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PULA IMVULA

GROWING FOOD • PEOPLE • PROSPERITY

PGP MAGAZINE FOR DEVELOPING FARMERS

PGP
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Cover: Farmer Mlotshwa Mathews Mfanimpela is ready to harvest. Photo: Farmer Development Team

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Top tips FOR FARMERS

The harvest may be over, but there are still many after-harvest tasks that need attention. Remember, thorough planning is key to a successful farming operation.

When the harvest is done

If you have already marketed your grain, follow up on the payment. **Graeme Engelbrecht**, regional development manager at the Dundee Office, reminds farmers of the importance of honouring their financial obligations. Pay back your loans and then invest your profit into your farming enterprise. It's better to grow your business, than spend the money on luxuries.

Graeme also advises that farmers who want to store their maize and market it at a later stage must carefully calculate the storage costs against the 'possible' later price. If you have your own storage facility, ensure you also adhere to the requirements of safe storage.

'Farmers must ensure that the harvested material is clean before marketing it or storing the product,' says **Jerry Mthombothi**, regional development manager at PGP's Mbombela office. 'The storage facility must also be cleaned and make sure that no water or air can get in.' Jerry also recommends the use of phostoxin tablets to prevent weevil-infested maize. (Read more about the safe storage of maize on page 7.)

Prepare for the new season

Winter is also the best time for farmers to start preparing the fields for the new season by taking soil samples says **Shadrack Mbele**, Grain SA Board member for Region 31. Send in your soil samples early to avoid laboratory backlogs.

This important step can help you tailor your fertiliser applications to meet the specific needs for optimal production. Any soil acidity must be rectified through timely lime application which will boost fertiliser efficiency and enhance nutrient mobility for improved yields. (Read the article on page 8 for more on this topic.)

Rather safe than sorry

In winter, dry grass and strong winds make veld fires a real threat. Maintain your property by trimming trees, removing dead leaves and debris. Always have emergency numbers handy of someone you can contact for assistance in case of a fire. Be aware of different evacuation routes to leave the area if a fire spreads to your farm. Also plan for what to do with your livestock in the event of a fire.

COMPILED BY LOUISE KUNZ, ASSISTANT EDITOR: PULA

2025 Farmer of the Year competition:

THE NOMINEES FOR THE 2025 *GRAIN SA FARMER OF THE YEAR* COMPETITION REPRESENT THE THOUSANDS OF GRAIN FARMERS IN THE FARMER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (FDP) WHO WORK HARD EVERY SINGLE DAY TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR FAMILIES. THIS YEARLY COMPETITION IS A HIGHLIGHT FOR ALL FARMERS AND THE PERSONNEL OF PHAHAMA GRAIN PHAKAMA (PGP) AND GRAIN SA.

It offers an opportunity for all farmers that are active members of the programme, whether big or small, to showcase their hard work and determination.

MORE ABOUT THE COMPETITION

This competition entails that a handful of Subsistence, Smallholder, Potential New Era and New Era Commercial candidates from each province are nominated according to strict criteria. Since there are so many deserving farmers, it is not possible for the regional development managers (RDM) to enter them all. So, the ones chosen as nominees serve as examples of what can be achieved.

Then a judging panel takes to the road to visit each of the nominees. They are interviewed and asked detailed questions about their production practices, financial management, record-keeping, general progress and the quality of their crops.

For the 2025 judging panel the following stood out during this year's evaluation:

- The strong participation from female-led study groups.
- Innovative strategies aimed at improving food security.
- Increasing awareness around health and safety, and hazardous product handling.
- A growing emphasis on basic recordkeeping from smallholder farmers to commercial producers.

> It is about celebrating the development and hard work of the thousands of farmers in the FDP.

It's important to keep in mind that the primary aim of this competition is not winning; it is about celebrating the development and hard work of the thousands of farmers in the FDP. It is meant to be a source of motivation and inspiration to all farmers to continuously work towards improving and reaching their goals. Your goal should never be to be nominated or to win, but to improve because that is what success is.

INTERESTING FACTS

- Duration of judging: 3 weeks
- Farmers visited: 23
- Total distance travelled: 5 887 km
  - Week 1: 1 745 km
  - Week 2: 1 039 km
  - Week 3: 3 103 km

HERE ARE THE 2025 NOMINEES

If you have been nominated for this competition, you are doing something right and setting an example for others of what can be achieved. With the support of the FDP team, all these nominees have shown growth in their farming operations. Their hard work will be acknowledged at the Day of Celebration on 1 October.

New Era Commercial Farmer of the Year

Botlhale Jacob Tshabalala (35)
Produces: Maize, sunflower and small white beans
Farm: Driehoek
Province: North West
RDM: Du Toit van der Westhuizen

Joseph Khlaleli (52)
Produces: Maize, sunflower and sugarbeans
Farm: Zandfontein
Province: Free State
RDM: Jacques Roux

Mpho Patrick Munyai (43)
Produces: Maize
Farm: Vhanyai Ranch, Vlakfontein
Province: North West
RDM: Du Toit van der Westhuizen

Simphiwe Senzeko Mabuza (30)
Produces: Maize and soybeans
Farm: Mooiplaats Farms
Province: Mpumalanga
RDM: Graeme Engelbrecht

Potential Commercial Farmer of the Year

Boy Zakew Nzimande (56)
Produces: Maize and drybeans
Farm: Sterkfontein
Province: Mpumalanga
RDM: Graeme Engelbrecht

Meet the nominees

Modinda Jabulani Matshinini (33)
Produces: Maize, sunflower and soybeans
Farm: Naudeskop
Province: Free State
RDM: Jacques Roux

Nkosana Mtimkulu (41)
Produces: Sunflower, soybeans and small white beans
Farm: Amantle
Province: North West
RDM: Du Toit van der Westhuizen

Thwala Jacob Mlungisi (44)
Produces: Maize and soybeans
Farm: Kaalvlakte
Province: KwaZulu-Natal
RDM: Graeme Engelbrecht

PERSONAL REFLECTION FROM ONE OF THE JUDGES

BEING PART OF THE JUDGING PANEL FOR THE FARMER OF THE YEAR COMPETITION WAS AN INCREDIBLY HUMBLING AND INSPIRING EXPERIENCE. WHAT STOOD OUT MOST WAS THE RESILIENCE OF FARMERS WHO OPERATE UNDER INFRASTRUCTURE CONSTRAINT CONDITIONS RANGING FROM WATER, ELECTRICITY, FENCING AND ROADS TO MARKET ACCESS.

Rural safety remained a stumbling block from stock theft to state resources that stand as vandalised white elephants yet continue to push forward with remarkable determination. I was moved by the diverse skill sets and innovative practices that farmers employed to sustain their agricultural enterprise, households and contribute meaningfully to local food security.

Particularly encouraging was the strong presence and leadership of women, especially in study groups, and the genuine willingness to learn and improve, even where resources are limited. Many households rely on the PGP Beyond Abundance (BA) programme not just for support but as a pillar of their local economy, where produce is sold and consumed locally at market-related prices.

It was also eye-opening to see that even farmers in the potential commercial or new era categories often remain non-bankable due to challenges around creditworthiness and collateral. This highlights the need for more inclusive financial models for previously disadvantaged farmers. This journey has reinforced my belief in the power of agriculture to uplift rural communities when support, knowledge, and opportunity meet farmer passion.

Mlibo Qotoyi, agricultural economist intern at Grain SA

Smallholder Farmer of the Year

Itumeleng Naphtaly Mongane (63)
Produces: Maize and sunflower
Farm: Nooitgedacht
Province: North West
RDM: Du Toit van der Westhuizen

Magolela Ali Morena (53)
Produces: Maize and beans
Farm: Syferfontein
Province: Limpopo
RDM: Jerry Mthombothi

Makhaza Johannes Masango (69)
Produces: Maize and soybeans
Farm: Brakspruit
Province: Mpumalanga
RDM: Graeme Engelbrecht

Vusumuzi Mnyandu (67)
Produces: Maize and potatoes
Farm: Plot 5 Slovo
Province: Mpumalanga
RDM: Jerry Mthombothi

Subsistence Farmer of the Year

Boyees Mrwetyana (55)
Produces: Maize
Farm: PTO
Province: Eastern Cape
RDM: Eric Wiggill

Fakazile Gebhuza (69)
Produces: Maize
Farm: PTO
Province: Eastern Cape
RDM: Eric Wiggill

2025 Farmer of...

Khabo Samaria Hlatshwayo (57)
Produces: Maize
Farm: Donkerhoek
Province: Mpumalanga
RDM: Graeme Engelbrecht

Nomsa Gogela (70)
Produces: Maize
Farm: PTO
Province: Eastern Cape
RDM: Eric Wiggill

Lindiwe Maureen Kubheka (58)
Produces: Maize
Farm: Communal land
Province: KwaZulu-Natal
RDM: Graeme Engelbrecht

Sarah Matladi (49)
Produces: Maize
Farm: Mahukubyane
Province: Mpumalanga
RDM: Jerry Mthombothi

Mkhanyiselwa Msongi Khoza (70)
Produces: Maize
Farm: Communal land
Province: KwaZulu-Natal
RDM: Graeme Engelbrecht

Sifisi Stefanus Khumalo (56)
Produces: Maize
Farm: Communal land
Province: KwaZulu-Natal
RDM: Graeme Engelbrecht

Nhleka Joseph Nxumalo (70)
Produces: Maize
Farm: Sithole
Province: KwaZulu-Natal
RDM: Graeme Engelbrecht

Viwe Nel Ntwana (45)
Produces: Maize
Farm: PTO
Province: Eastern Cape
RDM: Eric Wiggill

Ndinda Hezekia Mkhonza (69)
Produces: Maize
Farm: Hereford East
Province: Mpumalanga
RDM: Jerry Mthombothi

LOUISE KUNZ,
ASSISTANT EDITOR, PULA

WORDS OF WISDOM

Success isn't always about greatness. It's about consistency. Consistent hard work leads to success. Greatness will come.

~ DWAYNE ('THE ROCK') JOHNSON
American actor and professional wrestler

Prevent pests and rodents *in stored maize*

GRAIN THAT IS STORED IN BULK OR EVEN FOR FAMILY USE AT HOME, CAN ATTRACT INSECTS, PESTS AND OFTEN ALSO FUNGAL INFECTIONS. THIS CAN HAVE A DEVASTATING IMPACT ON THE GRAIN'S QUALITY AND VOLUME. TO STORE MAIZE SAFELY, ENSURE THAT PROPER DRYING TAKES PLACE, USING APPROPRIATE CONTAINERS AND CONTROLLING THE TEMPERATURE.

Did you know that one of the most serious yield losses in developing countries is due to post-harvest losses? Although maize can be stored for a considerable period in an unprocessed form without deteriorating, it should be stored in well-ventilated, dry areas to protect it against pests, rodents and moisture.

Mould occurs if the grain was not dry enough at harvesting, or if it is exposed to high humidity or moisture due to poor storage management. Fungal infections will cause rot and the development of aflatoxins. These mycotoxins are poisonous to livestock and can even cause serious health issues for humans. Mycotoxins are a real threat to consumers of maize products and livestock, but with the correct safety measures and efficient storage in place, it's a threat that can be managed.

GUIDELINES FOR GOOD STORAGE CONDITIONS

1. Thoroughly clean storage facilities, removing old grain, dirt and dust that could hide insects.
2. Ensure that proper storage is used. Repair any structural cracks or gaps to prevent moisture build-up and insects from creeping in.
3. Check for insects in aeration ducts and under perforated floors.
4. Use appropriate containers such as ventilated bins, silos or airtight bags to protect the product against moisture, pests and rodents. Hermetic bags are particularly effective for long-term storage, as they prevent oxygen and moisture from getting to the grain.
5. Ensure the storage facility is dry, well-ventilated and has a solid floor.
6. Store maize at less than 14% moisture content to inhibit insect reproduction.
7. Do not mix new maize with older, potentially infested grain.

8. Avoid stacking maize too high, as this can damage the bottom layers. If possible, keep bags off the ground and away from walls to prevent insect access.
9. Use insect probe traps, which can be inserted in the loose grain layer at the top. Insects entering the probe are captured at the trap's bottom.
10. Periodically check the maize for any signs of deterioration and adjust storage conditions as needed.

STEPS TO CONTROL PESTS

A comprehensive strategy is needed to control insects in stored maize effectively as 25% of all stored grain worldwide, is lost annually to damage caused by insects. This makes fumigation a necessity.

For smaller farmers, Jerry Mthombothi, regional development manager at PGP's Mbombela Office, says phostoxin tablets (which contains aluminum phosphide) can be used to prevent weevil infestation. This product can also be used to control rodents. Please remember to wear protective clothing when using any pesticides. Regularly inspect the stored maize for insects and rodents, and take steps to control any infestations.

According to Gerhard Verdoorn, operations and stewardship manager at CropLife, controlling stored grain pests is a specialised field of pest control. 'The greater the volume, the more specialised the treatment becomes. For a small-scale farmer, storing a few bags of grain for own use, it is possible to treat the bags with a deltamethrin/piperonyl butoxide spray to fend off undesired insect pests.' Just remember not to spray directly on to the product. In silos – which may house as much as 8 000 tons of grain – spray treatment is not a feasible option and fumigation is about the only viable treatment protocol to remove stored grain pests.

Implementing these strategies can significantly reduce the risk of insect infestation in your stored maize. Regular inspection of the maize and storage area is also essential.

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COMPILED BY THE PULA EDITORIAL TEAM

1 *Soil acidity is extremely detrimental to crop growth (left), while the crop growth is normal in the limed area (right).*

Analyse soil to get a better crop yield

IT IS ALREADY TIME TO START PREPARING THE FIELDS FOR THE FOLLOWING CROP SEASON. SOIL ANALYSIS IS ONE OF THE TOOLS IN THE FARMER'S 'TOOLBOX' TO MANAGE SOIL FERTILITY AND PLANT NUTRITION. IT IS THEREFORE WORTHWHILE TO TAKE A GOOD REPRESENTATIVE SOIL SAMPLE TO BE ANALYSED BY THE LABORATORY.

The first parameter in the soil analysis report is the soil's pH. This article will provide some information on soil acidity, guidelines on liming and instructions on incorporating lime into the soil.

PURPOSE OF A SOIL SAMPLE

- Soil analysis is essential for the crop farmer to determine the plant-available nutrient levels in the soil, to identify the soil acidity and deficiencies in plant nutrients.
- It is also an essential tool on which the farmer can base his liming and fertiliser programme for the crop to follow.
- It is therefore worthwhile to spend time collecting a well-representative soil sample for each field to be analysed by the laboratory.

WHAT IS SOIL ACIDITY AND WHAT CAUSES IT?

Soil acidity is one of the main crop-limiting factors worldwide. Hydrogen and aluminium cations are largely responsible for soil acidity. The pH measurement indicates the hydrogen ions (H^+) concentration in the soil solution. The pH of a neutral solution is 7.

- A pH less than 7 means that the solution is acidic.
- A pH of more than 7 indicates an alkaline pH.

The acidification of soil is both a natural and man-made phenomenon.

Natural acidification of soil

Carbon dioxide in the atmosphere dissolves in rainwater, causing the rainwater to become slightly acidic by forming carbonic acid. This carbonic acid dissolves calcium and magnesium in the soil, after which it leaches from the soil. Microbes and plant roots exude organic acids, which also leads to acidification. As plants take up calcium, magnesium and potassium from the soil, these cations are replaced by hydrogen and aluminium cations, which are acidic.

Man-induced acidification of soil

Emissions from the combustion of coal, as well as from fossil fuel combustion in engines, cause sulfuric and nitric acids to form in the atmosphere. These acids also dissolve in rainwater to form 'acid rain'. This acid rain is a major cause of soil acidification in the Eastern Highveld. The next major cause of soil acidification is nitrogen fertilising, like urea, ammonium-nitrate and ammonium sulphate.

Why is soil acidity bad for crop growth?

As the soil becomes acidic, it is stripped of basic cations such as calcium, magnesium and potassium, which are macro plant nutrients. This implies that the soil becomes infertile. Aluminium cations also 'come

2 *Aluminium cations are toxic to growing plant roots and may limit root growth substantially.*

1 *Lime recommendations according to the soil $pH_{(KCl)}$ and clay content for the top 150 mm soil.*

Clay content	Lime requirement for soil $pH_{(KCl)}$ values				
	3,7 - 3,8	3,9 - 4,0	4,1 - 4,2	4,3 - 4,4	4,5 - 4,6
(%)	Calcitic lime (t/ha)				
0 - 6	3	2	1,5	1	0,5
7 - 15	4	2,5	2	1,5	1
16 - 35	5	3	2,5	2	1
36 - 55	6	4	3	2,5	1,5
>56	7	5	3,5	3	1,5

Source: FERTASA, 2016

loose' and dissolve in the soil water, which is the medium in which plant roots grow and from which the plants take up nutrients. The aluminium cations are toxic to growing plant roots (**Photo 2**) and soil acidity may limit plant growth substantially (**Photo 1**).

Furthermore, most of the plant nutrients become less soluble as the soil pH declines, which causes the soil to become less fertile. Others, such as manganese, may become toxic. The ideal soil pH for most grain crops is slightly acidic, between a pH of 6 and 7 (measured in pure water). Laboratories commonly do the pH measurements in a potassium chloride (KCl) solution, which results in the pH being approximately one unit lower (e.g. $pH_{(water)}$ 6 approximately equals $pH_{(KCl)}$ 5).

RECTIFYING SOIL ACIDITY

Crop fields should be sampled regularly (recommended every three years). The soil acidity must be rectified through liming.

Types of lime

Limestone is the most common material used to neutralise the soil pH. Calcitic lime or dolomitic lime is commonly available and used in South Africa. The lime is mined and ground to a very fine powdery product. Other types are calcium and/or magnesium oxide, or calcium and/or magnesium hydroxide.

Sources of calcium, magnesium and sulphur

Adding lime to the soil rectifies the pH, as well as replenish calcium and magnesium as plant nutrients. Gypsum mixed with lime is also available, which provides even more calcium, but also sulphur, another macro plant nutrient.

Amount of lime required

Generally, the higher the soil's clay and humus content, the more lime is required to obtain the required pH shift. A pH shift is more easily obtained in sandy soils.

Table 1 shows the lime recommendations according to the Fertilizer Association of South Africa (FERTASA). These recommendations are sufficient to rectify the top 150 mm of the soil. When the sampling depth is 250 mm and the lime is ploughed 250 mm deep into the soil, the amount of lime must be increased accordingly. The sampling depth, lime requirement and depth of incorporation must be synchronised.

Fineness of lime

The time to complete the neutralisation reaction is directly correlated with the fineness of the lime. Very fine, powdery lime reacts much quicker than coarse particles. The powdery lime will react within a few months, given the soil is moist. The coarse particles will react over several months, even years. The fineness does not change the amount of lime needed. Even super-fine powdery lime induces the same pH shift as commercially available lime.

SPREADING OF LIME AND INCORPORATION INTO THE SOIL

- The lime applicator must be calibrated as accurately as possible.
- When spreading, the fine reactive lime does not spread wider than approximately 8 m wide. The applicator's swath width must be adjusted accordingly.
- The very fine, most reactive component of commercially available lime also easily blows away by wind during application. Therefore, liming must be done during wind-still days or wind-still nights.
- The lime left on top of the soil surface will not move into the soil by itself. The lime must therefore be incorporated and mixed with the soil.

Note: If the amount of lime was calculated for a soil depth of 250 mm, the lime must be incorporated and mixed with the top soil depth of 250 mm. The best way to mix and incorporate lime is by first discing and then ploughing. The better it is mixed with the soil, the better the reaction results will be.

CONCLUSION

Soil acidity is very common in our croplands and must be kept within the optimum limits to optimise the plant nutrition and eventually the crop yield. The importance of regular soil sampling and liming, according to the analysis results, cannot be overemphasised. Consult your local agronomist for the right amount and type of lime.

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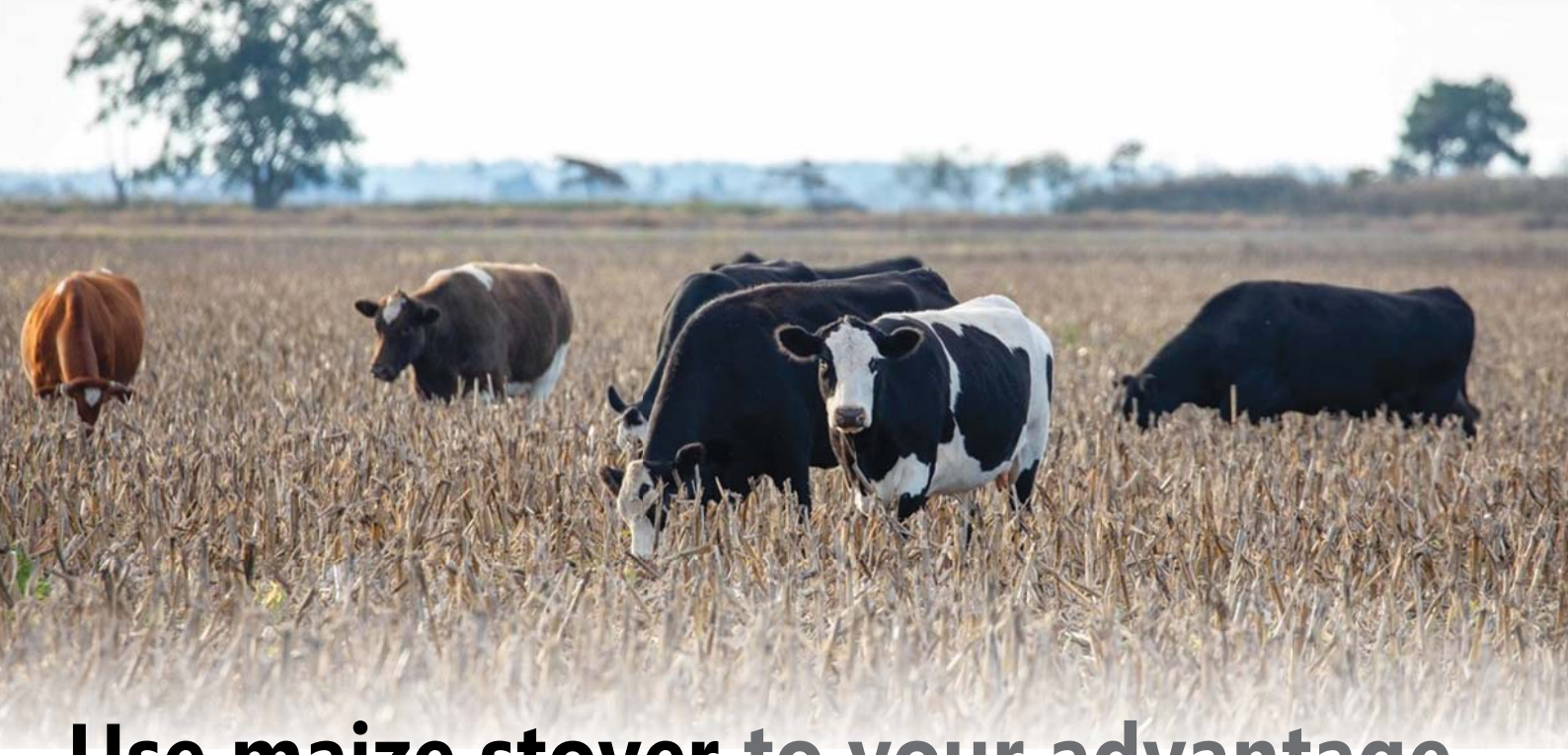
MARTIENS DU PLESSIS, SOIL SCIENTIST AND SOIL AND CROP CONSULTANT



Use maize stover to your advantage

MAIZE STOVER CONSISTS OF THE RESIDUES OF MAIZE AND INCLUDES STALKS, LEAVES, HUSKS AND COBS LEFT IN A FIELD AFTER HARVESTING. IT IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY AND MAIZE FARMERS SHOULD ALWAYS PLAN TO USE IT IN SOME WAY, OR ALTERNATIVELY TRADE IT.

By optimising the stover, a farmer is essentially increasing the benefits and profitability of his maize production cycle. With profit margins under pressure, every maize farmer must decide how best to capitalise on the stover left in the field.

Some landowners who lease land to other farmers may stipulate that they want access to the land post-harvest so they can benefit from the stover on the field. In this instance, the farmer who has leased the field must be aware of the value of the stover, and there should be some trade-off in the land rent agreement.

UTILISING THE STOVER

Grazing

The most economical way of utilising the stover is to allow your livestock to graze it off the land. Cattle and sheep can graze it efficiently, but there will be a measure of wastage because, at the same time, the cattle are trampling the stover into the field. In this instance, the cost benefit is that there is no fuel or labour spent to remove any stover off the land.

The disadvantage of having cattle on a field is that the animals will likely need to graze the fields for an extended period. Working the fields in the winter can be very beneficial for the next crop, and livestock in the fields will prevent the farmer from preparing the soil for the next season. Therefore, the farmer will have to decide on how long the livestock should be allowed to graze.

Maize stover is an excellent feed source and a fantastic way of growing your livestock through the winter months. The animals will gain condition and thrive on maize stover, compared to those that are overwintered on dry grasslands or veld. Some farmers even plan for this and will buy more animals specifically to eat the maize stover, then sell them again after a few months because of the promise of excellent weight gain from running them on maize stover.

Baling

When a landowner does not have the option of using the field for an extended period post-harvest, it is possible to bale the maize stover and remove it from the land. This involves mechanical costs as the stover must be chopped, raked and baled.

The benefit is that this method removes the maximum tonnage available from the fields. It can then be sold or mixed into feed rations for livestock or even be fed as is, with animals eating the bales in a more convenient place.

The maize stover should be harvested as soon as possible after the grain has been harvested. There will be a steady decrease in the quality of feedstock when it is left to lie on the fields longer, as the sugar and protein content decreases and fibre increases.

However, there is also a disadvantage to baling the stover that the farmer must keep in mind as he weighs up his costs and options. By removing the stover from the fields completely, the soil is left more exposed to possible wind erosion and topsoil will be blown away.

Leave it untouched

To prevent wind erosion damage, some farmers prefer to leave the stover untouched and allow it to break down and decompose on the field. The mulch and organic material can be added to the soil.

This is the approach that a no-till or minimum-till farmer would most likely take, as the idea is to mulch and build up organic material in the soil. Clearly, in this scenario, no livestock should graze on the fields. Unfortunately, this is a huge challenge for the small-scale maize farmers who are expected to allow any village livestock to graze on their lands during the winter months.

CONCLUSION

Every farmer should take time to consider his best options and decide how to capitalise on the value of maize stover. It would be wasteful not to use it.

REFERENCE

https://www.grainsa.co.za/maize-stover-is-a-valuable-commodity

ADAPTATION OF A PREVIOUS ARTICLE BY JENNY MATHEWS, MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST AND EDUCATOR

Correct lick for cattle is important

FOOD IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT FOR CATTLE IN A GOOD CONDITION. WITH GOOD PLANNING, THESE CATTLE CAN HAVE BEAUTIFUL FAT CALVES AS WELL. THE RIGHT LICK AT THE RIGHT TIME HELPS CATTLE TO PRODUCE ON THE AVAILABLE PASTURES. LICKS SHOULD NOT BE REGARDED AS A SOURCE OF FOOD, BUT AS SUPPLEMENTARY FEED.

It is winter and animals usually need hay bales for extra feed. A rule of thumb is one big round bale per head per month. This will translate into one bale for 30 heads per day. It's better to put one hay bale in a bale basket than just to place it on the ground. If you don't have bale baskets, rather roll the big bale out so that all the animals can feed simultaneously. Feed daily if you do not have bale baskets.

The protein in licks helps with the breakdown of the plant material in the animal's stomach, which is very important for animal growth. Therefore, make sure that the licks provided are absorbable and meet the nutritional needs of the livestock.

A healthy animal grows and produces – therefore, ensure that the animals' health is always at an acceptable level. Both internal and external parasites must be controlled in a timely and preferably preventive manner. Regular dung samples can contribute to determining the dosing and its effectiveness.

In **Table 1** (on page 12), an example of a lick and health management programme for the spring calving system is provided. Take this programme to your local veterinarian and local animal feed consultant to adjust it to your animals' needs. This will help to produce beautiful weaners.

PIETMAN BOTHA, INDEPENDENT AGRICULTURAL CONSULTANT

MAINTENANCE

TIPS to get ready for the next harvesting season

Remove the drain and store the drain plugs to prevent water accumulation.

After the harvest, it's important to take care of harvesting equipment. This means proper cleaning, lubricating and storing them to prevent damage. This way they will be ready for the next season's workload.

Proper care can ensure that your machinery lasts many years. Regular maintenance of your farming equipment minimises the risk of unexpected repairs, which will cost you time and money. Take the time now to prepare for the next harvesting season.

CHECKLIST FOR HARVESTING EQUIPMENT

- **Cleaning**: Thoroughly clean off any dirt or debris, both on the outside and inside, of the machine. Harvest debris can attract rodents that will chew on wires and other electrical components. Wash only the outside of the harvester and try to keep the water off bearings and other moving parts.
- **Lubrication**: Oil moving parts like bearings and grease fittings to prevent wear and ensure smooth operation.
- **Rust prevention**: Apply rust inhibitors to exposed metal parts, especially if the equipment is stored outdoors.
- **Storage**: Store equipment in a dry, sheltered location to protect it from the elements. Use covers or tarps if necessary.
- **Battery maintenance**: If applicable, disconnect and store the battery in a cool, dry place. Consider using a trickle charger to maintain battery health.

DON'T FORGET THE FOLLOWING

Inspect all components of the equipment. This includes inspection plates, concaves and sieves, bearings for corrosion, augers and conveyors, feeder house chains and elevator chains. Address any issues promptly by repairing or replacing damaged parts.

Other things on the checklist:

- Check and tighten all belts while inspecting for any cracks.
- Change oil and filters, grease all fittings and lubricate the chains.
- Make sure all lights are functioning correctly.
- Touch up scratches and worn areas with paint or rust protectors.

Remember to regularly inspect components for wear, damage or corrosion while in storage.

REFERENCES

- *https://www.grainsa.co.za/a-checklist-to-use-for-post-harvest-maintenance*
- *https://www.grainsa.co.za/machine-maintenance-can-save-you-money*

COMPILED BY LOUISE KUNZ, ASSISTANT EDITOR, PULA

Correct lick for...

1 ***Lick and health-management programme for spring calving system***

	September	October	November	December	January	
Cows		Weaner system: 1 medium-frame cow = 1,7 LSU				
Production	Calves			Serve		
Lick programme	Production lick 1 - 1,5 kg/day			Summer lick 200 g/day		
Vaccination programme	Vibriosis Rift, Valley Fever	RB51 non-pregnant cows				
Age months	1	2	3	4	5	
Month	**Sep**	**Oct**	**Nov**	**Dec**	**Jan**	
Heifers and bull calves						
Production						
Lick programme						
Vaccination programme				BM heifers	Black quarter, botulism and anthrax, Pasteurella BVD, IBR P13 (heifers)	
Age months	13	14	15	16	17	
Month	**Sep**	**Oct**	**Nov**	**Dec**	**Jan**	
Heifers 1–2 years						
Production						
Lick programme	Production lick 1,5 kg/day			Summer lick 200 g/day		
Vaccination programme		RB51				
Age months	25	26	27	28	29	
Month	**Sep**	**Oct**	**Nov**	**Dec**	**Jan**	
Heifers 2–3 years						
Production		Serve				
Lick programme	Production lick 1,5 kg/day				Summer lick	
Vaccination programme	Vibriosis	RB51				
Age months	37	38	39	40	41	
Month	**Sep**	**Oct**	**Nov**	**Dec**	**Jan**	
1st-calf cows						
Production				Serve		
Lick programme	Production lick 1,5 kg/day				Summer lick 200 g/day	
Vaccination programme	Vibriosis					

Internal parasites that occur regularly in cattle						
Month	**Sep**	**Oct**	**Nov**	**Dec**	**Jan**	
Roundworms		All animals; note the young animals in particular				
Liver fluke	Strategic treatment: All animals			Strategic treatment: All animals		
Conical fluke						
Tapeworm and coccidia	Tapeworm: Whole year suckling calves					

	February	March	April	May	June	July	August
		Steer system (18 months): 1 medium-frame cow = 2,2 LSU					
		Pregnancy	Weaning	Selling old and non-pregnant cows			
				Winter lick 700 g/day			
		Multimin with Se	Pasteurella, BVD	Black quarter, Botulism, Anthrax	Vit ADE	Rift Valley fever	Lumpy skin, Ecoli
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Feb	**Mar**	**Apr**	**May**	**Jun**	**Jul**	**Aug**
			Sell weaners and bull calves				
			Production lick 0,5 - 1 kg/day				
	Black quarter, botulism and anthrax, Pasteurella BVD, IBR P13 (heifers)	Multimin with Se		RB51 2nd vaccination heifers	Vit ADE	Rift Valley fever	Vibriosis, BM heifers, lumpy skin disease
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
	Feb	**Mar**	**Apr**	**May**	**Jun**	**Jul**	**Aug**
			Production lick 1 kg/day				
		Multimin with Se		Blackleg, botulism and anthrax	Vit ADE	Rift Valley fever	Lumpy skin, Pasteurella, BVD IBR P13
	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
	Feb	**Mar**	**Apr**	**May**	**Jun**	**Jul**	**Aug**
		Pregnancy				Calves	
200 g/day			Winter lick 700 g/day		Production lick 1,5 kg/day		
		Multimin with Se		Blackleg, botulism and anthrax	Vit ADE	Rift Valley fever	Lumpy skin, Pasteurella, BVD IBR P13
	42	43	44	45	46	47	48
	Feb	**Mar**	**Apr**	**May**	**Jun**	**Jul**	**Aug**
		Pregnancy	Weaning				
			Winter lick 700 g/day		Production lick 1,5 kg/day		
	RB51	Multimin with Se		Blackleg, botulism and anthrax	Vit ADE	Rift Valley fever	Lumpy skin, Pasteurella, BVD IBR P13
	Feb	**Mar**	**Apr**	**May**	**Jun**	**Jul**	**Aug**
			Strategic treatment: All animals				Strategic treatment: All animals
			Look out for conical fluke in these months in particular				
	Coccidia: Whole year young calves (3 weeks+)						

NAMPO stimulates collaboration in agriculture

IF YOU VISITED THE 57TH NAMPO HARVEST DAY BETWEEN 13 AND 16 MAY, YOU ARE ONE OF THE 87 191 VISITORS WHO PASSED THROUGH THE GATES AT NAMPO PARK. NAMPO 2025 ONCE AGAIN PROVED TO BE ONE FOR THE RECORD BOOKS, WITH MORE THAN 900 EXHIBITORS.

With air traffic totalling 377 aeroplanes and 69 helicopters, predominantly from the business sector, the sky above NAMPO was as busy as the ground below – a clear symbol of the reach, relevance and reputation this event has built over decades.

This event is a significant convergence point for the grain sector and the broader agricultural value chain, as well as a critical engagement platform to explore solutions and discussions for the agricultural industry. Various exhibitors use the NAMPO Harvest Day as a platform to launch new products and innovations for the agricultural industry.

The theme for this year, 'Global agriculture, locally!', resonated throughout NAMPO Park as global ag-tech met local grit. International exhibitors from the United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK), Turkey, Argentina and Brazil, together with numerous foreign visitors, joined South African innovators in bringing global agriculture local.

MORE THAN AN AGRICULTURAL SHOW

'Despite the current harvesting pressures facing farmers, where wet conditions during harvesting delayed the harvest time, the show was a resounding success. The general mood among farmers was upbeat, and exhibitors have expressed satisfaction with the quality of business done. The strong presence of young people also reinforces that agriculture in South Africa has a future,' said Danie Minnaar, chairperson of Grain SA's Harvest Day Committee.

'NAMPO is not just Grain SA's flagship event – it is proudly owned by our members, 7 670 commercial and 6 073 developing farmers, and driven by Grain SA's commitment to farmer profitability and food security. It's a space for practical engagement, driven by the needs of farmers,' said Richard Krige, chairperson of Grain SA. 'NAMPO's purpose remains clear: It's a neutral, apolitical platform that promotes knowledge sharing, innovation and critical dialogue to advance the entire sector – from soil to silo.'

> The strong presence of young people also reinforces that agriculture in South Africa has a future.

NAMPO's core strength remained visible in the thousands of conversations happening every hour – between farmers comparing cultivars, researchers explaining trial results, and service providers demonstrating innovations designed to improve yields and sustainability.

'What makes NAMPO irreplaceable, is the sound of farmers debating harvester specs or swapping notes on input cost strategies. NAMPO is where farmers discuss strategies to have access to the best seed technologies, where they inspect harvester models and where solutions are sought for input cost hikes, infrastructure bottlenecks

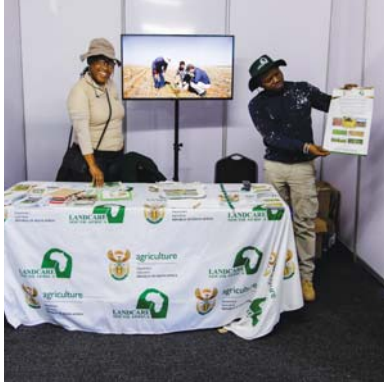
The minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, with some Grain SA members.

Vice chairperson, Jeremiah Matebula, being driven around NAMPO Park by one of the Santam drivers who were on duty during NAMPO.

Deputy President Paul Mashatile wearing his NAMPO cap.

President Cyril Ramaphosa visited NAMPO as a farmer – but the crowd were still keen to capture the moment.

An aerial view of NAMPO Park, near Bothaville.



The Department of Agriculture was there too.

The Mzansi Youth Choir performed a heartfelt song during the John Deere media briefing.

Young and older farming enthusiasts enjoyed their visit to NAMPO.

and new technology,' said Dr Tobias Doyer, chief executive officer of Grain SA, affirming that these conversations are the heartbeat of NAMPO.

Doyer also said that NAMPO's success lies in the platform it provides, where farmers, researchers, agribusinesses and technology providers come together to exchange knowledge, showcase innovation and prepare for the challenges of the coming season.

> NAMPO's purpose remains clear: It's a neutral, apolitical platform that promotes knowledge sharing, innovation and critical dialogue to advance the entire sector - from soil to silo.

VIP VISITORS

NAMPO 2025 will undoubtedly be remembered not only for its commercial success but also for the unprecedented political attention it received. Over the course of the week, the show was attended by a series of cabinet-level visitors, including President Cyril Ramaphosa, Deputy President Paul Mashatile, several ministers – among them John Steenhuisen (Agriculture) and Dean Macpherson (Public Works and Infrastructure) – as well as five provincial MECs and various other political parties' leadership. These visits, some formally arranged and others in a personal capacity, underscore renewed national interest in the agricultural sector.

President Cyril Ramaphosa attended the event in his personal capacity as a farmer to conduct business and engage with exhibitors on the latest agricultural technologies and innovations. However, the official government delegation, led by Deputy President Paul Mashatile, made headlines for a more strategic reason: A renewed national dialogue about agriculture's central role in the economy.

The agricultural sector raised several critical issues during these engagements:

- Persistent rural safety concerns.
- Lack of infrastructure maintenance and investment.
- Delayed regulatory approvals for crop protection and seed technologies.
- The urgent need for land tenure security and title deeds.
- Greater investment in mechanisation and digital access.

The deputy president acknowledged these concerns and responded with strong support. 'Agriculture is the backbone of South Africa's economy,' he said, affirming that food security is a social priority and a national economic imperative. 'We are not pursuing land grabs. Our focus is on productive land use, inclusivity and transformation supporting growth.'

He further pledged that rural safety would receive focussed attention through a new task team under discussion between the government and organised agriculture – a development welcomed by Grain SA. The opening of new markets through bilateral discussions is also highlighted as a priority.

If you missed NAMPO 2025, put the dates for 2026 in your diary as soon as possible: 12 to 15 May. ■

GRAIN SA PRESS RELEASE, 19 MAY 2025

New service creates platform to fight stock theft

GRAIN AND OILSEED FARMERS WITH A LIVESTOCK COMPONENT CAN NOW REPORT INFORMATION ABOUT LIVESTOCK THEFT TO A CENTRALISED DATABASE VIA WHATSAPP. THIS SYSTEM DOES NOT REPLACE AN OFFICIAL LIVESTOCK THEFT CASE WITH THE SAPS BUT IS AN ADDITIONAL TOOL FOR COMPILING TREND AND THREAT ANALYSES.

According to a press release on the National Red Meat Producers Organisation (RPO) website, the system aims to make the required reports and information available to the national and provincial stock theft prevention forums (STPs). In this way, the police is involved and assisted by making information available through liaison on officially recognised forums.

This system allows for the capture of reports without a MAS number to identify information underreporting and the possible reasons for it. Furthermore, the database makes it easy to retrieve information through a reference number provided.

The service is provided on behalf of the National RPO and the National Livestock Theft Prevention Forum (NSTPF), in collaboration with Agri Ops. All information is captured and stored on the Earth Ranger platform and is treated confidentially and in accordance with POPIA provisions.

HOW TO REPORT THEFT OF LIVESTOCK

The following information is required to report an incident:

1. **NAME AND CONTACT NUMBERS** are required for a data capturer to contact you if more or missing information is required. It is also needed to provide you with the ER reference number.
2. **PROVINCE:** To compile provincial reports.
3. **DISTRICT:** For the compilation of municipal district reports.
4. **POLICE STATION:** To compile reports per police station to present at monthly rural safety meetings and to compare statistics with official police stock theft statistics.
5. **THE TYPE OF INCIDENT** that occurred. The following cases can be reported:
   - Livestock theft
   - Illegal hunting with dogs
   - Traps
   - Roaming animals
   - Poaching
   - Trespassing
   - Attempt of stock theft
   - Violation(s) of the *Fencing Act*
   - Livestock theft arrests
   - Theft of wool and mohair

Please note that steps 1 to 5 are compulsory, while steps 6 to 8 are voluntary but preferred.

6. **Where did the incident occur?** For example, a pin drop.
7. **How did the incident occur?** Any additional information, like vehicle involvement, evidence at the scene or footprints.
8. **Additional information:** Include photographs of the scene or any other details.

Messages can be sent 24/7 to the following WhatsApp number: **071 515 2011**. Reports will be captured from Monday to Friday between 08:00 and 16:00.

Source: Red Meat Producers' website: rpo.co.za

SA GRAAN/GRAIN EDITORIAL TEAM.
FIRST PUBLISHED IN SA GRAAN/GRAIN, MAY 2025.

Corner Post

BY LOUISE KUNZ, ASSISTANT EDITOR

FOR MANDLA ENOS NKOSI (53), BECOMING A FARMER WAS A SLOW PROCESS. THIS 2024 SMALLHOLDER FARMER OF THE YEAR FINALIST STARTED DREAMING OF BECOMING A FARMER WHEN HE WAS STILL A YOUNG BOY. WHEN HIS DREAM EVENTUALLY BECAME A REALITY, HE STARTED GROWING HIS FARM GRADUALLY, ONE STEP AT A TIME.

Mandla's passion for farming was ignited as a young boy, helping the adults tend to the livestock at Langgewacht farm, where he was raised. He even helped with the fencing and other duties. After school, he started working on the farm, driving tractors, planting and learning more about the farming business. Mandla was the supervisor on the farm until he left the Nkululeko community farm.

In 1994, he opened a tuck shop. As the profits grew and his income increased, he was able to buy a Combi to transport children to school and make deliveries when someone needed transport. In 2014, Mandla got a transport contract from Tindal Mine to transport coal, which was the breakthrough he needed to bring him one step closer to his dream.

He purchased a tractor, which he used to plough for other farmers. He invested the money into his dream and bought farming equipment with his profits. When he decided to start planting, he didn't rush the process but grew gradually – from 1 ha until he eventually reached the 50 ha bracket. Every time he was successful, he would aim a bit higher – and the profit he made was invested into the farm.

Although he would love to own his own land one day, he keeps his eyes and ears open to find more land to grow his farming business. His farming dream is to remain productive and provide for his family and the community. 'I want to keep on growing every year and to keep on being a positive farmer, who is helping to ensure food security.'

This dedicated farmer proves that a dream doesn't become a reality through magic – it takes sweat, determination and hard work.

A FINALIST'S THREE TIPS FOR FELLOW FARMERS:

- If you do not correct your soil, you do not have a fighting chance for a good yield.
- Make sure you apply enough fertiliser for the tonnage you want.
- Buy high-quality seed and make sure the seed is adapted to your area.

MANDLA'S STORY

WHAT HAS HELPED YOU BECOME SUCCESSFUL?

By watching and asking. I have never been afraid to ask for advice, and I look at what other farmers (including commercial farmers) are doing and learn from them. I also formed a strong relationship with a fellow farmer who offered a lot of advice. I am also extremely grateful for PGP's input, training and mentorship.

HOW DO YOU KEEP GOING WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH?

It's just in my blood. As a Zulu man, you just feel it in your blood once summer arrives – summer means it is time to plant. I am also motivated by the neighbouring farmers. If they can get up after drought or hail damage and plant again, I have to as well. We need to plant because people need to eat.

HOW CAN WE MOTIVATE THE YOUTH TO BECOME INTERESTED IN FARMING?

We should invite them to come and look at what happens on a farm. I want to show them that hard work is rewarded. Get them involved and give them some responsibility on the farm. This will help them see whether they have a love for farming, or it will totally put them off farming. They first have to 'do farming' before they can begin farming.

FARM FACTS

Farm: Nkululeko Farm, communal land
Nearest town: Piet Retief
Region: Mpumalanga
Type of farming operation: Mixed – plants soybeans and maize, and owns cattle, goats and chickens

PGP'S CONTRIBUTION

- Joined PGP in 2021
- Siyacathula Study Group

Training courses completed:
- Farm management for profits

A mentor's view:
According to Timon Filter, mentor and trainer at the Louwsburg regional office, Mandla's commitment has helped him become a successful farmer. 'He knows how to plant and look after his crop and land, which makes him successful. His contentment defines his success for me. He really wants his own land one day, but for now, he knows that his farming operation is helping his family and community.'

Timon Filter

A programme that is changing lives




Empowerment leads to optimal yields

THE PHAHAMA GRAIN PHAKAMA (PGP) FARMER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (FDP) IS A COMPREHENSIVE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE FOCUSSED ON SUPPORTING GRAIN FARMERS IN SOUTH AFRICA, FROM SUBSISTENCE TO COMMERCIAL LEVELS. IT AIMS TO EMPOWER FARMERS WITH THE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND RESOURCES THEY NEED TO PRODUCE GRAIN PROFITABLY AND SUSTAINABLY, ENSURING OPTIMAL YIELDS.

Grain SA and PGP have been dedicated to the sustainable development of farmers from subsistence to commercialisation since the early 2000s. The team's primary aim is to assist active grain farmers in growing grain profitably, using the best available technologies and practices for sustainability. The programme offers a tailored roadmap for each farmer, providing up-to-date information through various channels such as farm visits, study groups, training sessions and the monthly edition of the Pula magazine.

METHODS AND STRATEGIES

Key development activities that take place regularly are:

- Study group meetings, where small groups of farmers in one region get together and have access to information and expert advice from PGP. A local chairperson coordinates these meetings, which are a wonderful opportunity for farmers to engage with other farmers.
- Mentorship with regular farm visits to advanced farmers, where one-to-one mentoring occurs.
- Training courses that are specifically tailored for skills development. These courses balance theory with a practical hands-on approach.
- Region-appropriate demonstration trials.
- Farmers' days are organised to bring farmers to see trial plots and learn from experts from the wider agricultural industry.

MONTHLY FOCUS ON FARM VISITS

During the 42 farm visits that occurred between 7 April and 9 May, crop inspections and yield estimations were conducted to ensure that the marketing of crops was done correctly and on time. Apart from two farm visits in the Lichtenburg region, farmers in these regions also benefitted from the team's visits.

- **Dundee**

  Nine visits to six different farmers, which included these visits by mentor Paul Wiggill:

During a visit to farmer Philani Khoza, the progress of the crops were assessed. Philani had the opportunity to ask questions about contracts and where to take his produce after harvesting.

Farmer TR Shelembe was advised to repair his roads to ensure that the combine could reach his lands without getting stuck. Mentor Paul Wiggill also instructed him to mow the weeds on the edges of the lands before harvesting.

- **Free State**

  In the Free State, eleven farmers benefitted from the team's expertise through 18 farm visits.

For farmer Jabu Matshinini, the challenges in agriculture became a reality this season. Due to the high rainfall in the area, his sunflower plants were falling, which caused a huge loss. The constant rain also caused the soybean crop to dry off much slower, but it could be a record yield if the rains subside and the crop can be harvested.

When Jacques Roux went to check on farmer Jabu on 23 April, he had to turn back as the farm was inaccessible due to flooding.

- **Louwsburg**

  Six farmers in the Louwsburg area received farm visits, making it a total of 13 visits in this region.

Mentor Chris de Jager found some leaves of the maize crop showing nutritional deficiencies. Chris showed Andile and his workers how to take soil samples to correct the soil fertility.

Timon Filter, mentor in the Louwsburg region, visited farmer Mlotshwa Mfanimpela to ensure their timing was right to harvest his maize. A crop estimate showed that the farmer can expect about 6,3 t/ha.

Learning from others at group sessions

IN the same period, the team also visited 55 study groups. These meetings offer smaller farmers a wonderful opportunity to share their farming joys and frustrations and increase their knowledge. Ten study group visits were done in Mthatha and seven in Mbombela. Here are some moments captured during some of the other group visits.

- **Dundee (12 study group visits)**

The important role of study groups, which is sharing information, was clear at the Emmaus Study Group meeting. Farmers shared information about the safe storage and preservation of crops, and suitable local marketing options.

Due to bad weather conditions, only a few farmers attended the Donkerhoek Study Group meeting. Many of the farmers would appreciate field visits. They also discussed the effect of the high rainfall on their maize crop.

- **Maclear (9 study group visits)**

Mentor Johan Nel visited the Hlankomo Study Group, where he gave training on measurements and the use of pre-emergence chemicals.

- **Kokstad (17 study group visits)**

After the Ntunjini Study Group meeting, farmer Fakazile Gebhuza was visited. She is a nominee in the Subsistence Farmer of the Year category and was busy harvesting her maize. Some of the cobs were spoiled by the high rainfall. The farmer was advised to remove these cobs from the good ones and to ensure that the maize gets enough sun to dry.

Happy farmers from the Ntunjini Study Group who received their inputs early.

At the Siyeza ePuka Agri Study Group, Phumzile Ngcobo (right), assistant regional manager, presented a session on marketing and storage.

CALLING ALL BA FARMERS

JUST a reminder that Phahama Grain Phakama bank accounts are open for the BA deposits for the 2025/2026 planting season. Study group visits are taking place between April and July to finalise the farmer numbers.

The closing date for the BA Programme is 31 July 2025. To participate in the BA programme, you must be part of a study group and have paid your Grain SA membership fees.

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