

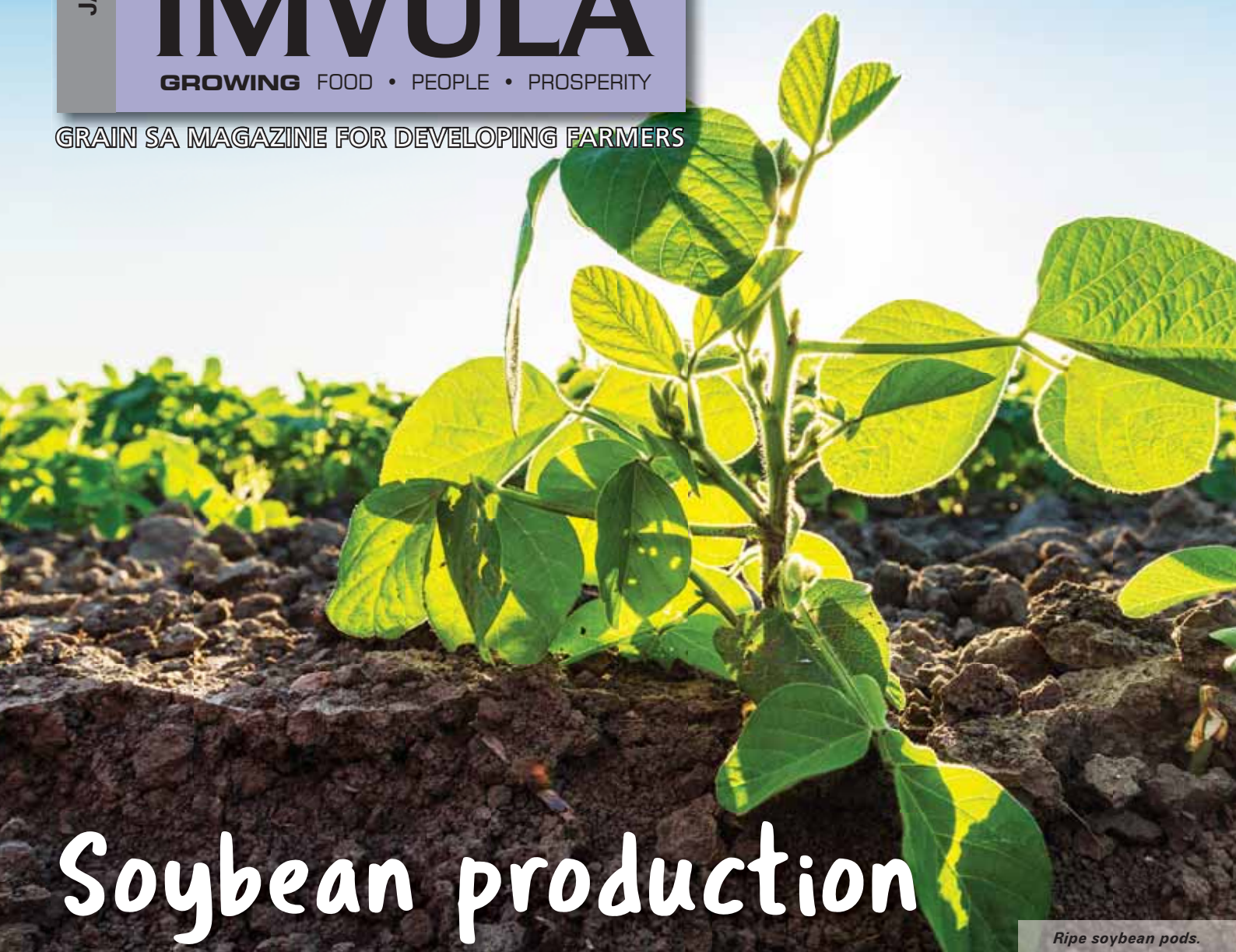
JANUARY 2023

PULA IMVULA

GROWING FOOD • PEOPLE • PROSPERITY



GRAIN SA MAGAZINE FOR DEVELOPING FARMERS



Ripe soybean pods.

Soybean production is a good alternative

SOYBEAN PRODUCTION HAS ONLY COME TO THE FORE IN THE LAST DECADE. PRODUCTION INCREASED FROM SLIGHTLY OVER 500 000 TON PER YEAR IN 2012 TO MORE OR LESS 2 MILLION TONS IN 2022. IT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO SPREAD THE RISK OF CROP FAILURE. IT CREATES AGRO-NOMIC ADVANTAGES AND CAN ALSO EARN A FARMER A GOOD INCOME.

South Africa's dryland crop production in the summer rainfall area is dominated by maize production. There is little doubt that maize as anchor crop serves our country well by supplying food and feed for humans, animals and as raw material for the industry. Production

practices for maize is well known, thus the relative stability in yield.

Soybean production is worth considering as an alternative for maize on a part of the farm. Add to this the 'kick-up' effect of maize yields planted after soybeans in a crop rotation system. In most cases, the maize yield will increase with 10% or more if it is planted after soybeans. Price differentials may also favour soybean cultivation. Also consider the fact that almost no nitrogen (N) fertiliser is needed. Soils and a climate that favour maize production, will in most cases be the same for soybeans.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER

The following factors should be taken into account before planting soybeans:

Soybean production is a...

Soil requirements

- Start with your soil. Soybeans will thrive in deep soils with a pH of about six. Fortunately it will tolerate lower pH values, even better than maize.
- Phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) levels of 20 parts per million (ppm) and 100 ppm (depending on the soil and extraction method) are ideal, but once again soybeans are adaptable to grow under lower levels.
- Consider any weeds in the field as your enemy and remove it. Ensure that the herbicide used on a previous crop will not damage soybeans.
- Make sure that your crop field is reasonably level, as soybeans should not be planted deeper than 5 cm at 250 000 to 300 000 plants per hectare.
- Row spacing depends on the implements used, but narrow rows (less than 90 cm) normally yield more in normal years.

Cultivar selection

- A vast range of soybean cultivars is available. To select the right one for your area, make use of information available from the Agricultural Research Council's (ARC's) *Soybean Cultivar Recommendations*, seed companies and the adviser in your area.
- Make sure that the maturity group of the cultivar you consider fits into the area where you plant the crops.
- If possible, plant more than one cultivar with different growing periods – this will lengthen the harvesting period. Never mix seed – plant different cultivars in separate fields.
- The planting date will also influence your cultivar choice. Consider these planting date guidelines:

- Cool areas: End of October until end of November.
- Moderate areas: November until beginning of December.
- Hot areas: Middle November until end of December, where frost is not expected early in the autumn.

Inoculation of seed

This is by far the most important operation for the successful cultivation of soybeans. Take note that a farmer can save more than 60 kg of N for every ton of soybeans produced if inoculation is done properly.

Biological nitrogen fixation (BNF) is only possible with successful inoculation with *Rhizobium*-bacteria. This process started with the mixing of the right *Rhizobium* strain with soybean seed and if possible, also *Rhizobium* in suspension in the planting furrow. Seed should be moistened with a wetting agent.

Handle the inoculant with care, store in a cool place and keep it out of direct sunlight during mixing. Successful BNF will ensure enough N for a good crop.

The planting of soybeans should be done as soon as the mixing of the seed is done. Never leave the inoculated seed for the next day, except where the inoculum is pre-treated to allow for longer retention periods. Make sure you follow the instructions.

All other nutrients should be applied as needed. Molybdenum is essential for effective N-fixation. Therefore, it should be applied as a micronutrient.

Keep in mind that soybeans require 6 kg to 9 kg P and more than 20 kg of K per ton of grain. Sulphur (S) may also be in short supply. At least 2 kg of S is removed for every ton of grain produced. A soil analysis will give a good guideline for a fertiliser recommendation.



Planting date

Irrespective of other considerations, never plant in dry soil. Soybeans take up 50% of its seed weight before germination, but for maize it's only half this amount.

Weather conditions will be the driving force, but where possible, early planting with the right cultivar will yield the best. *Sclerotinia* stalk rot is also more prevalent with late plantings, especially when it's cold and wet during flowering.

Avoid crust formation in the first week after planting. Keep the crop fields free of weeds, pests and diseases as far as possible.

Like maize, soybeans are also more sensitive to adverse conditions during the reproductive stage. Fortunately soybeans stay longer at this stage, thus it could cope with such conditions a little longer than maize. The crop can also cope better with waterlogged conditions than maize.

Harvesting

The last crucial part of the soybean production process is harvesting. If the fields are too big for hand harvesting, a combine is needed. Make sure that you have access to such a machine at harvest time. Soybeans will shatter after the R8 stage, when 95% of the pods turn brown. ■



**DR JAN DREYER, AGRONOMIST,
PROTEIN RESEARCH FOUNDATION**



A WORD FROM...

Derek Mathews

FARMERS, I TRUST THAT YOU ALL HAD A BLESSED PLANTING SEASON AND THAT THE CROP IS GROWING TO ITS FULL POTENTIAL. ONE THING THAT I HAVE LEARNED IN MY CAREER, FARMING FOR ALMOST 40 YEARS, IS THAT EVERY YEAR HAS ITS OWN CHALLENGES. IT'S NEVER THE SAME AND IT'S NEVER EASY.

As I write this note I think of how we as farmers equip ourselves to face the continuous challenges. Also how can and does Grain SA play a role in equipping and assisting us to face these challenges how big or small they might be.

One thing that I am very passionate about is driving hard to assist our farmers in being independent of funding from external sources and projects. If our projects don't have an aim to make farmers independent but rather encourage them to wait for a grant, I think we are doing the farmers an injustice.

We as farmers need to take ownership of our own businesses and build and grow them ourselves. Yes, we might need a hand sometimes. We can however not always rely on that hand from someone else – because then it will always be their business or the business that they built and not our own.

So what can Grain SA do to assist us to grow into sustainable farmers?

- Firstly we need to fight for and ensure sustainable profitability for the grain industry. This will mean there is an opportunity for us as farmers to make some money and grow our businesses.
- Next we need to hear the needs of our farmers who might need a hand to get on a growth path and facilitate and support the projects that can do this for our farmers.

As I see it, this is the best way Grain SA can stand by you in your journey to grow into an independent businessman or woman who can be proud of your achievements and enjoy the fruits of your labour.

I wish you well on your journey!

– **Derek Mathews is the Chairperson of Grain SA.** ■

A celebration of *gratitude* for *top* grain farmers

THE 2022 GRAIN SA GRAIN PRODUCER OF THE YEAR AWARDS EVENT WAS HELD ON 21 OCTOBER IN BOKSBURG. IT WAS A GLAMOROUS EVENT, WHERE WELL-DESERVED RECOGNITION WAS GIVEN TO ROLE-PLAYERS WHO ARE DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY INVOLVED IN ENSURING THAT GRAIN PRODUCTION IN SOUTH AFRICA REMAINS SUSTAINABLE.

21ST WINNER

The vice-chairman of Grain SA, Richard Krige, welcomed the guests to the event, where the title of Grain Producer of the Year was awarded for the 21st time. This special award went to André Brink from Durbanville in the Western Cape, who is an extremely effective South African grain producer. He is not only a true role model in his community but has also mastered the art of promoting profitable and sustainable grain production.

Upon receiving the award, André summed up the theme of the grand event, 'A celebration in gratitude', perfectly when he said: 'It is events like this that become a mirror image of agriculture in South Africa. We celebrate the pleasure of still being able to farm and are grateful for an organisation like Grain SA that takes hands with us.' The other two finalists in this category, Gideon Koegelenberg from Makwassie and JP Meintjes from Viljoenskroon, were also honoured for their contribution to agriculture during the event.

Derek Mathews, chairman of Grain SA, congratulated the finalists and said: 'I am incredibly proud of the producers in South Africa.'



Producers and the wider grain family attended a celebration in gratitude to honour Grain SA's top producers at the Birchwood Hotel in Boksburg.



Grain SA Vice-chairperson Jeremia Mathebula and his wife, Thandi, were among the guests.



The teams from Grain SA and Syngenta who make the award evening possible, with the winners. In the front are Joseph Mokaleng, Khuphukile Mazibuko and Flip Manoto. At the back from left to right: Derek Mathews, Bheki Mabuza, André Brink, Dr Pieter Taljaard and Antonie Delpont.



TV presenter and broadcaster, Rozanne McKenzie, was the master of ceremonies and ensured that the programme ran smoothly.

Photos by Helenus Kruger and Lizel Snyman.



Mapidianye Phillip (Flip) Manoto from Lichtenburg in North West, the Grain SA/Absa/John Deere Financial New Era Commercial Farmer of the Year (250 t plus).



Bheki Isaac Mabuza from Lydenburg, Mpumalanga, the Grain SA Potential Commercial Farmer of the Year (35 ha to 250 t).



Joseph Tuelo Mokaleng from Delareyville in North West, the Grain SA/Standard Bank Smallholder Farmer of the Year (3 ha to 35 ha).



Khuphukile Mazibuko from Estcourt in KwaZulu-Natal, the Grain SA/Absa/John Deere Financial Subsistence Farmer of the Year (0 ha to 3 ha).

DAY OF CELEBRATION FLASHBACK

Bheki Mabuza with **Nico Vermaak**, Grain SA's company secretariat lead.



Guests enjoy the sunshine and great conversation.



Grain SA executive member, **Ramoso Pholo**, with **Thomas Sibiya**, also an executive member.

Some guests were dressed in traditional attire.

Those producers can dig deep, even in difficult times – we honour them today for their leadership and inspiration.'

Antonie Delpont, managing director of Syngenta, the main sponsor of the evening, said in his keynote speech that agriculture should be celebrated more often. 'We are inspired by the world's producers, who feed a growing world population, contribute to reducing poverty and manage natural resources. Agriculture needs partnerships for specific, well-focused projects and programmes,' he added. 'As we all have to eat, we celebrate agriculture and the contribution it makes in communities – not just in South Africa, but around the world.'

Dr Pieter Taljaard, chief executive officer of Grain SA, summed up the evening by saying that agriculture in South Africa has beautiful stories to tell. According to him, the stories of outstanding producers such as those celebrated during the awards event are an example of what agriculture can and has already achieved. The awards event was truly a celebration in gratitude.

DEVELOPING FARMER WINNERS HONOURED ONCE AGAIN

Another highlight of the ceremony was the introduction of the category winners in each section of Grain SA's Farmer Development programme. These winners were announced at the Day of Celebration in September, an occasion where Grain SA gives acknowledgement to all farmers for the hard work they put in throughout the year. ■

**VALERIE CILLIERS, EDITOR,
SA GRAAN/GRAIN**



Plan ahead for the PLANTING SEASON

JANUARY IS THE MOST IMPORTANT MONTH FOR FARMERS. ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT PLANTING TIME YET, FARMERS MUST START PLANNING AHEAD. THEY HAVE TO MAKE DECISIONS LIKE WHAT TO PLANT AND WHAT TO BUY FOR THE NEXT PRODUCTION YEAR.

Like most businessmen, farmers must manage their tax obligations. In most cases the tax year will end at the end of February. So you need to calculate your profit situation in January. If a profit is declared to the South African Revenue Service (SARS), tax needs to be paid – but farmers can manage their profit situation by buying inputs.

If a profit is expected, a farmer could buy inputs. The question is which inputs to buy. This depends on what will be planted. It means that farmers should be a step ahead in the planning process to decide what to buy.

PROFITABILITY

It is important for a farmer to calculate the expected profitability of the different crops he can plant. The way this is done, is actually simple. For every crop, ask advice from the representatives of the different input suppliers and get a recommendation for the different crops that you can plant.

For example, this would mean that the Pannar representative will tell you what cultivar and what plant population to plant on your farm. This information and cost will be the seed cost. This information is needed for every crop that can be planted on your farm.

FERTILISER

For fertiliser, the Omnia representative as an example will make use of your previous soil sample information, the current crop and yield on the fields, as well as the soil potential maps to determine the expected yield and calculate the fertiliser that will be needed. With this information, the cost of fertiliser and lime can be calculated.

The Fertilizer Association of Southern Africa (Fertasa) publishes the fertiliser withdrawal figures per crop on a regular basis. In **Table 1** the plant nutrients withdrawal figures of maize at different yields for planning are shown. The plant nutrients requirements (kg/ha) for sunflower planted on a sandy loam soil type, with a 15% to 20% clay percentage, is shown in **Table 2**. The same information is available for all the other crops.

WEED CONTROL

Weed control can also be predicted. It is now the ideal time to go through your fields with your chemical representative. This is very important because you can evaluate your weed control and pesticide programme applied, and the representative can help make adjustments to your next programmes. This representative will supply you with a new programme and cost for the new season.

If you are a clever farmer, you will arrange that all the representatives and their agronomists will be on your farm simultaneously. Ask their honest opinion and recommendations per crop about your production in order to reach your long-term goals.

Implement these recommendations and you will reap the fruit.



DIESEL AND MAINTENANCE COSTS

The diesel and repair work can also be fairly accurately calculated. As a rule of thumb for conventional production practices, 75 litres of diesel will be used per hectare. If farmers have their own diesel consumption figures, they can use it. Use the current fuel price and you will be close to the actual cost.

There is always a relation between the diesel cost and the repair and maintenance cost. If farmers use their fuel cost and add an extra 10%, it will be close to their repairs and maintenance cost needed. Other costs such as hedging, contract work insurance and additional costs must also be included.

CALCULATE THE INCOME

Now that you have most of the costs, the fixed cost and income must still be supplied. The fixed cost is very important. This is the cost that you need to pay every month, such as the payment on your vehicle,

1 Plant nutrients withdrawal figures of maize at different yields for planning.

Plant nutrients	Per ton	Per 4 ton	Per 6 ton
Nitrogen (N)	15 kg	60 kg	90 kg
Phosphorus (P)	3 kg	12 kg	18 kg
Potassium (K)	4 kg	16 kg	24 kg

2 Plant nutrients requirements (kg/ha) to produce sunflower at different yields for planning.

Plant nutrients	Per ton	Per 1,5 ton	Per 2,5 ton
Nitrogen (N)	10 kg	20 kg	60 kg
Phosphorus (P) 15-20 mg/kg (Bray)	7 - 9 kg	10 - 12 kg	16 - 21 kg
Potassium (K) 60 mg/kg	7 kg	10 kg	18 kg

Detail gross margin planning for white maize for the production year 2020/2021.				
Expected income				
Crop	Yield	Net price	Income/ha	Total crop income
A: Total expected income				
Direct allocatable variable costs	Application/ha	Price/unit	Cost/ha	Total crop cost
Seed				
Fertiliser				
Lime				
Herbicides				
Pre-planting:				
With plant:				
After germination:				
Pesticides				
Fuel				
Repairs				
Input insurance				
Grain price hedging				
Contract work				
Crop insurance (hail, fire, theft)				
Aerial spraying				
Casual labour				
Drying cost				
Packaging and packaging material				
Production credit				
B: Total allocatable variable costs				
C: Total overhead costs			Cost/ha	Total crop cost
D: Total cost/ha (B + C)				
Margin/ha (A - D)				

for workers, the telephone bill, airtime insurance and living costs – remember to divide the fixed cost between the livestock and the grains produced. Your fixed cost can be calculated from your financial statements. Add at least 10% on this cost for the next production year.

To calculate the income, use the expected yield as determined by the agronomist and calculate it with the crop price on Safex, deducting the transport differential and the handling cost at the silo. This will give you an indication what to plant.

Draw up a table for every crop (see **Table 3**) and you will have the different crop budgets to compare and make a final decision on what to plant and buy.

Table 3 is a summary of the most direct allocatable costs. Farmers can use this as an example to calculate, for example, their total maize cost and maize gross margin. Do the same calculations for every crop. Remember, if the margin is negative, it is most unlikely

that the crop will be profitable. Restudy the costs and make some adjustments.

SUMMARY

With this information, you can decide what to plant, what to buy and how much to buy. Take this information with your expected profit to your credit provider and they will look at ways to finance you to buy the necessary products before the end of January. ■



PIETMAN BOTHA,
INDEPENDENT AGRI-
CULTURAL CONSULTANT

Farmers get a boost with new finance scheme



THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, THOKO DIDIZA, LAUNCHED A 3,2 BILLION BLENDED FINANCE SCHEME (BFS) WITH LAND BANK TO ASSIST FARMERS. THE PROGRAMME WILL BE IMPLEMENTED OVER A TEN-YEAR PERIOD.

A press release issued on 24 October 2022 by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD), shared the news that the department and Land Bank each invested R325 million per annum. This will effectively result in the creation of a R650 million fund per year that will grow to R1,95 billion by the end of the third year. The funding will be on a blended finance structure, which is a combination of a loan and grant with the focus on commodities as per the Agriculture and Agro-processing Masterplan (AAMP).

‘The launch of the Blended Finance Scheme (BFS) of Land Bank in collaboration with the (DALRRD) is a very exciting milestone for farmers,’ says Dr Sandile Ngcamphalala, Grain SA Farmer Development lead, who attended the launch. ‘It is part of the wider AAMP, which is meant to stimulate and drive up to 10% growth in the agricultural sector.’



Dr Sandile Ngcamphalala, Grain SA's Farmer Development lead, attended the launch of the Blended Finance Scheme.

AFFORDABILITY AND INCLUSION

Land Bank is a specialist agricultural Development Finance Institution (DFI) that is embarking on a revised strategy. This is aimed at improving the effective balancing of financial sustainability and developmental outcomes in order to meaningfully contribute to the development and transformation of the agricultural sector in South Africa.

The bank achieved a clean audit outcome for the financial year 2022 – providing an indication of its sound governance, management controls and processes to enable the successful implementation of the BFS. ‘Strategic partnerships like this are critical to ensure growth, food security, the development of farmers and transformation of the agricultural sector, and contribute towards job creation,’ said Minister Didiza.

‘In order to ensure increased affordability and inclusion, and to reduce the risk of failure by new entrants, Land Bank will predominantly follow a blended finance model to support development farmers,’ said Thabi Nkosi, chairperson of Land Bank.

This partnership aims to support the development of small- and medium-scale farmers to participate in the mainstream agricultural economy and the agricultural value chain.

To Dr Ngcamphalala this is also good news. ‘The launch of the BFS implies that Land Bank is back in business to fund South African farmers. The scheme will see the injection of R325 million grant funding annually to Land Bank for the next three years.’

He continued: ‘Even more exiting is the fact that Minister Didiza is committed to supporting and working with Land Bank for the next ten years.’

OBJECTIVES OF THE FUND

The objective of the fund is to make the land and agrarian reform successful by supporting the development, acquisitions and production expansion of qualifying black farmers in prioritised value chains. This is meant to achieve the following goals:

- Economic growth and expansion of the agricultural sector.
- Accelerate land redistribution and wealth creation.
- Job creation.
- Transformation of the sector.
- Increased export.
- Effective land reform and rural development (especially underutilised land).

ACCESS TO THE SCHEME

Access to the BFS will be directly through Land Bank. The department will perform an oversight role, including reporting to all its relevant structures. Furthermore, the received expression of interest from other private banks and engagements are at an advanced stage as part of the goal of broadening access to finance by farmers.

The targeted sectors include:

- Fruits, nuts and vegetables value chains.
- Grains and sugarcane.
- Poultry value chain.
- Pork, beef and sheep value chains.
- Other viable ventures that support the AAMP.

Grants will be provided based on the pre-set DALRRD qualifying criteria.

Important to note is that long-term lease agreements, including permission to occupy, that are longer than the period of funding will be accepted as adequate security to enable access to funding.

WHO QUALIFIES?

- South African citizens with a valid identity document.
- Black owned and managed farming enterprises that are commercially viable in commodities prioritised in the AAMP.
- In the case of joint ventures, the non-black partner should have 40% but not less than 26% ownership in the enterprise.
- Enterprises with 10% farm worker profit sharing – the National Development Plan urges that by 2030, no one should go to bed hungry.
- Youth (40% targeted), women (50% targeted), people with disabilities (6% targeted) and military veterans.

GRAIN SA'S INPUT

'The funding ratio between the loan and grant was one of the points emphasised at the launch,' explains Dr Ngcamphalala. 'It was said

that the funding will target production support, including CAPEX and OPEX as well as insurance. The grant part of the loan will be capped at R10 million, R10 million and R50 million for small-, medium- and large-scale farmers respectively. Smallholder farmers will access the facility at a 60%:40% split between grant and loan. Medium-scale and large-scale commercial farmers will receive the funding at a 50:50 and 40:60 split respectively.

'Key to accessing the funding was economic benefit criteria including issues of equity, transformation and inclusivity, the BBBEE score of the applying enterprise, personal risk, employment opportunities, food security contribution, localisation of the commodity produced to replace imports as well as the targeted local or international markets. The funding responsibility will rest solely with Land Bank, and as such, applicants will have to fulfil the viability assessment of Land Bank to determine the bankability of the enterprise,' Dr Ngcamphalala concluded. ■

PULA IMVULA EDITORIAL TEAM

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Part 7

Asbestos: *Be safe*

NO EMPLOYEE SHOULD BE EXPOSED TO ASBESTOS PRODUCTS IN THE WORKPLACE AND MUST WEAR PROTECTIVE CLOTHING WHEN WORKING WITH ASBESTOS.

Employees should adhere to all asbestos regulations and notify the Department of Labour when asbestos work is being done.

Keep a complete up-to-date inventory of all asbestos products on the farm. Compile a management plan on how these products will be managed with the objective of getting rid of them over a period of time. A risk analysis must also be compiled on what the exposure to these products pose to employees.

Repairs to asbestos products may not exceed 10 m² in a period of six months. If an asbestos roof larger than 10 m² has to be repaired, a registered asbestos contractor should be used for repairs.

When asbestos has been removed, it must be stored in a cordoned-off area and removed by a registered transport contractor



within six months of removal. Safety signs should be affixed to these areas as well as to other areas where asbestos is present on the farm. No asbestos products may be buried on the farm or dumped in the local authority's landfill. ■

CHARL SAAYMAN, HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSULTANT
AT MEGA HEALTH AND SAFETY

SA soybean market *is healthy*



SOYBEANS FOUND A FOOTHOLD IN SOUTH AFRICA AROUND THE EARLY 1900s, WHEN THE NEED AROSE FOR A ROTATION CROP FOR MAIZE. HOWEVER, THE REASON FOR SOYBEAN CULTIVATION CHANGED DRASTICALLY IN 1908, WHEN BRITISH COMPANIES SHIFTED THEIR FOCUS TO COLONIES FOR THE ACQUISITION OF SOYBEANS FOR SOYA OIL.

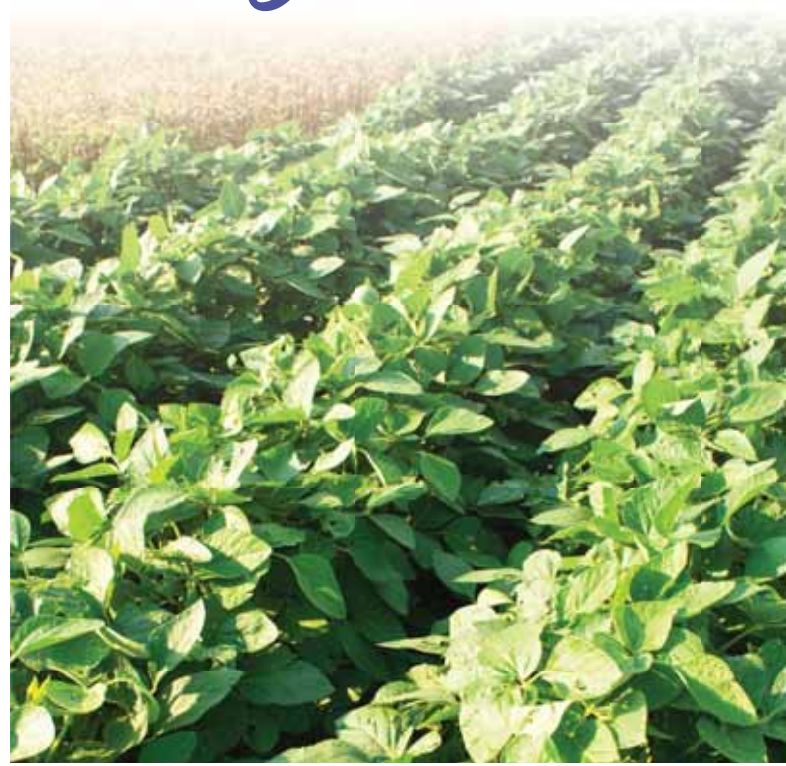
In recent years, soybean production in South Africa has been increasing at a very steady pace. In this article we take a look at the international (global) and local soybean market.

INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK

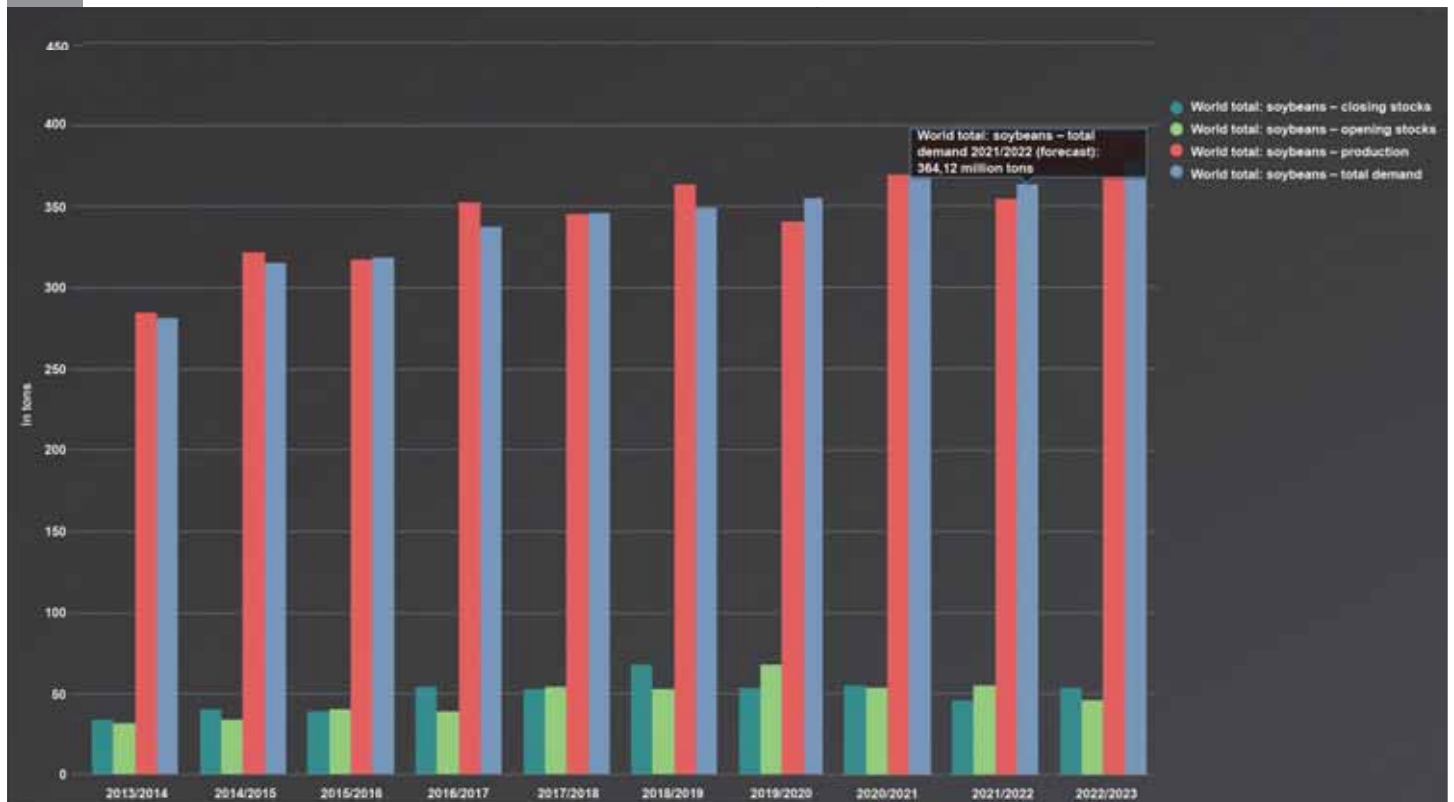
In the global market, the general trend was that production is more than the total demand and therefore, stocks were able to build up. This trend continued until the 2019/2020 season. From this season onward, production was either very close to or less than the demand.

Due to continuously increasing consumption, the market was forced to dig into existing stocks to satisfy the demand. This caused declining international closing stocks at the end of each season. These lower stocks in turn supported international soybean prices.

As illustrated in **Graph 1**, forecasts indicate that this trend will come to an end. After unfavourable weather conditions in South America in the 2021/2022 season, ending stocks were at a very low point. Due to this low point, prices were supported – which



1 *International soybean supply and demand.*





in turn makes it more profitable for farmers to plant soybeans. Soybean production in Brazil is expected to increase by 25 million tons to 30 million tons.

LOCAL MARKET

The local soybean prices have seen positive market sentiment from the second week in September until the last week in October.

South African soybeans are very competitive in the international market – this can be seen by strong export figures. Prices remain very close to the Argentinian export parity. For a while the Argentinian export parity rose significantly, making the United States of America (USA) the cheapest origin for soybeans, but conditions in the market have returned to the usual state.

Why Argentinian prices rose

To battle inflation and reduce the outflow of currency, the Argentinian government regulated the local currency exchange rate. This meant that soybeans that were sold in the international market, did not sell for the correct price according to their value.

Therefore producers did not sell soybeans and rather stored the products on their farms until the situation improved. Argentina then had to import soybeans, process it and export the processed soybean products.

CONCLUSION

South Africa remains a competitive soybean destination, with sufficient supply to satisfy the local demand and export a healthy number of soybeans. With the increased soybean production in recent years, South Africa can continue to increase its soybean exports on an annual basis. ■



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A programme that is changing lives



Get ready to plant

DURING October the Farmer Development team met with farmers to plan and prepare for the new season. It is important to be organised and to have a clear plan of action.

Jerry Mthombothi, regional development manager at the Mbombela office, visited some of his study groups to talk about the new season. He was accompanied by Shadrack Mabuza from Bayer and Muzi Hlongwane from Kynoch. Shadrack encouraged farmers to use good-quality seeds and chemicals. Muzi spoke about the importance of soil preparation and knowing what fertilisation is needed for the soil. They both emphasised the advantage of farmers ordering in bulk.

The regional development manager of the Kokstad office, Luke Collier, and Grain SA mentor, Eric Wiggill, have visited farmers to draw up crop production plans and monitor the fields that will be planted. They have helped farmers decide on their input orders and put in diesel orders for the advanced farmers who are participating in some of the projects running this year. The team will monitor crop progress and offer recommendations on plans of action towards ensuring that the best possible yields are achieved throughout the season.



Jerry Mthombothi met with Klidare study group members from Bushbuckridge to discuss the new season and the purchasing of inputs.



Mentor Eric Wiggill visited Marareni Sipiwo to plan for the wetlands using rippling and discing.



Jurie Mentz, regional development manager at the Louwsburg office, paid farmer Jeremia Nkosi near Amersfoort (photo) a visit to deliver his Pannar maize seed.

Enhancing food SAFETY IN SA

THE Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Dr Blade Nzimande, and the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Thoko Didiza, launched the National Biosecurity Hub in collaboration with the University of Pretoria on 11 October 2022.

The hub will facilitate collaborative efforts to support the prevention, reduction and management of crop and animal disease and other matters related to food safety in South Africa.

Minister Didiza said the hub's launch comes at a time when food security is a global concern. She noted that biosecurity required an integrated approach beyond just government efforts to prevent the spread of pests and diseases in the country.

Speakers from different companies spoke about plant health, animal health and food safety. They all emphasised the importance of integrated management through innovation/research, regulation, risk analysis, capacity building, monitoring and surveillance, digital decision support and protecting our food systems.

Grain SA is an important link as a channel of communication between what commercial farmers and developing farmers are experiencing and reporting to researchers.



Grain SA's regional development manager in Mbombela, Jerry Mthombothi, attended the launch on invitation from the Department of Trade and Industry with Agnes Mndawe, one of the mentors in his region.



Issues which will be monitored and addressed by this hub include decreased food security, food quality and safety.