

## Soil, water and crop management during February

Grain SA magazine for  
developing producers

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**FARMERS WHO HAVE BEEN OBSERVING THE CONDITIONS OF THE SOILS IN THEIR LANDS AND PASTURES WOULD HAVE SEEN SOME DRASTIC CHANGES IN THE SOIL CONDITIONS FROM A VERY WET SUMMER AND AUTUMN TO A VERY DRY EARLY SUMMER SEASON.**

Rainfall predictions by experts before the start of the summer crop planting season during late October indicated that we would have a 40% to 50% above average rainfall for October and November 2011 and January 2012. In reality October has been dry in most areas with a dry November and with late rains predicted for December at the time of writing.

#### Current soils conditions determine management choices

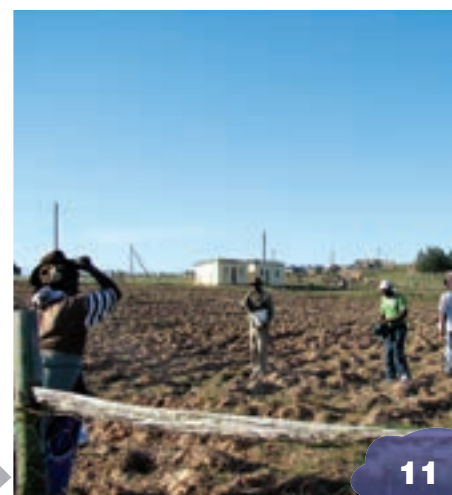
Many of the soils tilled conventionally came out of the winter period in a dry hard compacted state. Some farmers were unable to put in tyne implements to loosen the hard pan and aerate the soil. This es-

sential operation will stimulate bacterial activity so that the breakdown of previous crop residues, in a conventional tillage operation, will commence and restore the nitrogen balance in the soil prior to planting. Remember that this process can take up to five weeks before the nitrogen is started to be recycled and made available for the plant.

Observations of the growth and condition of the current wheat crop in both conventionally and conservation tilled lands showed the following. Soil compaction was not addressed at planting or the wheat was planted in too wet conditions with twin coulters that had the effect of sealing off seed from the soil. The cold winter prevented the normal availability of nitrogen to the soil and root profile. Farmers underestimated the leaching of nitrogen that had occurred during the very wet summer season. In some instances the extra application of nitrogen was not allowed for in the fertiliser recommendations. These factors together with the very



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## Soil, water and crop management during February



### Mme Jane says...

**T**his past summer crop planting season has been very challenging and any farmer who has managed to plant all the crops as planned has done very well indeed. The rains were very late and in many areas, insufficient rain has fallen to secure a good crop.

We must remember at all times that farming is not easy – it is very satisfying and you work outside in a clean environment, but there are no guarantees. Each year, you start from scratch. Because we are dependent on rain to produce our crops, it is very important that as farmers we should always have done our best so that when the rain falls, we are able to utilise it optimally.

Many commercial farmers are in a position to work their lands long before the planting season so that when the rains fall, they are able to plant immediately. Many developing farmers are not able to work well in advance – usually because of financial and mechanical constraints. When the rains fall, the commercial farmers start to plant, but the developing farmers start to prepare the soil. This often results in late plantings which can mean a reduced crop potential.

Look around you and see which crops are looking good – then find out when they were planted. Let us make a huge effort to prepare our lands well in advance so that next spring, we are able to plant in good time.

cold winter soil conditions resulted in poor secondary root development and growth and reduced to very poor tillering. Wheat ears are small and the final pip count of between 30 and 35 pips per ear is low compared to the ear count. The hot dry October and November period has just made all these factors more important than in a more normal year.

The same lessons above can be applied to the production of your summer crops. Take the opportunity right throughout the season to dig profile holes in every summer crop and in the different soils on the farm. At the minimum look at the top 150 mm to 180 mm every time you visit the lands to be able to assess the prevailing soil and water conditions.

#### Later plantings and conditions

If you were unable to plant at the optimum time and crops were planted late consider the following factors. Judge the leaf colour and stage of growth of your maize, soybeans or sunflowers or take leaf samples for analysis. If your observations or leaf test results show that the crops were under fertilised an extra side placing of nitrogen or a combination of nitrogen and sulphur can be considered. Remember that the leaching of the nitrogen in the previous winter season could have been carried over to the current crop. This shortage could become evident if you carefully observe the condition of the current crop.

#### Soybeans

In later planted soybeans inspect the crop for nodulation from the first week after planting right through the season. If there has been a poor inoculation take or the nodulation varies from plant to plant or from area to area in a land it is possible to improve or even normalising the crop potential by side placing the nitrogen the crop requires. A two ton soybean crop will remove about 800 kg of protein per hectare. This requires a large amount of nitrogen. Soybeans, under ideal inoculation and nodulation conditions, receive 75% of the nitrogen required from the action of the

rhizobium bacteria in the nodules, in a chemically complex cycle that has been well studied. About 25% is required from the available soil nitrogen.

In the absence of nodules you might thus have to take a decision to apply extra nitrogen to obtain a good yield. Remember that only the pink to red nodules are actively supplying the plant with nitrogen. Given good moisture conditions, an adequate plant population and a weed free land this might be the only way to obtain a good crop. If you are uncertain of how good your nodulation is consult your soybean seed supplier who will have the expertise to advise you.

If you have had heavy rains during December the side placing operation will loosen and aerate the soil as well as control weeds in the inter row spacing in the case of conventionally tilled crops.

#### Soybeans, sunflowers and maize

Other crop and economic factors that should be taken note of and managed during February could include the following:

- Continuous inspection of your crops for weed insects and bacterial and fungicidal infections. The appropriate follow up for spraying while you can still get into the crop with tractors and spray rigs can then be planned and considered.
- Inspection and a potential crop yield assessment for each crop to determine the correct hail insurance cover required. This will also assist knowing what your future cash flows might be so that you can relay this to managers or the entity providing finance for you operation.
- Be aware of future price trends and decide whether or not a hedge position in the futures market will be taken. You can always consult Grain SA or your local Cooperative in this regard.
- Do the detailed planning for combining, crop storage and any other crop husbandry interventions that might be required.

ARTICLE SUBMITTED BY A  
RETIRED FARMER

# It all starts at a young age



**SENEKAL IS PRODUCING OUTSTANDING EMERGING FARMERS. IN 2010 IT WAS WILLIAM MATASANE AND IN 2011 KOOS MTHIMKULU, WINNING THE PRIZE FOR FARMER OF THE YEAR.**

Does this indicate that Senekal is the district where to own land? What is so special about Senekal that our farmers seem to be very successful, considering and comparing the climatic conditions of the area which can become very dry at times.

Koos Mthimkulu grew up in the Paul Roux district very similar to Senekal. His passion for farming manifested at a very young age. He was exposed to many different aspects of agriculture and gained much experience working on farms.

His employer Frikkie du Preez might not be aware of the fact that he was training, teaching and exposing Koos to the “human resource” (Dr Moll) management model concentrating in developing the person and mentoring him to his full potential. Never did he stop exposing Koos to challenging situations.

Koos eventually bought equipment and started a contracting business with Frikkie du Preez assisting him. Farmers lacking capacity made use of his services. Koos tells the story of how Frikkie gave him a planter to calibrate calling fertiliser/ha and seed rating/ha. He left Koos to figure out how to go about the task. Needless to say it took a whole day but he was successful. Having made no phone calls or contacted seed companies, he managed the task with distinction. It is known that success breeds success.

I am positive that they are both unaware of the contribution challenges like these stretch thinking patterns to a point of “never give up” (Churchill).

Koos laughs, “You know initially I thought he was overworking me – this was not true he was teaching me”.

Frikkie was a delegator and his staff had to think and perform, but he also knew their limitations.

President Mandela said: “Speak to a person in his language and you speak to his heart. Speak a different language and you speak to his ears.” Frikkie spoke the language of the heart which is agriculture.

Koos had ambition to own his own land. The Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs offered Koos the farm Astoria (524 hectares) in the Senekal district as a “caretaker” farmer. If successful the title deed would follow. The rules have changed and Koos is in the dark as to what the future holds.

The present system does not really encourage farmers. Improvements and maintenance under present conditions do not invite for enthusiasm to spend money on a farm you don't own.

Profit margins are small and buying land puts a heavy burden on the future generation. Developing on the one side and fighting input costs in a poor season can end up in a disaster.

Koos and Lydia, (his wife) live in the beautifully kept homestead. Lydia has a huge vegetable garden planted with seeds of all kind. Surplus vegetables are sold locally. His family lives with him on the farm. When driving around the farm you are met with much for the eye to see. The staff repair equipment in the well equipped workshop.

Clifford, his son works alongside Koos and is taught the tricks of the trade. Clifford did a course in marketing and management. He is finding it very useful in decision making. Clifford is very excited about the increase of their Bonsmara herd.

## It all starts at a young age

A number of issues are raised which he is concerned about.

- Input costs for grain farming on their farm is a high risk business to be exposed to in the long term.
- Global warming does pose a risk not to be discarded.
- Labour will become problematic in the near future. The youth are not prepared to work because farm work is very physical. Those who do apply for a job soon leave.
- The middleman is making huge profits from agriculture. We will not cope unless commodity prices rise considerably.
- Marketing through SAFEX is not always understood and causes problems in decision making. The concept must be well understood.
- Rainfall distribution in our region is not good. Periodic droughts occur and often cause substantial losses.

Promises for cattle from the MEC of Agriculture did not materialise for unknown reasons. Clifford runs a very intensive health care program on his cattle. They have sufficient fodder flow programs. Planting maize in tram lines creates opportunity for green feed and Japanese radish to be produced between the rows, for winter months.

The farm belonging to the Government was given to develop a few of the ten boreholes on the property. This will be very useful in managing the grazing. Hopefully we will be able to develop our stock to 200 cows. Black emerging farmers are mostly first generation farmers. The majority lived and worked on farms. However they were never involved in the decision making process. The concept is new to the majority even though some seem to be making good decisions.

Koos and Clifford are assisted by Flip du Preez who is their mentor and say the following; "We could not have asked for better. Flip is so dedicated, knowledgeable and helpful. With his help we are always attacking the advantage line and soon we will be scoring our tries to put us ahead of our fears".

Grain SA convene monthly study group meetings, promoting training of skills on a wide spectrum of issues relevant to farming.

Koos is concerned about the different organisations representing Agriculture. Farmers black or white have the same goals and problems. Being represented by different organisations makes no sense. Unity makes for strength. Combine, hold hands and approach the government in a different way. Nationalisation will not work because government will be the sole owner.

Our specific situation is a foretaste of things to come. Being a caretaker is no motivation to put your heart into a farm then loose what you have invested because of political reasons.

We will make a success of what we are doing. Flip fills the gap of knowledge which never reached us. Being first generation we are well on our way as food producers.

Humble, hard working, enthusiastic and brutally honest farmers appreciate every bit of inspiration and help. People like these are the salt of the earth and will never fail those whom they produce food for.

**JAN DE VILLIERS, A RETIRED FARMER**  
PHOTO'S SUPPLIED BY VKB



Koos Mthimkulu and his son, Clifford, with some of the awards he received recently.



# Oil & Protein seeds

## Soybean cultivars – determinate and indeterminate growth

**FEBRUARY IS A GOOD TIME TO HAVE A GOOD LOOK AT THE GROWTH AND HEALTH OF THE VARIOUS SOYBEAN CULTIVARS THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PLANT ON YOUR FARM. THE GROWTH HABIT AND TRAITS OF A PARTICULAR CULTIVAR CAN BE ASSESSED IN YOUR CLIMATIC CONDITIONS. THE BEST PERFORMING CULTIVARS CAN THEN BE USED IN FUTURE PRODUCTION AND THE POOR PERFORMERS DISCARDED.**

Many producers are confused as to what a “determinate” or “indeterminate” cultivar actually means. Producers also want to know which of the two main types are the best to plant.

### Cultivar selection

It is very important that that a cultivar is selected that performs well in your district and on your farm to ensure successful physical and financially viable production on your farm. New and improved cultivars are continuously being released into the market by commercial and private producers. If you are a new soybean producer it is quite a bewildering task to choose the most suitable cultivar. If there are other producers in your area it is advisable to visit various farmers and compare notes on the growth and performance of the cultivars being grown.

It is also interesting to see the soybeans at various stages up to harvesting to get a feel of which cultivars with different observed growth habits yield well. February is a good time to consult with farmers and seed company representatives or agents. Try to attend trial demonstration and information days whenever possible. If you can encourage seed breeders and supply companies to do trials on your farm or in your area so much the better. It is always advisable to plant several different varieties on your farm to “hedge” your bets for potential yields under the unpredictable climatic conditions that can arise in the production season.

Although most cultivars are tested in different production environments to determine yield potential and traits such as resistance to diseases, nematodes, insects and resistance to commonly used herbicides.

Transgenic cultivars have had their basic genetic makeup added to so that they have a high resistance to glyphosate (Roundup) and other chemicals that control weeds. These cultivars make up a high

proportion of the cultivars now planted worldwide. This is so because the farmer's spraying for weed control can be finely planned and has resulted in better overall management and positive financial returns. If possible try both transgenic and non-transgenic (standard) cultivars on a trial basis on your farm to experience which is the better and which responds the best for your own management practices.

Cultivars that don't do well in a particular region are usually quickly identified. Seed from the more promising or proven high yielding cultivars can be chosen for the next production season.

### Maturity classification

Soybeans are also classified by maturity group (MG). The maturity group can also be coupled to an area or areas where the cultivar is found to be best adapted. The maturity group zoning however does not imply that the cultivar cannot be grown elsewhere. Cultivars of several maturity groups classified for different zones are however often grown with good results within a specific zone. Again the research indicates that it is only through practical experience that you can find out which cultivars do best on your farm.

The growth and plant development in soybeans is determined by the amount of sunlight received during a day and the prevailing temperatures in this period. Soybeans are known as a short day plant species because the start of the growth of the flower buds in the main meristems and additional meristems occurs only when the days are shorter than some critical day length during the summer production period. The critical day length is different for each cultivar. After the start of flowering the prevailing temperature will determine when the flowers will appear.

Cultivars are also often classed as early, mid season or full season. Full season soybean cultivars require more heat units than mid season or early season cultivars. Soybeans are very sensitive in this regard and farmers must be careful to order and keep in stock, both long and shorter season cultivar seed ahead of the planting season. In a year such as this where the early summer rains did not materialise as predicted having a short season cultivar on hand as a backup might mean the difference between having a crop or no crop.

Long season cultivars planted later in November or December in the cooler areas at higher altitudes are likely not to perform to their potential as far as yields go. Sometimes there is enough sun energy and

## Soybean cultivars – determinate and indeterminate growth



temperature to promote very good stem and leaf development but not enough to put into seed development.

### Determinate or indeterminate growth habit

The genetic makeup of soybeans largely determines which genes are present that influence the stem growth habit. The plants thus have apical meristems that begin to flower when day lengths are shorter than the critical day length for a particular plant type or not.

In determinate plants both the stem apices and other meristems on the main stem nodes change immediately from a vegetative phase and start the production of flowers. In other words at this stage in plant development all potential flowering points that are in the vegetative phase start to change over to producing flowers.

The phases of pollination and seed development will commence at about the same time. The yield potential of the determinate plants is thus largely established and related to the vegetative growth stage and development at the onset of reaching the critical day length.

Near simultaneous appearance of the flowers occurs at all nodes plus the stem tip. A clue to this stage is that the uppermost leaf is usually as large as the leaf below but can be smaller if the plant development has been stopped by the onset of the critical day length. Determinate plants will usually have a distinct cluster of pods borne at each flowering plant.

In indeterminate plants the onset of flowering also starts on the apical meristems at critical day length but the vegetative growth continues.

Flowering starts but is extended over a longer period. Seed set thus also continues on the main and other stems and is completed over a much longer period in the growing season.

### Plant height and distance of the lower pods from the ground

Breeders strive to produce cultivars that have a distance of 10 cm to 10,7 cm's of stem between the soil surface and the first pods. The shorter maturing or early season cultivars sometimes have a too short distance between the soil and first pod height and much seed is wasted at combining.

It is important to set up your planters and cultivation methods so that the plants are not planted in deep furrows that make efficient combining impossible. Soybean farming goes hand in hand with small stock and in the instance of a cultivar not growing as planned the crop and seeds that missed being harvested can be very well utilised by small stock. This high protein diet is very useful in winter and can reduce the amount of protein required in winter licks.

There is no short cut to observing the growth habits of the cultivars you have chosen so as to make wise decisions for next season's production.

ARTICLE SUBMITTED BY A RETIRED FARMER

# Practical hints to improve production management

**FINANCIALLY WISE IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THE MANAGEMENT OF THE PRODUCTION PROCESSES ON A FARM NEED TO IMPROVE EVERY YEAR TO REMAIN SUCCESSFUL. APPLYING THE HINTS DISCUSSED WILL HELP YOU ACHIEVE THIS.**

In a previous article we have discussed how to improve the production management of your farm to maintain a sustainable profit by attending to a production management program. In this article we will continue the discussion by paying attention to a number of other practical hints to improve production management.

## Keep records

First of all it is important to keep records. To be able to improve your

production processes continuously, it is absolute necessary to keep proper records. One can now pose the question: "What records do I need to keep?" In terms of production management at least the following records should be kept:

- Production records;
- Marketing records; and
- Weather (rainfall) records.

Ideally financial records should also be kept, but this will be discussed in another article later on.

## Production records

Production records are records of all actions done to produce your crops. For example:

Production record for maize production – 2011									
Up to plant									
Name of land	Area	Apply lime kg & date	Primary tillage	Secondary tillage	Seedbed preparation	Plant date	Cultivar	Plant population	Fertiliser plant type & kg
Land 1									
Land 2									
Land 3									

After plant							
Name of land	Area	Herbicides	Pesticides	Top dress type & kg	Date harvest	Kg harvest	Kg/ha
Land 1							
Land 2							
Land 3							



# Practical hints to improve production management

## Marketing records

Marketing records are records reflecting the marketing of your products.

Product record					
Product: _____		Month: _____			
Harvested		Marketed		Spillage	Total
Date	Quantity	Date	Quantity	Quantity	Marketed and spillage
Total					

With a bit of imagination these records could be adapted to suit different production strategies and any type of crop including fruit and vegetables.

## Weather (rainfall) records

Keep record of at least daily rainfall in a way that suits you. Calculate the total rainfall for each month and for each year. Proper rainfall records over time will provide you with a clear picture of the general occurrence of rainfall on your farm. Using this information you can become more scientific when planning plant dates and other actions, even actions with cattle or sheep – breeding seasons, estimating grazing capacity and so forth.

The advantage of keeping these records are that you know exactly what you did the previous season, which then forms the basis of planning the next season – where can I improve in terms of production and marketing? Proper records help one to also improve your organising and implementing of the production plans. Proper records also improve the control function of management. To be a top farmer you need to be in control by ensuring that the right things are done in the right way, by the right people and at the right time.

## Have a farm map

It is absolute useful to compile a map of your farm showing the physical layout and position of all infrastructure and lands, camps, roads, rivers and so forth. Indicate the area (hectares) of the lands and camps. Use the map by indicating every year where (which land) you have planted what. It might seem unnecessary to do this, especially if your farm is not very big, because you will argue that you can remember everything. Is that really true? Why not make life simpler by using the farm map. You will also experience that it streamlines your planning, organising, even implementation and especially control tasks.

## A soil map is a necessity

A soil map is a map indicating the classification of the soils on your farm. This is however an advanced technical tool and you will have to acquire

the assistance of a soil scientist to compile this map. In order to identify soils accurately, it is necessary to undertake a soil survey. The aim is to provide an accurate record of the soil resources of land on a farm. With the soil boundaries drawn on a base map, the map is used to determine the potential, limitations (restrictive layers such as plough-soles) and management needs for each land on the farm. Therefore after this map has been compiled you will have knowledge regarding the production potential of all your lands. It might even lead to a re-planning of your lands, but then you are improving.

Combing the information of the soil survey with that of soil analysis each year, you will really be in a position to improve your production management processes – land preparation, planting actions – dates and population, fertiliser application and so forth.

Management plays a vital role in farming and the level of management applied to the natural resources, of which soil is but one, will determine the profitability of the business.

## Some more hints

- Attend courses, farmer's days, study group meetings, read and so forth to improve your knowledge and skills of the production processes of the products you are producing. You will also be empowered to stay abreast of latest developments to improve your production management. A farmer needs to be a life long student.
- With reference to the previous hint, produce your products technically as correct as it is practically possible. If you have to plant at a depth of five centimetres, depending on the type of crop and soil and so forth it is up to you to do just that.

Because of the financial challenge (cost-price squeeze) of management it is important if you want to survive in the long run on your farm (production unit), it is imperative to improve your production management from year to year. Apply these hints, you can only benefit.

INFORMATION COMPILED FROM THE FARM MANAGEMENT FOR PROFITS MANUAL BY MARIUS GREYLING

*This special feature is made possible by the contribution of the Oil and Protein Seeds Development Trust.*

# Experience of a lifetime for William

**DREAMS COME TRUE, BUT NEVER DID WILLIAM MATASANE EXPECT TO BE SO FORTUNATE TO EXPERIENCE THESE DREAMS. WILLIAM SHARED HIS EXPERIENCES WITH PULA IMVULA:**

The excitement was overwhelming and I was exhausted. It was a 17 hour flight to Sydney yet the flight was so smooth that I even fell asleep.

From Sydney we flew to Brisbane for our stay with Australian families. There were many people at the airport from different countries and nationalities. I was astonished to see how friendly and helpful they were.

Our first visit was to a family farming with cash crops. The various crops produced included maize, wheat, cotton and sunflower on 20 000 hectares of land. The whole farm was managed by only three people. Between them they did all the work.

Zero till is the practice applied. No soil preparation other than chemical weed control applied and the size of the equipment is enormous.

When the reaping season comes, much of the work, like transport is let to contractors. Roads are in a good condition and the work flows at an amazing pace. Elevators on farms is a common scene.

Our next visit was to Leigh and Megan who farm 35 000 acres of land and concentrate on Angus cattle. The Angus brand for hamburgers is very popular.

When the sales of stock is due, helpers on horseback and shepherd dogs assist to bring in the stock because the area is so huge it takes two to three days to gather numbers for sale.

Australia is relatively free of stock diseases and virtually no ticks occur, making management so much easier.

Children live with their parents on the farm and a bus service collects them for school and they are returned in the afternoon after school.

We were invited to attend a rugby match and the car we were travelling in was to be parked at a junction, with the keys to be left in the car. We joined the group and drove by coach to the match. On returning the car with the keys in was still in place. No theft.

Brisbane is extremely clean and laws are enforced for trespasses. Recycling of all possible materials is done saving the country money and also creating jobs for those who do the processing.

Mrs Morgan aged 70, her three sons and three helpers run a feedlot of 60 000 head of cattle twelve months of the year.

They also have a Brahman stud producing bulls for the breeders. Calves are hand reared by popping an egg into the calf supplement thus replacing the colostrum from the cow.



## Experience of a lifetime for William

Technology is advanced and makes farming easier. As I was a chef in my younger days, I was invited to do a “boerewors” braai for a group of farmers. We used technology and a recipe from South Africa and soon we had “boerewors” from the local butcher. What a feast we had after the rugby game.

Our visit to Sydney was most enjoyable. We attended an opera in the Opera House. The aquarium was a wonderful experience with all the different fish and even a “water snake” which we often talk about back home.

Shops are often open till one o'clock in the morning with people shopping all the time. Plastic money notes and coins are used and initially we thought it to be monopoly money.

Boarding the plane on our return, many thoughts entered my mind

and I wondered what I would do different? What lessons did I learn? To name a few, I would begin by cleaning up our living space – recycle, it creates jobs. People need to take ownership of our beautiful country.

Having written what I remember, I nearly forgot to mention my friend with whom I was travelling. Johan Kriel from Grain SA. I think I know why this so happened. I scored a try in the match and Johan was carried off the field on a stretcher, fatigued.

To Johan, Grain SA and all those involved and who arranged the trip to Australia a big thank you. This tour has opened my eyes and broadened my perspective immensely.



**JAN DE VILLIERS, A RETIRED FARMER**

# The ins and outs of human resource management



**MOST BUSINESSES HAVE VARIOUS RESOURCES – FINANCIAL RESOURCES (THE MONEY TO RUN THE BUSINESS), NATURAL RESOURCES (LAND, RIVERS, MOUNTAINS), INFRASTRUCTURAL RESOURCES (ROADS, BUILDINGS, SHEDS), MECHANICAL RESOURCES (TRACTORS, IMPLEMENTS AND MACHINES) AND HUMAN RESOURCES – TO MENTION A FEW.**

As your farming business grows, it becomes increasingly important to have a good labour force as you will not be able to do all the work alone. You will need to rely on competent people to do certain tasks while you are busy with others.

Human Resource Management entails the management of all aspects related to the resource labour or employees or personnel. Basically employment relations in a business are regulated by a number of laws but good leadership and communication and so forth also play a major role. The management of this area must also be planned, organised, implemented and controlled properly.

It is generally accepted that employees have a right to expect the following from the owner/manager:

- Appropriate pay for the work being done; (the more difficult the work, the higher the salary; the longer the period of service, the higher the salary; the greater the level of responsibility, the higher the salary. Not all people are the same and therefore they are paid differently).
- Appropriate conditions of employment (hours, leave, etc.).
- A planned work flow and proper procedures and equipment to do the job.
- Instruction in safe and proper work methods.
- Reasonable consideration of individual personal needs.
- Good communication, including advance information regarding changes which will affect them.

- To be told clearly what is expected of them and whether or not they are meeting expectations.

On the other hand, the owner/manager has a right to expect the following from his employees:

- Be ready to start work on time and work until finishing time.
- Work at a recognised normal pace for each hour.
- Adhere to the methods, procedures and standards established for the job.
- Act safely and in accordance with rules regarding security and confidentiality.
- Adapt to changes designed to improve productivity or efficiency, provided that their positions are not thereby diminished.
- Keep him informed on matters affecting the job.
- To perform his/her duties according to accepted occupational health and safety measures.

### Occupational health and safety in the workplace

Occupational health and safety refers to safety in the workplace and maintaining of the good health of employees and employers.

### Objectives of the Management of Occupational Health and Safety in the workplace (OHSA)

- To promote occupational safety and health measures in the workplace.
- To increase employee participation in the process of promoting safety and health in the workplace.
- To introduce greater preventative measures regarding occupational health and safety.

## Scope of the act

The act covers most employers and employees as well as users, designers, suppliers and installers of machinery and equipment. It also includes domestic and agricultural workers within its scope. Unlike other labour legislation which limits cover to situations where an employer-employee relationship is present, the OHSA imposes health and safety regulations on self-employed persons and persons engaged in the manufacture, production or sale of machinery or substances used in the workplace. Employers are required to ensure the health and safety of their employees as well as all persons who may be directly affected by their activities.

## Duties of employers

The act contains general duties and specific duties. The employer's general duty is to provide and maintain as far as is reasonably practicable, a working environment which is safe and without risks to health. In order to achieve this, an employer should do the following:

- Identify the hazards present in the workplace;
- Assess the risks to employee health and safety posed by these hazards; and
- In the light of this assessment, take steps to eliminate or mitigate the hazards.

A hazard is defined as "a source of or exposure to danger" and danger is defined as "anything which may cause injury or damage to persons or property". "Reasonably practicable" is defined as "practicable" having regard to:

- The severity and scope of the hazard or risk concerned;

- The state of knowledge reasonably available concerning the hazard or risk and of any means of removing or mitigating that hazard or risk;
- The availability and sustainability of means to remove or mitigate that hazard or risk; and
- The cost of removing or mitigating that hazard or risk in relation to the benefits deriving there from.

In order to fulfil this general duty, an employer must ensure that:

- Employees are properly instructed (on how to use machinery, how to ensure safety etc.) and that precautions are adhered to.
- Protective equipment may only be resorted to if it is not "reasonably practicable" to eliminate or mitigate the hazard.
- An employer may not make deductions from an employee for occupational health and safety provisions or for safety clothing or equipment provided.

Specific duties of an employer relate to particular undertakings and may either prohibit particular activities in the workplace, direct that plant, machinery and equipment comply with specifications or require the use of safety devices or equipment. Such specific duties would be published as regulations to the act and may either set a definite physical standard or refer to a standard of care.

It is therefore your legal obligation as the owner/manager of a business to adhere to these laws when you employ people. If you do not, you expose yourself to severe penalties. Remember the Department of Labour employ labour inspectors who may visit your business. If, when visiting your farm, they find shortfalls and non-compliance of the legal requirements, they could summarily stop your business and require you to first rectify all the problems.



# PULA IMVULA

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*Our aim is to produce the best  
publication possible. Please direct any  
comments on the editorial content or  
presentation thereof, to Jane McPherson.*

# The ins and outs of human resource management



Some of the major problems experienced are:

- No service contracts are available;
- Employees are not remunerated at the minimum wage;
- The correct leave is not granted;
- No payslips are provided to employees;
- Deductions are not managed properly;
- The disciplinary procedures are not applied correctly;
- Employees are required to work longer hours than prescribed and are not paid overtime;
- Employment of child labour; and
- Transgressions regarding occupational health and safety measures.

As an employer you are under legal obligations to manage your employees in the correct way. If you re-call that is the one part of ethical conduct, the other part being that "something else". However this does not mean you must be a "softy." You need to be fair and show respect towards your employees, whilst being firm and strict.

How your employees are motivated to do their work can have a major influence on profits. Diligent employees can be an advantage by doing their work thoroughly without wasting resources.

## Practical examples

Let's consider practical examples:

### To remember

- In terms of a business everything, everybody involved with the business, be it owner/s, managers or employees, does through what they do, or do not do what they should do, affect the profit (in other words they affect income and/or expenditures) of the business.
- Employment relations are affected by a number of labour laws.
- Occupational health and safety affects the lives and health of your employees.
- Motivated employees will be diligent.

### Positive conduct

- Adhere to the minimum requirements of all the laws as applicable. Apart from fines and/or imprisonment to be imposed for non-adherence to the labour laws, a business could also be closed for a period of time to rectify all matters.

- Keep all records as needed such as service contracts, personal information of employees, information regarding time worked and remuneration, leave records and so forth.
- Attend a course or workshop to acquire the knowledge and know how to manage this aspect properly.
- Attend a course or workshop to acquire the knowledge and know how to manage occupational health and safety properly.

### Negative conduct

- The negative conduct would be the vice versa of the positive conduct such as:
  - Not to pay the minimum wage and overtime as required;
  - Not to register for UIF and workmen's compensation;
  - Not to keep all records as required;
  - Do not steal your employees leave;
  - Do not assault your employees;
  - Not to adhere to all measures regarding occupational health and safety measures and expect your employees to work under unsafe conditions and work with unsafe implements, machinery and tools.

However more important are that proper management of this area of management serves as an extremely good motivator of employees, simply because they know they are treated fairly and with respect, yet strictly. Remember employees discuss their "bosses" when they meet each other and if you do not treat your employees with respect others will be aware of it. You could then end up with poor employees and have a high employee turnover.

If you treat your employees with respect, you will be respected.

### The result

- The choice is yours. Do you want to be a respected employer?
- Remember once you are on record with the Department of Labour you can expect more visits. And when disputes arise who is going to get the benefit of the doubt?

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