

PULA INVULA

Grain SA magazine for
developing producers

Protect your harvest against fires

WINTER IS COMING AFTER A PARTICULARLY WET LATE SUMMER AND AUTUMN. AS A RESULT OF THE WET SEASON, THERE IS PLENTY OF GRAZING FOR THE ANIMALS, BUT THIS ALSO MEANS THAT VELD FIRES COULD POSE A SERIOUS PROBLEM THIS YEAR.

Fires can cause serious damage on farms. The lighting of one match can destroy thousands of hectares of farmland. Most crop fires occur before or soon after harvesting because at this time the crops are usually ripe and dry.

How to prevent fires

- Children should not play with matches.
- Do not throw burning matches or cigarettes into dry grass, leaves, bushes or barns.
- Do not make open fires in the veld or during windy weather.
- Make sure that all fires are put out properly.

If you see a fire

- If you see a veld fire, report it immediately to your neighbours and the local fire warden. Tell them exactly where the fire is.
- Leave someone at home to give people information about the fire. If you have a radio or tel-

ephone, the lines must be kept open so that new information can be passed on as soon as it is received.

- If you are not the landowner, inform him or her about the exact position of the fire.
- Move all farm animals and equipment to a safe place.

Tools (equipment) you can use to put out a fire

- Fire extinguishers – water or dry-powder type.
- Make a fire swatter from old belting strips of rubber or wet sack. Beating the fire with the beltings or wet sack takes away the air (oxygen) which the fire needs to burn. If there is not enough air, the fire will smother and die slowly.
- Use rucksack pumps to wet the plants and grass near and in front of the fire. Rucksack pumps are also useful when checking for flare-ups after the fire has been put out.
- Use water containers and a water pump that can supply enough water.
- Shovels, rakes and spades can be used to make a firebreak to stop the fire from spreading. A counter fire can be made from this break which burns against the direction of the wind. A break is a clean strip of land almost like a road on

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Mme Jane says...

Lately the media seems to be reporting more on crime and fraud. What is happening to our people, to our standards and our ethics? Perhaps we should talk about ethics.

Work ethics include attitude, behaviour, respect, communication and interaction – how one gets along with others. The begging question in a situation involves what is right and acceptable versus what is wrong and underhanded.

Throughout the last few years there have been companies and individuals whose work ethic have been rather shady, having a negative impact on others. This included people looking the other way when others did something questionable.

Work ethics, such as honesty, doing a job well, valuing what one does, having a sense of purpose and feeling/being a part of a greater vision or plan, is vital. We should not only want to do, but desire to do the proper thing. Work ethics are intrinsic – they come from within.

In farming there are ample opportunities to lie and cheat. Think about the people who borrow money and do not pay it back after the crop; or people who plant a crop, deliver it and pretend that they did not get a crop; or those who borrow money to plant a certain number of hectares and then plant more (thus not using all the inputs on the lands as planned). People who do not honour their contracts, people who make excuses for not working hard, people who sell things that do not belong to them and people who buy stolen goods...the list goes on.

If we are going to build the agricultural sector in our country we must get back to the good basic principles of honesty, hard work, integrity and respect. Everyone, including the people in government departments, must do a proper day's work. This is the only way we will succeed. If you are going to change the way things are done – change yourself first. Lead by example, be reliable. Let us get back into a position where we can say with confidence: my word is my honour.



Protect your harvest against fires

which there is nothing to burn.

- Use shovels and rakes to put out the fire with sand and soil. Also use them to remove dry grass and twigs which can burn easily.
- Use hand slashers to cut un-burnt grass and plants before an oncoming fire.

Fighting the fire

- Approach the fire from one or both sides and try to narrow the front of the fire.
- If there is a fire-belt (break) or a natural barrier such as a river, try to narrow the fire against the barrier.
- Set up fire-fighters at strategic places to put out sparks carried by the wind. Strong wind can carry sparks as far as one kilometre.
- It is important to beat inwards to the burning area so that sparks are not blown into grass and leaves that are not burning yet.
- Monitor the wind direction at all times.

When the fire has been put out

Once the fire is put out, the following should be done:

- Make sure that the fire-fighters have not been injured.
- Patrol the area for at least three hours to check for flare-ups.
- Return equipment to the correct place.
- Refill water containers such as tankers.
- Repair damaged equipment.

Firebreak guidelines

Every owner on whose land a veld fire may start or burn or from whose land it may spread must prepare and maintain a firebreak on his or her side of the boundary between his or her land and any adjoining land. It is your duty and responsibility to ensure that a fire does not start on your land. Burning fire breaks, is time well spent and could protect you and your farm (land, buildings, crops and livestock) from disaster. Owners of adjoining land may agree to position a common firebreak away from the boundary. The fire break:

- Should be wide and long enough to have a reasonable chance of preventing a veld fire from spreading to or from neighbouring land;
- Should not cause soil erosion; and
- Should be reasonably free of flammable material capable of carrying a veld fire across it.

Purpose of firebreaks

The purpose of firebreaks could be to:

- Prevent the spread of controlled or uncontrolled fires;
- Point where fire may be extinguished;
- Point where back burns can be started;
- Point of attack of fire; and
- Access point to a fire.



JANE MCPHERSON, PROGRAMME MANAGER OF THE GRAIN SA PRODUCER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME



Our schools programme leads the way

DURING 2010, GRAIN SA STARTED A SCHOOLS PROGRAMME WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE MAIZE TRUST. THE PROGRAMME WAS A SUCCESS. IN OUR APPLICATION TO THE MAIZE TRUST FOR 2010/2011, WE AGAIN REQUESTED FUNDING FOR A SCHOOLS PROGRAMME. THE MAIZE TRUST VERY KINDLY APPROVED FUNDING FOR THE VISITS TO SCHOOLS.

It is essential that we encourage children to be aware of the value of agriculture as a source of food and fibre, a major role player in the economy, as an employer and as a career choice. More than half the population in Africa is under 20 years of age. Children are current consumers, consumers of the future and the next generation of workers and the sooner we can make them aware of the value of agriculture in general and the maize industry in particular, the sooner we can hope to have them understand the importance thereof.

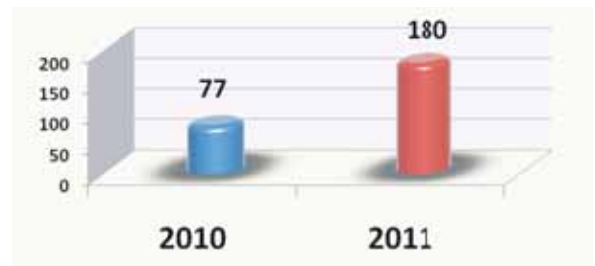
This year the main aim of our project was to develop three different DVD's which portray the agricultural sector, maize industry as well as agriculture as a career of choice. The number of children are very large – at each school we have to make the decision as to whether we see all the children together (as large groups are not conducive to concentration and participation), or see the groups separately (which means that the trainer has to repeat the same lesson a number of times). We approached the AgriSETA in October 2010 to request their support for the programme. They indicated that they would make R360 000 available for the development of the three DVD's. We gratefully accepted their offer and went through a recruitment process to identify a suitable service provider who could make the DVD's. In the end we settled on Martie Willemse from Noline productions for the first DVD and PW van Wyk from AgriTV for the second DVD.

Presenters were identified in ten different regions, namely Free State, North West, North West/Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape and Mpumalanga. During the first term, visits were made to 180 schools where the DVD was played to the learners. The DVD is developed in such a way that there are three places at which it can be paused so that the presenter can discuss the contents with the learners. After the session, the school is also given a poster which serves as a reminder as the contents of the first DVD – Food, Fibre and Life.

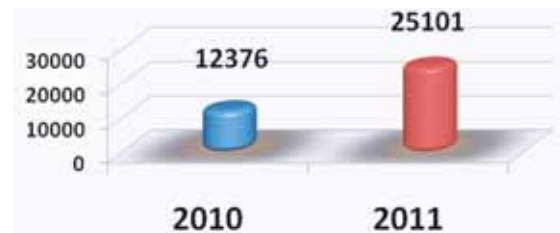
Various learners from the schools visited were asked if the day was of value to them. The following feedback was received.



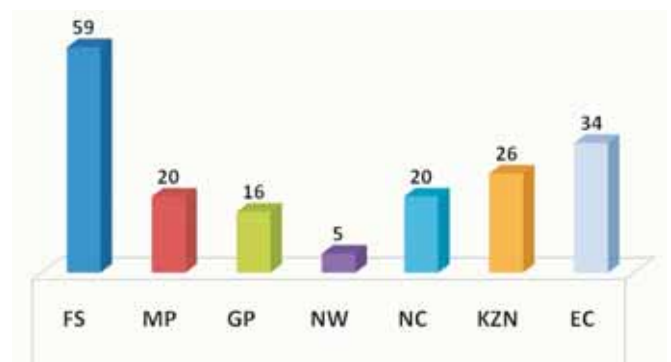
Learners involved during the 2011 first term visit.



Schools visited during the first term of 2010 and 2011.



Learners that attended the first term presentations.



Schools visited in the various provinces during the 2011 first term.

Our schools programme leads the way

Moliko, Tebello and Doreen, learners from Quibing Senior Secondary School

"I don't know where to start but what I can say is that I've learned much and I'm happy to learn more. I believe that it's really important to plant trees etc, so that we can live our daily life wonderful and happily ever. And I've learned that the job of planting is not for the farmers only, we as young people, we need to know more about agriculture so that we can produce food for other people and from today I will make my own vegetable garden because I've learned that I can achieve more by planting. So I'm very happy and I want to thank Grain SA for teaching us how important agriculture can be. So I'm sending my blessings to Grain SA. God guide them until we meet next time."

Mosamo, Mokhele P, Diphapang, Radimo and Mokhetni M from Le Reng Secondary School

"We learnt many things that we did not know, such as 90% of world's food is produced by farmers. We need five farmers to make one burger. Some of us didn't know that clothes are made of animal fur and animals are also part of farming. We thought agriculture was just about farming but today we found that we were wrong. It is all about farmers because without farmers there will be no food."

Thabiso Msomi from Linpark High School

"Yes, it enlightened us of how the food we eat gets to us and how it is made. It also made us see the other side of agriculture and its advantages. It enlightened us of how the clothes we wear are manufactured and brought to us."

Bongani and Sechaba from Thabo Thokoza Secondary School

"Yes! The presentation was clearly understood and we learnt more about agriculture. We can't live without agriculture. Basically there is a close interaction between the environment whereby farmers produce food from animals and the plants. We learnt that what we wear comes from agriculture and we have learnt that the sunflower produces oil and also cotton can produce the jeans never mind the style. We also learnt that photosynthesis is taking place in green plants and chlorophyll comes from green plants. Thank you Grain SA it is a pleasure to have you."

Malefane Retshedisitswe from Boitumelo Secondary School

"I have realised that without agriculture we're going to be hungry and we are also going to need clothes to wear. For me agriculture is very good for human, animals and so on. I would like to encourage people who kill animals and plants to stop it because the more they kill plants the more we going to suffer by not having food, timber furniture, material that build houses and also suffer without stationary and if we kill animals we are also going to suffer without clothes and food and I really like it."

Ramona Steenkamp from Pionier Hoërskool

"Yes, it was very interesting and of great value. I for sure have more respect for what I eat and where it comes from. Thank you for sharing your knowledge with us, it was of great pleasure. Please keep on doing it, because it is of great interest."

Thabiso Sonopo from Marquard High School

"Yes, it was very valuable because I learned more than I expected. At first I just didn't know that agriculture is this important and that it plays a very big role in our lives. It is so amazing to know that this morning I woke up and ate food that is made from agriculture. It is more amazing to know that I am wearing clothes made from agriculture. What's even more amazing is that I am going to sleep in linen made from agriculture. I didn't know that rice is made out of plants. Truly speaking agriculture plays a very big role in our daily lives. We should always take care of our plants even those we think are useless because I thought plants that grow in water are very useless only to realise that rice is made out of that plant I thought was useless. I really appreciate the fact that Grain SA visited our school because they taught us many things about agriculture. I am also looking forward to their next visit. Thank you Grain SA, for giving us this knowledge."

Letshabo Ipeleng from Sensile Combined School

"I've learned a lot about where the products come from and where they went before they became raw food. We learned how plants and animals are important to us and what it provides us with. We also learned that when the food come from primary sectors it goes to the tertiary sector until it becomes a final product. It also provides us with minerals and fibre."

Metyatat Nontetho from Sensile Combined School

"The Grain SA visit had a very positive impact - because it gives us the knowledge on how products were manufactured from the primary sector, secondary sector to tertiary sector. This was indeed a wonderful experience for me. Actually I was amazed by the origin of the raw materials. And to see the job opportunities that man can get through agriculture issues had me thinking. I also learnt how clothes that I wear every day were made. Now I'm going to investigate what are the career awaits for me if I want to be involved in agriculture because I saw that unskilled people who are unemployed can also contribute - which means that jobs are going to be created and more lives will be changed. This was once again an amazing experience for me."

**Pono Shembe from Zakhe
Agricultural College**

"The visit was valuable to me and I'm sure most of the school is feeling the same if not all of them. I learnt a lot from the visit, in particular that most human needs are derived from the agricultural industry. From the event of urbanisation and the growth of population agriculture bridges the gap from the farms to the big cities. Agriculture acts as a catalyst in food production worldwide. Almost all clothing is influenced by agricultural production. We look forward to the next visit!"

**Rebecca Ntsapi from Boitumelo
Secondary School**

"I have seen without agriculture we are going to suffer and there will be no human beings and people are going to die. Without agriculture there will be no clothes and food and shelter. Agriculture is important in our lives because without it there will not be many things in the world. Thank you!"

**Moshane, Paballo and Vinoliah from
Rainbow High School**

"Yes, it was very exciting because I learned more and more about agriculture. I am a very respectful and understanding person and because of this visit I now understand a lot about agriculture and I would like to learn more about it. That was very good. I would like to do agriculture and I do believe that it has lots and lots of job opportunities. I will be very happy if the GSA trainer, Me A. Thomas, could respond to me. Not only to our school, but I would like you guys to remain the good news to the other schools."

**Callum Estchmaier from Weston
Agricultural College**

"Yes it was great value to us because it prepares us for future farming. This talk also helped us see how farming is important for food, clothes, shoes and energy. They are also trying to encourage us to stay on track with farming."

Mtabane Egnar from Lere-La-Thuto School

"It was very interesting to me because some of the things I didn't know. It has helped me a lot. I just wish Grain SA would come back again. I didn't know that rice came up under the soil and water. And the other thing that teaches me a lot is that I didn't know that our grandfathers when they have to wear something they should hunt so that they can get something to wear, while we buy from shops. I learnt more than what I expected I would. Please come back and show those who didn't see. They would be surprised when they see what I saw today. That was very, very interesting!"

**Sandile Mohunu from Sarel Cilliers
High School**

"Yes, I believe we as humans take agricultural things for granted. I have never thought of all the things I heard today. Now I know that products like cornflakes just don't appear as easy as we thought they did. It's time that we looked at nature differently, in a more positive way. Keep up your good work. Don't lose your enthusiasm..."

Londeka Mkhize from Estcourt High School

"Yes, it was because I learnt that there are many divisions in agriculture. The DVD could explain more in a quite interesting way. It taught me that there are lots of resources which are very valuable and as people we should take that into consideration. We really are grateful that there are people who take their time, to make us aware of such things and we really are looking forward to the next visit."

Jaco Hulme from Linpark High School

"It meant a lot to me because it made me realise that everything we eat and wear comes from nature. I learned that farmers play a big role in our lives because they plant stuff for us to eat and that a lot of the vegetables we eat come out of the good earth. Farmers make sure that the animals we eat are healthy and that the soil is very important in our lives. People must look after nature because there might not be food because we use one million tons of maize a year and if it carries on like this then the world can be in danger and it really made me think of what we have and that we must be grateful."

**Makotsoang Sello from Louw
Wepener Combined School**

"Yes, because it's nice to know more about agriculture and I've learnt that soil is our main source to the world. Everything that we get today comes from animals and soil and for me it was a great experience. My grandpa was also doing agriculture but he was not as experienced as my dad is who plants different things like cabbage and potatoes. I would like to take the legacy of my forefathers forward. And my dad would be proud. So this has been something I can't forget. Thank you very much."



Focus on the Eastern Cape Study Groups

THERE ARE ABOUT 2 152 HECTARES OF ARABLE LAND AVAILABLE TO MEMBERS OF THE STUDY GROUPS IN THIS REGION. THIS IS COMMUNAL LAND, LAND OWNED BY THE STATE BUT MANAGED BY THE TRIBAL AUTHORITY. EACH FARMER HAS A "PERMISSION TO OCCUPY" (OR PTO), WHICH IS THE EQUIVALENT OF A LEASE AGREEMENT. THE FARMER WILL NEVER OWN THE LAND, BUT THE LAND CAN NEVER BE TAKEN AWAY FROM THE FAMILY.

In this season the farmers were unable to plant 857 hectares. There are a number of reasons for this, including the high cost of inputs as well as the high cost of using contractors. The farmers are unable to buy their own implements and tractors as the prices they receive for grain are low and profits small. Many of the farmers still using the land are old and they rely heavily on old age pensions. Old aged farmers do not qualify for financial assistance like loans from banks and they cannot increase the land they plant with the money that they have available.

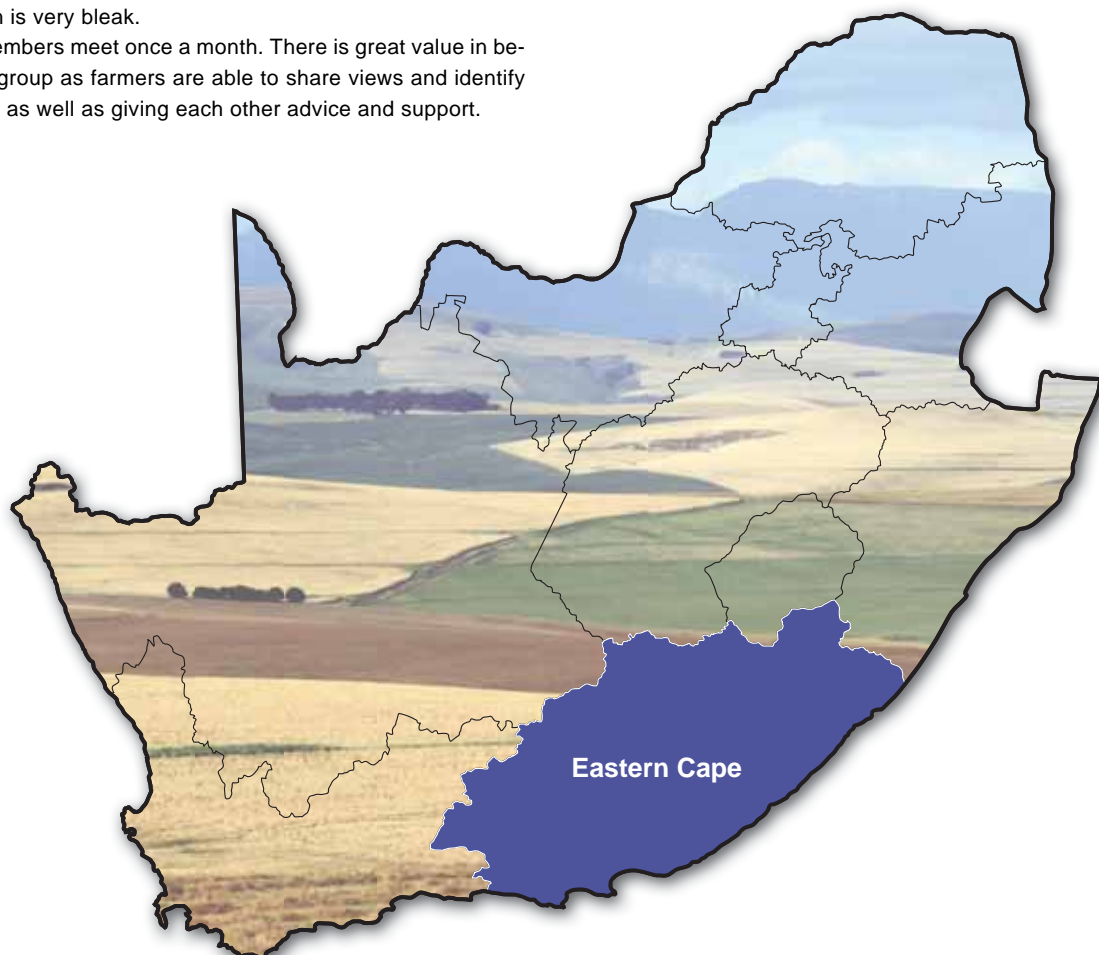
Much of the arable land is not fenced and so the farmers face losses from livestock grazing the planted lands. The CASP programme of the Department of Agriculture is slow with infrastructure like fencing material. The massive food production programme is decreasing each year and very few farmers are assisted by this programme to plant their crops. Rural farmers are applying to the ASGISA programme that work community land without involving the land owners. This is not a sustainable solution as we know that when ASGISA no longer works the lands, they will lie fallow again as there is no skills transfer and real empowerment taking place. The situation is very bleak.

Study group members meet once a month. There is great value in being part of a study group as farmers are able to share views and identify their training needs as well as giving each other advice and support.



Rural farmers are far from commercial farmers and there are only a few farmers who are really farming on a commercial scale. Development in these areas is slow, but I am glad to report that progress is visible. The farmers are using hybrid seeds, fertiliser and are making a concerted effort to control the weeds in their maize lands.

LAWRENCE LUTHANGO, PROVINCIAL CO-ORDINATOR OF THE GRAIN SA FARMER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME





Get to know...

Monica Mathamba

MONICA MATHAMBA LIVES IN THE MTHATHA MBOZISA ADMINISTRATIVE AREA WHERE SHE IS PART OF THE MBOZISA FARMERS ASSOCIATION. MONICA FARMS ON COMMUNAL LAND AND HAS MANAGED TO FENCE HER CROPPING FIELDS OF SIX HECTARE.

Monica has attended the following Grain SA training courses: Introduction to maize production as well as the advanced course in maize production. Monica has improved her maize production using the knowledge and skills gained by being a member of Grain SA. She used to produce 3,5 tons per hectare but now she produces 4,5 tons per hectare.

How does she finance her crop?

Financing the crop comes from her own pocket and she is not happy with her financier as loans are approved too late, when the season is over.

Where does she get her inputs?


Monica purchases her inputs from Mthiza Farmers Co-op and East Cape

Co-op. Prices are comparatively high and no technical advice is given by the suppliers.

What is the role of the government in agriculture and how do they fulfil it?

The role of the government is to give producers advice and technical skills as well as to provide infrastructure. Monica says that the government is not fulfilling its role because they are not implementing their policies.

To what does she attribute her success?

Monica attributes her success to having a passion and by working hard. She believes that using hybrid seeds, fertiliser and the application of herbicides to control weeds have improved her yields. This year, Monica would like to buy more implements, particularly a boom sprayer. 

LAWRENCE LUTHANGO, PROVINCIAL CO-ORDINATOR OF THE GRAIN SA FARMER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME



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Concerns raised at Congress

MR JAN BOTHA FROM THABA'PATCHOA RAISED SEVERAL CONCERNS ON BEHALF OF DEVELOPING PRODUCERS DURING THE ANNUAL GRAIN SA CONGRESS ON 9 MARCH 2011. HE FOCUSED MAINLY ON THE CHALLENGES FACING DEVELOPING PRODUCERS AND GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE TO ASSIST THEM.

"As black producers, we face the same challenges as the commercial producers and in many cases the challenges hit us harder because we have no reserves," Jan said before proceeding to give examples of problems faced and how the government has failed them.

The first concern he raised was the low pH level of soil. He pointed out how last year the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) in the Free State promised lime to their producers. GPS maps were made, soil samples were taken, recommendations made, quantities of lime determined and the money was available in the budget. This was all done by May 2010 and yet the lime still has not been spread on the lands. "This affected the summer crop last year and will again affect the wheat crop this year," Jan said.



The poor condition of machinery and tractors was his second concern. He talked about how Grain SA did a thorough assessment of the tractors and machinery of 42 producers in the Free State and requested the DAFF to assist the producers with R2,5 million for the repairs. This was ready on 12 March 2010, but to date nothing has happened.

His next concern was damaged contours and waterways. "The DAFF has a Land Care programme which does good work, but their budget is too small and the land is washing away faster than they can work."

He also mentioned the poor state of our country's roads and its negative effect on producers before moving on to the problem of overgrazing. "Overgrazing should be managed by the DAFF through a programme that used to be known as *bodem beskerming*," Jan suggested.

The failure of municipalities to manage commonage lands was also on his list as well as the difficulties to acquiring production loans. Jan explained that last year only 25% of the lands of black producers were planted because the producers could not access production loans. Profits are too small to justify a loan. Grain SA created business plans for 152 producers in the programme who wanted to plant summer crops. The producers needed temporary grants to make this viable but the government never made a decision on the matter. "27 000 hectares of land could have been planted by these black producers – the government did nothing to help, but they say they are worried about food security."

Jan also expressed concern for the fact that extension officers are not able to help producers. "They do not have any practical farming experience and most do not even visit the farms."

The last example of government's failure to address the concerns of developing farmers were the issue of the Department of Land Affairs giving land to people who are not producers. "Good producers continue to struggle without land of their own, while land is given to others who cannot use it."

Jan Botha ended off his speech by pleading to the chairman of the Congress to pass on their message to the highest levels of government. "They are failing the black producers and we will never transform the sector unless they start delivering to the people," he concluded.

**ILANA KOEGELENBERG, GRAIN SA
CONTRIBUTOR**

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