the minimum wage.
- The national minimum wage cannot be reduced by contract, collective agreement or law.
- The national minimum wage constitutes a term of the worker's contract except to the extent that the contract provides for a more favourable wage.
- It is an unfair labour practice for an employer to unilaterally alter hours of work or other conditions of employment in implementing the national minimum wage.

The Act provides further that the minimum wage will be determined regularly by the Minister of Labour – as was done in January 2020 when the minimum wage was increased with 3,8%. The assumption is that the NMW will increase yearly at least equal to the reigning CPIX figures for the year.



Bernard Lombard is a consultant at Labour Excelsis, a Labour Relations Consultancy, who assists clients in all IR and HR related matters.

EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYEES

The employer

Farm workers, in terms of the NMW Act, are entitled to a minimum hourly wage of R18. The R18/hour is what a worker must receive in cash. It cannot include benefits such as transport, meals or accommodation allowances. Farmers are therefore not entitled to use the provision of housing as a way to calculate, and even circumvent, compliance with the provisions of the Act. The minimum wage may also not include any tips or bonuses a worker receives so production bonuses are not added when a worker's basic wage is calculated.

Seasonal or temporary employees

The Act clearly states that all employees are entitled to earning at least the minimum wage. For the purposes of compliance to the Act, farmers would therefore need to also pay seasonal and temporary workers an amount equal to, or greater, than the minimum wage.



What you need to know...

NON-COMPLIANCE

Employers, who qualify, can apply for an exemption for a specific period of time, but this period cannot be for longer than one year. The exemption from paying the minimum wage is a short-term remedy afforded to small-scale farmers allowing them sufficient time to amend their wage structure to comply with the Act.

Exemption will only be granted after an application for exemption was made to the offices of the Department of Labour.

The consequences of non-compliance

An employer can be fined for not paying the minimum wage. The fine for a first-time offence may be either double the value of the underpayment or double the employee's monthly wage, whichever is more. For any further offence, the employer may be fined three times the value of the underpayment or the employee's minimum wage, again whichever is the bigger amount.

Do not let the minimum wage turn your endeavour into a minimum success.

Inspectors from the Department of Labour are tasked in terms of the Act to include verifying compliance with the NWA as part of any inspection of workplace conditions. You would therefore need to be able to prove to an Inspector that every worker employed on the farm is paid in terms of the Act. It is therefore crucial that the 'rate per hour' is clearly defined on all employees' pay slips.

Record-keeping is therefore vital. The farmer would need to satisfy an Inspector of the Department that for the preceding twelve months, he or she had in fact complied with the Act. Proper payslips, indicating the rate per hour, needs to be given to each employee and this would serve as proof that the employer complies with the Act.

Proper planning should be done prior to the appointment of any additional employees to ensure that compliance with the Act does not deter small and upcoming farmers from farming in a sustainable and financially viable environment. Calculating the cost of potential employee wages has become as crucial to the successful farmer as timing when to plant. Do not let the minimum wage turn your endeavour into a minimum success.

A labour consultant, like Labour Excelsis, would be able to assist employers in all matters relating to compliance with the NMWA. Should you need any assistance and guidance feel free to contact us today. ■





BUY AGROCHEMICALS

from an accredited source

AGRICULTURE IN SOUTH AFRICA IS BASED ON MORE THAN JUST A BUSINESS EXCHANGE OR MAKING A PROFIT – IT IS BASED ON HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS AND TRUST. HOWEVER, IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG, IT SHAKES THESE VERY FOUNDATIONS TO THE CORE AND CAN LEAVE A PRODUCER EXPOSED – AND OFTEN WITHOUT RECOURSE.

Crop protection plays a critical role in this value chain. One could even say that trust is necessary in this area more so than any other, considering that these important substances are potentially hazardous and could pose an extreme risk not only to a producer's entire harvest, but also to consumers and the environment. Would it not make sense then, to buy from someone who is qualified and who has committed to abide by the highest ethical standards?

PEACE OF MIND WITH A TRUSTED PARTNER

This is why CropLife SA embarked on a journey some years ago to establish a continuous professional development (CPD) programme that ensures agrochemical sales agents of member companies are provided with a range of learning activities that maintains and enhances their professional competencies and knowledge. The programme aims to advance and promote the status of the agent as a crop adviser, acting in the interest of the environment, community and the producer.

It requires that a participant reaches a certain number of points in three respective categories, namely technical training and learning activities, business management training and learning activities as well as safety and legal-related training and activities. In addition, they must complete the Basic Crop Protection course as a minimum requirement for participation.

*Elriza Theron, marketing and communications manager, CropLife SA.
First published in SA Graan/Grain
February 2020. Send an e-mail to
elriza@croplife.co.za.*



Once an agent has obtained the required number of CPD points, he/she is issued with a CropLife SA accreditation card and earns the title of crop adviser. At the moment it is a physical card, but soon it will be available as a digital card on an Android or iPhone device.

This means that producers can have peace of mind when buying from a CropLife SA-accredited crop adviser, because they know the person is qualified, up to date with industry knowledge and adheres to CropLife SA's code of conduct. For exporters of crops, this is particularly important for auditing purposes such as GLOBALG.A.P.

CropLife SA encourages all producers to insist on this accreditation before purchasing agrochemical products. That being said, a producer must always ensure to only use products that are registered in South Africa for the intended purpose, which refers to a specific pest, crop and application method as well. An easy way to verify this is to register on www.agri-intel.com and view the label information of the product in question.

The responsibility lies with each player in the value chain to ensure that the trust that is held so dearly in agriculture, is maintained. ■

For more information contact CropLife SA at 087 980 5163 or info@croplife.co.za.



MADE POSSIBLE BY
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Select the right FEED CROP for success

TO ANY STOCK FARMER THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF HIS FARMING ACTIVITIES IS TO ENSURE THAT THE RIGHT QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF FEED ARE AVAILABLE AT ALL TIMES.

Feed flow planning is vital for making decisions regarding the crops to be planted and used. Every feed crop has its unique properties and growth curve. Adjust this to the stock flow and select the right crop.

FEED CROPS

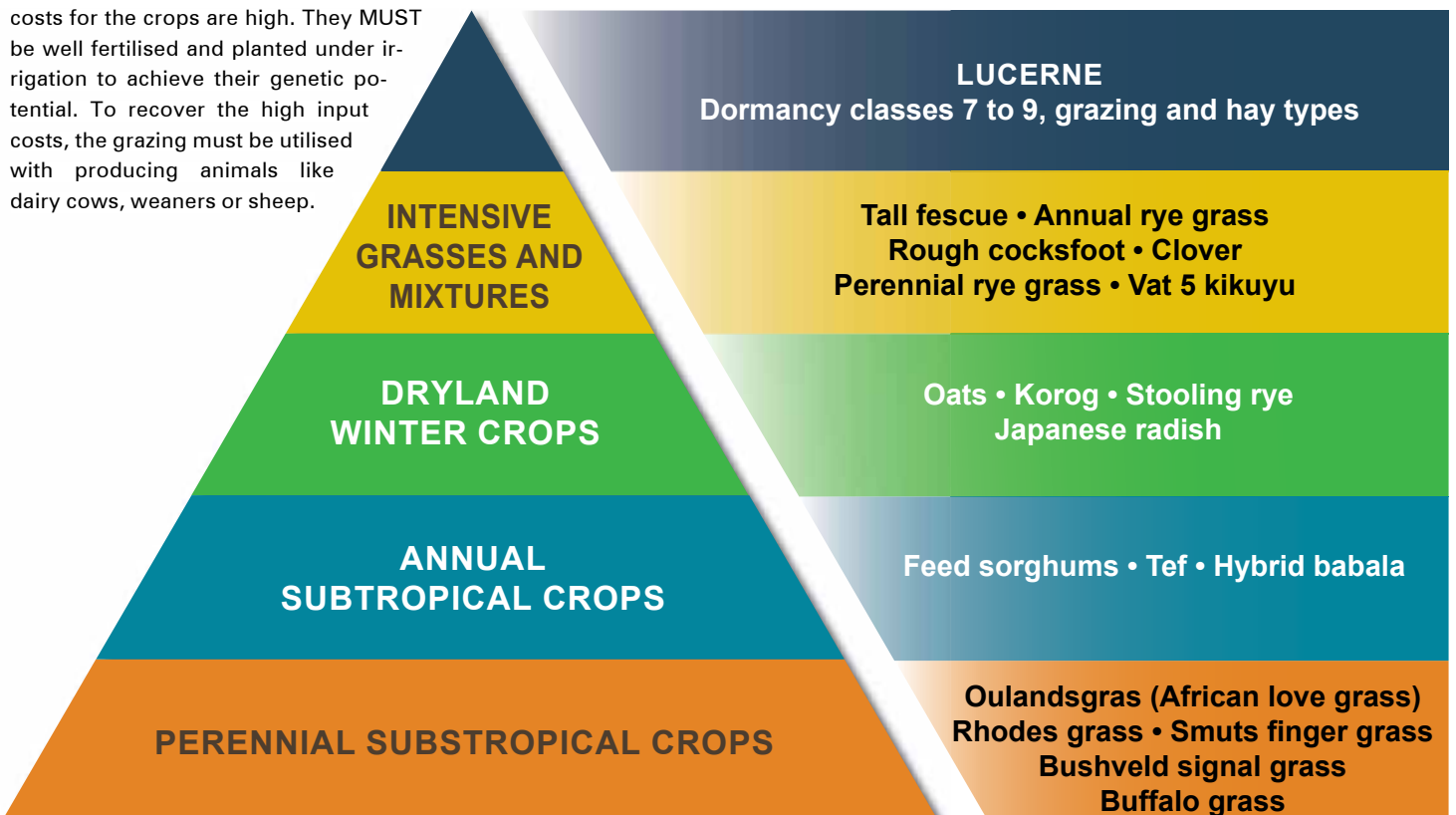
The properties of the different types of feed crops and the requirements for successful cultivation are summarised below for your convenience:

Lucerne

This king of feed crops is a high-quality feed with 18% to 20% crude protein and a high level of digestibility. Lucerne can be cultivated successfully under intensive high-production conditions under irrigation, or less intensively under dryland conditions. It is a strong perennial plant and will produce well for approximately six years and longer. Grazing and hay types are available.

Intensive grasses and mixtures

This crop category is distinguished from others by the type of stock unit involved. The input costs for the crops are high. They MUST be well fertilised and planted under irrigation to achieve their genetic potential. To recover the high input costs, the grazing must be utilised with producing animals like dairy cows, weaners or sheep.



Pietman Botha, Pula Imvula contributor. First published in SA Graan/Grain Grain Guide of 2021. Send an e-mail to pietmanbotha@gmail.com.



Dryland winter crops

High-potential oats, triticale and stooling rye cultivars are available, as are cultivar packages that produce good-quality green feed in the critical late autumn, winter and spring months. The right choice of cultivar ensures green feed that produces sufficient grazing at the right time.

Green-feed cultivars, like wheat cultivars, are divided into spring, intermediary and winter types on the basis of their habit. Each of these types has its own utilisation method in a feed-flow programme. It is therefore important to take note of the properties of each of the types in order to utilise its top benefits.

Annual sub-tropical crops

These crops establish and produce feed rapidly. Hybrid babala and feed-sorghum hybrids are used as grazing, silage, standing hay and/



or green chop respectively. Teff cultivars are not merely a commodity, but have been developed to give the producer a head start. Teff is an excellent hay crop and on average produces two cuttings per season.

Perennial sub-tropical crops

These grazings are cultivated under semi-intensive conditions. They are summer crops and are dormant in winter. During the autumn months the grazings translocate nutrients from the leaves and stems to the roots. This enables the grass species to bud in spring and develop rapidly. In addition to the fact that each of these species has preferences with respect to soil, management and rainfall, each has properties that allow it to fit in perfectly with a specific system. The preferences as well as the properties of the crops must be considered before one can be selected.

Most of this information was obtained from Pannar. Visit their website at www.pannar.co.za or scan the QR code



for direct access to their grazing production manuals and feed crop guide for different production systems. ■



If you really look closely, most overnight successes took a long time.

~ STEVE JOBS



Groundnut diseases *in perspective*

TODAY'S PRODUCER MUST WEAR MANY HATS TO MANAGE HIS FARM SUCCESSFULLY. ONE OF THESE HATS IS THE ABILITY TO IDENTIFY PESTS IN THE GROUNDNUT FIELD. THIS HELPS HIM TO DEVISE A TIMELY PLAN FOR DISEASES THAT CAN CAUSE MAJOR DAMAGE.

Lourene Muller, groundnut agronomist, Triotrade. First published in SA Graan/Grain February 2020.



The variable weather conditions contribute to the appearance of less common leaf diseases in groundnuts. *Botrytis*, which is common in irrigation fields, can even appear in dryland plantings with regular rainfall. This is one of the leaf diseases that is difficult to control, as it usually occurs closer to the end of the growing season, close to the harvest.

Botrytis (Photo 1) forms in the middle of the foliage where the microclimate is hot and moist. This disease is particularly prevalent when the plants have already closed the rows. The best way to prevent *Botrytis* is to ensure good illumination in the foliage. Row widths should be adjusted from the beginning of the season, particularly in

areas where the producer has encountered this disease before. The disease is difficult to control, as sprays cannot penetrate dense foliage.

Web blotch (Photo 2) is another customer to be on the lookout for. This leaf spot normally occurs in the middle of the foliage, but at times it can also appear in the bottom leaves. The disease can occur in patches in the field, but spreads very quickly. Web blotch can completely defoliate a groundnut field within three weeks. Controlling web blotch is just as difficult as controlling *Botrytis*, as the sprays applied do not always penetrate to the middle of the foliage. Prevention is always better than control.



1 Symptoms of *Botrytis* on groundnuts.



2

Web blotch on groundnuts.



3

Symptoms of Sclerotinia on groundnuts.



4

Early web blotch symptoms on groundnuts.



5

Symptoms of late leaf spot on groundnuts.

Sclerotinia (**Photo 3**) is another criminal in the groundnut field. Sunflower producers know that this disease causes enormous losses – and the same applies to groundnuts. Sclerotinia appears on the soil surface, close to the stem of the groundnut. To distinguish Sclerotinia from *Botrytis* you must check for small, round balls that occur on the stem close to the soil. The other consequences of Sclerotinia can be seen on the seed itself after it has been harvested. Purple rings that look like a bullseye form on the kernel. This is caused by the toxins present in the kernel. When groundnuts

with this bullseye are graded, the stained kernels are downgraded. Prevention of Sclerotinia is the only way of controlling it. Do not produce groundnuts in fields in which sunflowers were produced during the previous season.

In addition to the above, there are also some common diseases like early and late leaf spot (**Photos 4 and 5**) that you have to be on the lookout for. The important thing is to remember that prevention is always better than cure, and regular field inspections are extremely important to identify and control diseases. ■

Farming is about maximum profit per hectare

ON 15 OCTOBER 2020 GRAIN SA HOSTED THE AWARDS CEREMONY OF THE FIRST GROW FOR GOLD COMPETITION AT MULDERSDRIFT. OUTSTANDING MAIZE, SOYBEAN AND SUNFLOWER YIELDS FROM 46 COMMERCIAL PRODUCERS TO SMALL-SCALE FARMERS FROM ACROSS SOUTH AFRICA WERE CELEBRATED.

Although the past few seasons have posed many challenges to grain producers, South African producers still managed to perform miracles when it comes to yields. Grain SA's Grow for Gold National Yield Competition shows what can be done through good management and sustainable practices. Some of the producers even rewrote the record books.

SMALL SCALE ACHIEVERS

Meet the small scale farmers who were honoured at this event:



Second: **Ramulondi Petrus Managa** from Louis Trichardt. Using the cultivar DKC 78-45 BR (Bayer) Ramulondi realised a yield of 6,40 t/ha.



The winner: **Gardner Khulekani Khumalo** from Madadeni in New Castle, KwaZulu-Natal who achieved a yield of 8,01 t/ha using Bayer's DKC 68-58 BR cultivar.



Third: **Ntsieni Wilson Mufamadi** from Thohoyandou who planted Bayer's DKC 78-45 BR and realised a yield of 5 t/ha.

Article compiled by Pula Imvula editorial team.

THE COMPETITION

The Grain SA Grow for Gold competition provides producers with the opportunity to learn from each other about exactly what is possible. The competition format allows individual growers to enter and also offers seed companies the option to enter three of their best yields in each category. A standard protocol ensures that all participating producers are assessed at the same level and criteria.

While returns are important, they are not all that matters. To continue to farm sustainably, producers nowadays have to pay attention to many more facets in their farms. Input costs and expenses per hectare must be measured. It will differ from environment to environment and producer to producer, as everyone's direct and variable costs are different. The secret, however, is to keep the ratio of input to profit in balance and not just focus on returns. In the end, it's about maximum profit per hectare.

The competition is the only one of its kind hosted by Grain SA and include the production of maize, wheat, sunflower and soybeans. Grain SA members can enter free of charge.

Grain SA will use the Grow for Gold platform to give all producers an opportunity for continuous learning and improvement in order to establish what can be achieved. ■



THE CORNER POST

GARDNER KHUMALO

'You need to know your soil'



GARDNER KHULEKANI KHUMALO (37) IS A PROUD FOURTH GENERATION FARMER WHO FARMS AT MADADENI IN THE AMAJUBA DISTRICT ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF NEW CASTLE. WITH A YIELD OF 8,01 T/HA, HE BECAME THE FIRST WINNER IN THE SMALL-SCALE MAIZE FARMER CATEGORY OF GRAIN SA'S GROW FOR GOLD NATIONAL YIELD COMPETITION.

Sandile Khumalo, a representative from Dekalb, who ensured that the Khumalo's bought the best seed for their soil – the cultivar DKC 68-58 BR – entered Gardner into the competition.

BORN A FARMER

'I started farming at a very young age as my father was a farmer, as was my grandfather and great grandfather,' Gardner says that he was born a farmer. As soon as they learned how to drive he and his twin brother, Sphephelo, had to help on the farm. 'When I was in Grade 11, we started growing vegetables on a 7 ha piece of land at my grandmother's place.'

After completing his school career he attempted a course in animal production, which he did not complete as he wanted to farm. 'My passion for farming is definitely motivated by my family – from my father to my great grandfather.' Farming runs through this family's veins.

As time went by the twins and their father realised that if they wanted to make a difference they had to grow their enterprise. To contribute to food security in South Africa they needed more land. At this stage they were already the proud owners of some equipment and tractors. They successfully applied for a loan at Ithala Bank in 2011 and purchased a 672 ha farm, Liesbethdale. From here Mgodeni Farming Primary Cooperative started producing maize and soybeans in 2012 on 285 ha of arable land. The rest of their farm is utilised as grazing for the 96 cattle.

'We tried our hand at planting potatoes on 15 ha between 2012 and 2014, but unfortunately it was not a profitable venture, so we decided to focus on maize and soybeans.'

GROWING FOR GOLD

Although Gardner had the knowledge of three generations to guide him in his farming operation, he never realised how much he still had to learn until Chris de Jager was appointed as his Grain SA mentor two seasons ago.

'A lot of what we were doing on the farm before Chris came on board would probably not be considered as good agricultural practices,' he says with a grin. 'Chris is a wonderful teacher', Gardner says who attends the study group sessions regularly to increase his agricultural knowledge. He says having a mentor played a huge part in his success as well as the input from wonderful neighbouring commercial farmers in the area.

Louise Kunz, Pula Imvula
contributor. Send an email to
louise@infoworks.biz



The first big lesson they learned was the importance of water conservation and preserving the soil quality for the future. 'Our knowledge about technology was also not up to date, but thanks to Chris our knowledge in this area improved.'

Gardner says they were not keen on soil sampling, but now that they have witnessed what a difference it makes, this is one practise they are taking very seriously. 'After our harvest the previous season, we took soil samples. When the results came back we made the necessary applications according to the results.' This way they know that they can look forward to a good yield.

A strict and effective spraying programme is also followed on the farm and they ensure that no mistakes are made when applying fertiliser.

According to Gardner success in farming is not about hard work or luck, but a combination of good agricultural practices, a good cultivar and the right amount of rain. 'Good rain can't be overlooked, but it is more than enough now,' he chuckles. At the time of the interview early in January they still had 13 ha left to plant but rain was delaying the planting.

ADVICE FROM A WINNER

Gardner happily shares some tips with other farmers who would also like to improve their yield:

1. 'To have a good yield, you need to know you soil,' is Gardner's advice to other small-scale farmers. 'If you don't know your soil, you will waste money on things the soil does not need. This way you only have to buy what is needed.'
2. He also says it is important to buy certified seed as good advice from a knowledgeable source, the seed company representative usually comes with the purchase.
3. Follow a spraying programme to ensure healthy crops and prevent yield loss.
4. Stick to the correct planting date.

Gardner is dreaming of expanding their farming operation. 'I hope to eventually have 1 000 ha of arable land to plant. 285 ha is a bit too small to make serious money!'

This passionate farmer loves target-shooting and enjoys watching soccer. However when the farming activities have quieted down, you will find him at one of the three dams on the farm with a fishing rod in his hands. Here he can relax and plan for the next successful season. ■



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