

PULA INVULA

Grain SA magazine for
developing producers

Sound management will give you the edge

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DO YOU CARE FOR YOUR ANIMALS PROPERLY? OR IS THE GRAZING ON YOUR FARM SHOWING SIGNS OF OVERGRAZING? DO YOU EXPERIENCE THE SATISFACTION OF OBSERVING YOUR SUCCESSFUL CROP? AFTER HARVESTING HAVE YOU ATTENDED TO YOUR LANDS?

What makes one producer more successful than another? This can be debated endlessly. However, finally all reasons can be relayed to the quality of management and in the case of a farming business – farm management.

Definition of farm management

Numerous definitions for farm management exist but by combining all definitions they all more or less state that farm management is “the efficient employment or combination of all resources, human and physical, to achieve the aims of the farming business.”

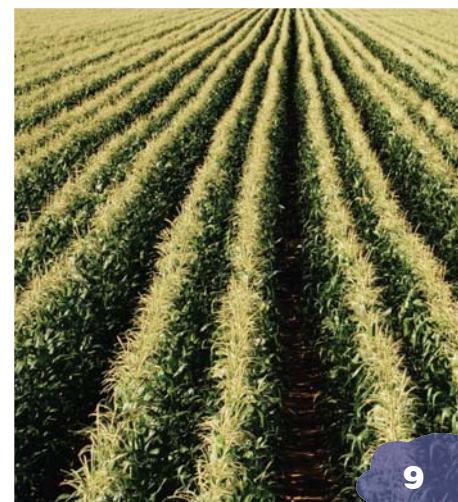
A bit theoretical some will say, but let us analyse the definition beginning at the aims or objectives of a farming business. One dare say that the overall or most important aim would be to make a profit and thereby a sustainable profit. Yes, there

could be additional objectives such as to improve the standard of your living, to produce a product consumers would prefer and others. However all additional objectives can only eventually be achieved if a profit is made. Although not really an objective, many producers prefer to stay on and manage a farming business because of the good way of life. When no profits are made even the good way of life becomes not so good any more. In financial terms the objective would be stated to be a good return on investment, however for simplicity sake let us refer to making a profit. In the most basic form profit being determined by income minus expenditures ($P = I - E$ or $I - E = P$).

The human and physical resources, mentioned in the definition, are also referred to as production factors, being management, labour, land and capital. Labour representing all employees. Land represents the physical land (soil (lands), vegetation (grazing), water). Capital is the term used for physical money and other immovable assets such as buildings, fencing, kraals, sheds and so forth and movable assets such as vehicles, implements, tractors, breeding livestock and production inputs and so on.



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Mme Jane says...

In spite of great efforts to control weeds, we have found that in this particularly wet season, many producers have struggled to control weeds. This year has been a good example to show producers that using chemical weed control is the way to go! In many cases, the lands were too wet for the producers to cultivate between the rows and in many cases the producers lost the fight against the weeds.

It is a good time to look at your lands so that you are fully aware of the problems that you will be facing next year. Weeds should never surprise you – they could be perennial weeds that have been present in the land for many seasons, or next year's weeds will be from weed seeds that have fallen to the ground in the current season. It is not too late to make a difference in your lands. Remember the following:

- Do not ignore small patches of a weed, control the patch before it spreads.
- Identify the weed correctly so that you know the enemy and are able to make an effort to control it.
- Never let the weed plant go to seed, most perennial weeds can expand by seed and vegetatively.
- Manage the weed in conventional crop production. Remember to find out about possible herbicides that can be used to control the weed.
- Do not allow the weed to grow freely on the head-land (*wenakker* – or edge of the land). Bad infestations can start here and later spread to the land.
- Make sure that your seedbed preparation is good, there should be no weeds in the land before you plant. This will give the crop a chance to develop without competition.
- If perennials are present, consider using no-till methods so that you control the weed chemically.
- Cultivate lands where the perennial weeds are present. The tillage affects the weeds badly. (See point above, in some cases chemical weed control may be the better choice).
- Be careful not to spread the weeds mechanically by having the root segments, tubers and rhizomes carried into a clean land on the mechanical equipment. The rush to get across the next land may cause people to overlook the sanitisation of equipment.
- Map the areas on your farm where these weeds are present in the autumn so that you can remember to manage them in the next season.

Fortunately the prices for all the grains seem to be rising – I sincerely hope that this trend will continue so that you, the producer, can realise a profit after you have harvested and sold your crop. Remember that farming is more than just a way of life – it is a business and you need to focus all your efforts on making a profit so that you can be a sustainable producer.



How do I become a member of Grain SA?

ANY PERSON WHO IS A GRAIN PRODUCER CAN BECOME A MEMBER OF GRAIN SOUTH AFRICA. THERE ARE DIFFERENT TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP OF THIS ORGANISATION, BUT THE MOST COMMON FORMS ARE FULL COMMERCIAL MEMBERS, AND STUDY GROUP MEMBERS.

The fees payable to become a full commercial member is a fee of R2 per ton for every ton of grain delivered, with a minimum fee of R570 (including VAT).

There is study group membership which costs R10 per study group member per year. If there are people who would like to form a study group and become a member of Grain SA, please contact your nearest Development Officer whose names and contact details appear on the back page of this newsletter. The purpose of the study groups is to have regular meetings during which all aspects of grain production are discussed. Being a member of a study group also means gaining access to the many training courses that are offered by Grain SA throughout the year.

We are hoping that more and more of the developing producers will become fully fledged commercial members of Grain SA by paying their levy of R2 per ton for every ton they harvest. Grain SA needs your membership so that we can bargain on behalf of all the grain producers in South Africa.

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



1 Sound management will give you the edge

The four management tasks

The action of management consists of four management tasks namely planning, organising, implementing and control whereby;

- **Planning** is what to do, how to do it, when to do it.
- **Organising** is who will do what, when will it be done, where will it be done (allocation of resources).
- **Implementing** is practically and physically doing what was planned and organised.
- **Controlling** is to compare what was done, good or not so good, to what was planned and organised and to seek reasons for deviations in order to improve in the future.

At the same time, whilst applying each of the management tasks the producer/manager must be the leader, and he must take decisions, communicate internally and externally, delegate work, coordinate sections, motivate his people and maintain discipline both informally and formally.

Furthermore to be in a position to make a sustainable profit and achieve all objectives a farming business must produce a product and be able to sell the product – it must therefore meet the needs of customers. In broad terms products may be food, fibre, timber or game. The expression “needs” includes aspects such as quality and quantity of the product, specific time of delivery and/or consistent delivery, place of delivery and packaging.

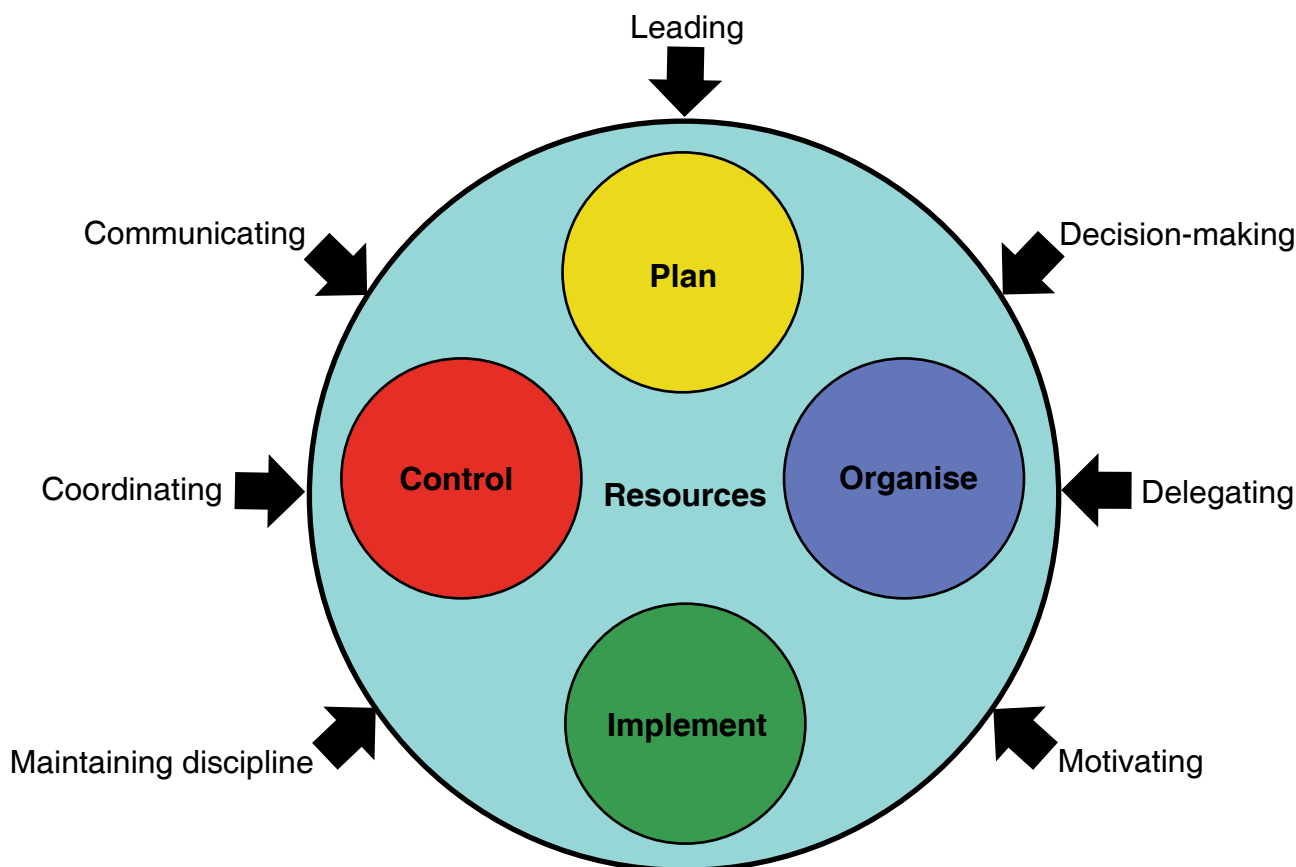
Regarding the basic formula of income - expenditures = profit/loss ($I - E = P/L$), it is important to remember everything we do or at times do not do what should have been done, in terms of our business, eventually reflects in our formula. Income can increase or decrease and the same

with expenditures. Do we consider all phone calls we make? Are all calls really necessary? Do we consider all trips to town? Do we supply our livestock with supplementary feeding when needed? Do we have our tractors and other machinery serviced and maintained regularly?

In view of the discussion the term farm management can thus be explained as to plan, organise, implement and control your employees, your land and all immovable assets and all movable assets including production inputs by leading, taking decisions, communicating, delegating, co-ordinating, motivating and maintaining discipline to produce products customers need at a profit. Diagrammatically illustrated as below.

The questions at the commencement of the article can now be re-phrased by asking; do you plan, organise, implement and control to take care of your livestock properly? Do you plan, organise, implement and control your grazing system properly? Is the production of a crop properly planned, organised, implemented and controlled, including for instance such an aspect as soil analyses?

The four management tasks can also be seen as the wheels of a vehicle or tractor. Each wheel must be inflated properly for the vehicle/tractor to move forward efficiently. Should only one wheel not be inflated properly or at worst be flat the vehicle will still be able to move forward but with less efficiency and sooner or later damage will occur to such an extent that the vehicle will come to a complete standstill. The same will happen to a business. Should one of the management tasks not be executed properly, your business could still make a profit but sooner or later, be it five years or ten years or longer, your business will grind to a halt. And that is also the challenge for the future; if your management does not improve every



MANAGEMENT = PRODUCT

Sound management will give you the edge

year, eventually your business will come to a halt, being that profits are not made any more. One cannot do things the same every year; you must improve by increasing your income and/or controlling your expenditures.

Income can be increased for instance by higher prices and/or higher production per unit (maize – tons/hectare) and/or improved production plans (precision farming) and/or increased productivity and/or a change of enterprises and/or diversify.

Costs can be limited for instance by bargaining for lower prices of inputs and/or improved production plans (precision farming) and/or reducing costs as by reducing staff and/or controlling costs by the implementation of budgets and/or higher productivity.

Within farming business the owner/manager must manage the following areas:

- Production management (physical production of products);
- Purchasing management (buying of production inputs and assets);
- Marketing management (selling of products);
- Financial management (managing of finances includes taxes, estate planning, risk and uncertainty);
- Administrative management (office and records);
- Human resource management (personnel);
- Public relationship management (relationships and communication);
- Asset (control, maintenance and selling of assets) and stock management (control of production inputs); and
- General management (aspects such as occupational health and safety, fire control and farm safety).

Although the areas are mentioned separately, the areas are interrelated and whilst you may be busy managing (planning or organising or implementing or controlling) one area you will most probably be busy managing one or more of the other areas. For instance whilst you are busy with production management you could also be busy with financial management, purchase management and human resource management. This makes farm management so challenging.

It is also however true that one cannot manage without information, both externally and internally. Thus information needs to be gathered, as much as possible and can only done by reading, listening, observing and



recording. All should be familiar with the expression, if you do not measure, you cannot manage. If you do not know that the calving percentage of your herd of beef cattle is only 60%, what are you going to manage to improve the calving percentage? So you start with recording and then gather information on what causes the calving percentage to be low and how to improve or rectify the possible causes. The same applies to for instance to the yield of your crops, milk production, production of wool, growth rate of your broiler chickens or whatever.

Lastly as farm managers we must also remember that it is part of our responsibility to bear in mind the conservation of the environment when we are managing our businesses by applying good agricultural practices.

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



Oil & Protein seeds

Sunflower – harvesting, handling and storage

THE PRODUCER MUST MAKE SURE THAT QUALITY CONTROL BEGINS AT THE PLANNING AND PRE-PLANTING STAGES AND INCLUDES ANY MANAGEMENT ACTION THAT WILL ENSURE OPTIMUM PRODUCTION.

Some factors to keep in mind and that can influence the final quality of the seed harvested are: soil preparation, soil depth, pH, mineral balance, stored moisture, cultivar choice, correct fertilisation, weed and pest control and harvesting at the correct stage and proper handling, including cleaning, drying and storage methods.

Harvesting

Harvesting constitutes a major and critical operation for any farming enterprise. Harvesting is the first step in the post production system including processing, storage and preservation of the sunflower crop. Within the different production regions in South Africa harvesting, storage and processing covers a range of activities from the picking and storing of whole sunflower heads for later threshing on small farms to the fully mechanised commercial grain farming operations.

Mechanised harvesting

Timing

Sunflowers are usually combined before the maize crop in a normal year from the end of February for early planted seed to May for the later planted seed. This harvest can usually be completed before maize harvesting commences. This is important in smaller operations using the same combines to harvest sunflowers and maize. Any producer can make use of a contractor that has machines setup for maize and/or sunflowers. The period between maturity and harvest should be kept as short as possible to minimise losses from bird damage and head-rot diseases.

Sunflower plants are physiologically mature when the back of the head has turned from green to yellow, a change that usually takes place before the heads are dry enough to harvest. The later planted sunflowers will only be ready for harvesting after a killing frost early in the winter months. Before harvest use a moisture meter to monitor moisture levels in the crop at and after physiological maturity to ensure that the crop is harvested at the optimum time. If you do not own a moisture-meter samples can be taken at regular intervals, to your local silo operator or in consultation with your combine contactor, so as to decide when it is the correct stage to harvest.

To reduce seed shattering loss during harvest and loss from birds sunflowers can be harvested at moisture contents as high as 20% to 25% and then dried in a grain drier to 9.5% which is a safe moisture content for bin



storage. However conditions in South Africa favour the complete drying of sunflowers in the land before harvesting. It must always be kept in mind that sunflowers with a moisture content above 10% are very susceptible to fungus attack.

Combining

A combine's forward speed should be between five and eight kilometres per hour. The optimum forward speed will vary depending on the moisture content of the sunflower speed and yield of the crop. Forward speed should be decreased as the seed moisture content decreases to reduce the shatter loss as the heads feed into the combine. Faster forward speeds are possible if the seed moisture is between 12% and 15%.

The higher speeds should not overload the cylinder and the separating area sieves except in an extremely heavy crop. Seed having 12% to 15 % moisture will thresh very easily as it passes through the cylinder.

Combine Adjustments

A summary of some of the problems encountered in combine settings and possible causes are shown in the table on page six:



Sunflower – harvesting, handling and storage

Problem	Possible cause/solution
Partially threshed heads on the ground.	Concave spacing too wide.
Excessive tailings.	Air flow too low, over threshing at the cylinder/rotor. Chaffer openings too narrow.
Excess waste material in the hopper bin.	Over threshing, cylinder/rotor speed too high, concave too tight, fan too low, or sieve too wide.
Broken or crushed heads.	High cylinder/rotor speeds, narrow concave spacing.
Crushed seed with an intact hull.	Concave spacing too tight.
De-hulled or broken seeds.	High cylinder/rotor speeds or excessive material from the returns.
Un-threshed heads on the ground.	Poor gathering at the header and pans.
Seeds being thrown out the back of the combine.	Speed/air flow, slow down the machine and air flow rate.

Harvest losses range from 3% to 5% but may be up to 10% or 15% under adverse conditions. Mechanical harvesters must be checked for efficiency by testing actual losses before and after the combine has combined a test strip.

Moisture meters and testers

To ensure that the producer can begin to manage harvesting and storage moisture content effectively it essential to have access to a modern moisture tester or to purchase your own if your production volume justifies it.

- Accurate moisture tests are important in managing and marketing grain.
- Guessing or inaccurate tests can lead to:
 - Spoilage if grain is too wet and placed in low temperature or natural air drying bins.
 - Extra drying cost and combine loss if grain is harvested too wet.
 - Moisture shrinkage and extra drying charges.
 - Loss of crop value.

To make accurate moisture tests first obtain a representative sample.

Sampling

- Obtaining a representative sample before harvest as the moisture content of standing unharvested sunflowers can often be overestimated. This results in the harvesting being done more later than sooner.
- Harvest a portion and then test it.
- Mix hand-picked heads and rubbed off seeds from several plants selected from all over the land. Make three tests on this sample and average the results.
- Take the sample to your local silo operator for accurate testing.
- Make regular assessments after the heads have turned yellow so that the crop can be harvested at an optimum seed moisture content.

Storage at the farm/village level

Metal silos

Probably the best option for a producer that is at commercial production level. Many steel galvanised grain bins sizes from 30 to 10's of thousands of tons capacity are available. If funds are limited a few smaller silo's of about 30 tons capacity can be erected that make up part of grain handling and storage system that can be designed from the outset to become the start of the establishment of a comprehensive system tailored to the future production volumes from a producer.

Factors and considerations influencing the harvesting and storing grain by producers depends on whether or not the producer has no storage or his own storage for part of the crop or all of the maize produced on an area. The larger producers would probably have facilities to handle only part of the bulk of the main crop produced. Larger farms are geographically spread and it is probably more cost effective to deliver to a commercial silo directly from the land rather than to be handled from the land to farm silo and then once again to be delivered to the commercial silo's.

The producer has own storage

If you have your own handling facilities including, cleaning, drying and storage bins then the grain can be harvested as soon as the sunflower seed will thresh off the heads, cleaned, dried, stored and sold at the optimum time taking into account what marketing and selling arrangements have been made. If the crop can be harvested as soon as possible any further weather and other risks of loss or damage can be reduced.



The producer has no storage

Sunflowers produced on farms without storage facilities will usually be harvested and immediately transported in bulk to the local silo's. The producer will have to wait for the crop to be dry enough for delivery to the local silo. The grain must be dryer than 10% to meet gazetted standards for sunflowers.

Keep in contact with your local silo operator to find out at what maximum moisture content the grain can be delivered. In high yield seasons the silo operator will not be able to handle as high a volume of maize at a higher moisture content. The contractor should only commence harvesting at a moisture content that can be immediately delivered for storage.

Although it is an advantage to have your own storage facilities there are risks and a large investment involved in equipment and the management of handling, cleaning, drying, fumigating for insects, and keeping the crop at an optimum moisture content throughout the storage period.

Proper sunflower seed storage

For a producer that already has his own storage shed or storage silo's the following checks and procedures will assist to store your own grain successfully, prior to selling the crop.

- Clean the storage facility. Thoroughly clean the shed or silo, intake pits, augers and conveyers, aeration fans, ducts by removing any packed waste material and old grain which can harbour insects or fungi. Seal cracks and crevices that can allow insects, fungi or moisture to enter the storage.
- Consider using an approved bin treatment for insects. Treat the inside of the storage system and beneath any aeration flooring with a residual spray for insect control. Be sure the chemical is registered for use with sunflower and follow the label instructions closely.
- Ensure that the stored grain is cleaned of foreign materials and fluff. Sunflower seed stored with excessive foreign material, florets, broken seeds, weed seeds as any of these materials make the whole sample more susceptible to fungi and insect problems. This material is usually at a higher moisture content and can cause heating. It is advisable to put in a suction cleaner in the system after the intake pit auger or elevator before the clean seed is stored in bulk.
- Crops store best if they are cool, dry and clean.
- Store at a safe moisture content. Sunflower seed should be stored at 10% or less moisture if you plan to market the crop within six months following harvest.
- Silo aeration systems are key. An aeration fan is meant to cool sunflower. Fans should be turned off during weather of high humidity or rainy weather.
- Check the seed. Sunflower seed should be sampled weekly until seed temperatures are cooled to the winter storage temperature. Samples should be taken every four weeks during the winter and once a week during the summer months.
- Check the sunflower not the bin. When sampling probe the sunflower seed pile and be observant of temperature, moisture, insects, fungi and odour differences from the previous inspection. If the probe is hot take immediate action in moving or circulating the whole bin of seed. Feel, smell, or walk around the bin and probe the seed bin from various positions at the side bottom and top of the bins to be able to monitor the condition of the seed in the whole bin.
- Act quickly to stabilise a problem. Should a problem be detected stabilise it by aerating immediately, move the grain into another bin or shed floor or load out into trucks and deliver to the nearest commercial silo or buyers facility.



Sunflower – harvesting, handling and storage

Sunflower seed that is not stored in optimum conditions can cost the producer a large amount of money. Stored grain insects are either already in the storage before filling or may enter later. The following steps will aid in the prevention of stored grain insect problems:

- Clean storage thoroughly prior to filling.
- After cleaning old crop residues and dust and repairing use a residual spray to treat the inside surface of the bin two weeks prior to filling. (Follow manufactures specifications and withdrawal periods to avoid contamination for animal or human consumption).
- Avoid filling mixing new crop with old crop.
- Clean and check the aeration system. Foreign material may collect in ducts creating a breeding environment for insects and obstructing air-flow.

Bio-deterioration

The condition of stored grain is determined by a complex interaction between the grain the macro and micro environment and a variety of organisms including micro-organisms such as mould, insects, mites, rodents and birds which might attack it. Grain provides an abundant source of nutrients and the spoilage caused by the organisms mentioned above is called bio-deterioration.

Moulds

Contamination by moulds is determined by the temperature (less than 0°C to 50°C) of the grain and the availability of water and oxygen. Moulds utilise intergranular water vapour, the concentration of which is determined by the state of equilibrium between the free water within the grain (grain moisture content) and the water in the vapour phase immediately surrounding the grain kernel.

Insects and mites (arthropods)

- Cause physical damage and nutrient losses.
- Metabolic activity increases moisture content and temperature of grain.



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



- Act as carriers of mould spores.
- Faecal matter of insect and mites used as a growth medium by moulds.
- Increasing proportion of broken kernels decreases storage life considerably.

Secondary metabolites

Secondary metabolites are those compounds produced by living organism's including moulds which are not essential for growth but are highly toxic to animals, humans and plants.

These "mycotoxins" have been extensively studied since 1961 when a group of highly toxic *Aspergillus flavus* toxins the "aflatoxins" were isolated. Any activity which disturbs the stability of an ecosystem will increase the production of secondary metabolites including mycotoxins. These activities include the widespread use of fertilizers and pesticides, and cultivation high yielding and limited plant varieties.

Mycotoxins have been implicated in a range of human and animal diseases and/or animal diseases and occur in a variety of grains. The ingestion of mycotoxins can produce both acute (short term) and chronic (medium/long term) toxicities ranging from death to chronic interferences with the function of the central nervous, cardiovascular and pulmonary systems and of the alimentary tract. Some mycotoxins are carcinogenic, mutagenic and immunosuppressive. *Aflatoxin B* is one of the most potent hepatocarcinogens (cancer causing agents) known. 

INFORMATION ADAPTED FROM THE ADVANCED SUNFLOWER PRODUCTION MANUAL

The importance of crop estimates

THE NATIONAL CROP ESTIMATES COMMITTEE MAKES FIGURES AVAILABLE AT VARIOUS STAGES DURING THE CROP GROWING SEASONS WHICH GIVE AN ESTIMATION OF THE CROP ON THE LAND AT THAT STAGE. THESE CROP ESTIMATES PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE DETERMINATION OF THE PRICE OF THAT CROP.

What are crop estimates?

Grain SA understands that crop estimates are a very controversial issue. Clear thinking has to be applied to the role and function of the National Crop Estimates committee before suggesting changes that could have a further negative impact for the producers.

It must be remembered that the National Crop Estimates Committee does an estimate on the entire crop and not just that which is offered on the commercial market. It is furthermore not possible to determine the surface area planted as well as the yield to be obtained – it remains an estimate. The quality of the estimate can only be as good as those who participate in the provision of the information. The biggest source of information remains the producers.

Who is the National Crop Estimates Committee (CEC)?

The Crop Estimates Committee (CEC) comprises of:

- Approximately 3 000 producers who cooperate and send their information to the committee on a monthly basis.
- Institutions by the name of Spatial Intel and Geoterra Image who determine the area planted to the crop with the use of satellite imaging.
- The ARC institute for grain crops as well as the Small Grains Institute who work on statistical data and randomisation in co-operation with the producers.
- Representatives of the Provincial Departments of Agriculture who give information on the status in the production areas.

- Agri businesses that make their own crop estimates in their areas. This information is given to the CEC but their estimated areas planted are not used in the estimates.
- The Directorate of Agricultural Statistics of the National Department of Agriculture who gather the information, process the data and make the official estimates.

The following are important questions:

- If the CEC stops doing estimates, will there be no national crop estimate done? The answer to this is no because other organisations will make estimates and then it will be unclear as to whose estimates are correct.
- Is the CEC independent or is it manipulated by role players in the industry? It is very difficult for any individual to manipulate the CEC as there are a number of independent role player who all contribute to the authenticity of the information.

What is the opinion of Grain SA?

Grain SA believes that:

- An independent, accurate and timely surface and crop estimate is necessary for the correct functioning of the grain markets.
- Producers, the National Crop Estimates Committee and other role players should work together to achieve this.
- The members of Grain SA and all other producers and role players should be encouraged to give correct information frequently and consistently.



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



Focus on Uphuzane Study Group

Study group name

Uphuzane study group.

Where is the Uphuzane study group situated?

Uphuzane is situated about 25 kilometres from Paulpietersburg in the Northern part of KwaZulu-Natal right next to the Bivane River. This is a very deep rural area with poor infrastructure and the producers lack the skills and knowledge to be able to farm sustainable and independently.

Membership of the group

The study group consists of male and female producers who are very eager to learn and improve their income, better their livelihoods and make better use of their natural resources.

Arable land available

At the moment the producers make use of about seventy hectares of arable land but there is still a lot of fallow land available.

What are the reasons for unused lands?

The reasons for these unused lands are mainly financial, because their fields are communal lands and financiers are reluctant to lend money. Another problem is mechanisation, the lack of tractors and implements.

How often does the study group meet?

The study group meets once a month to discuss problems and how to make use of their limited resources.

What are the advantages of being a member of the study group?

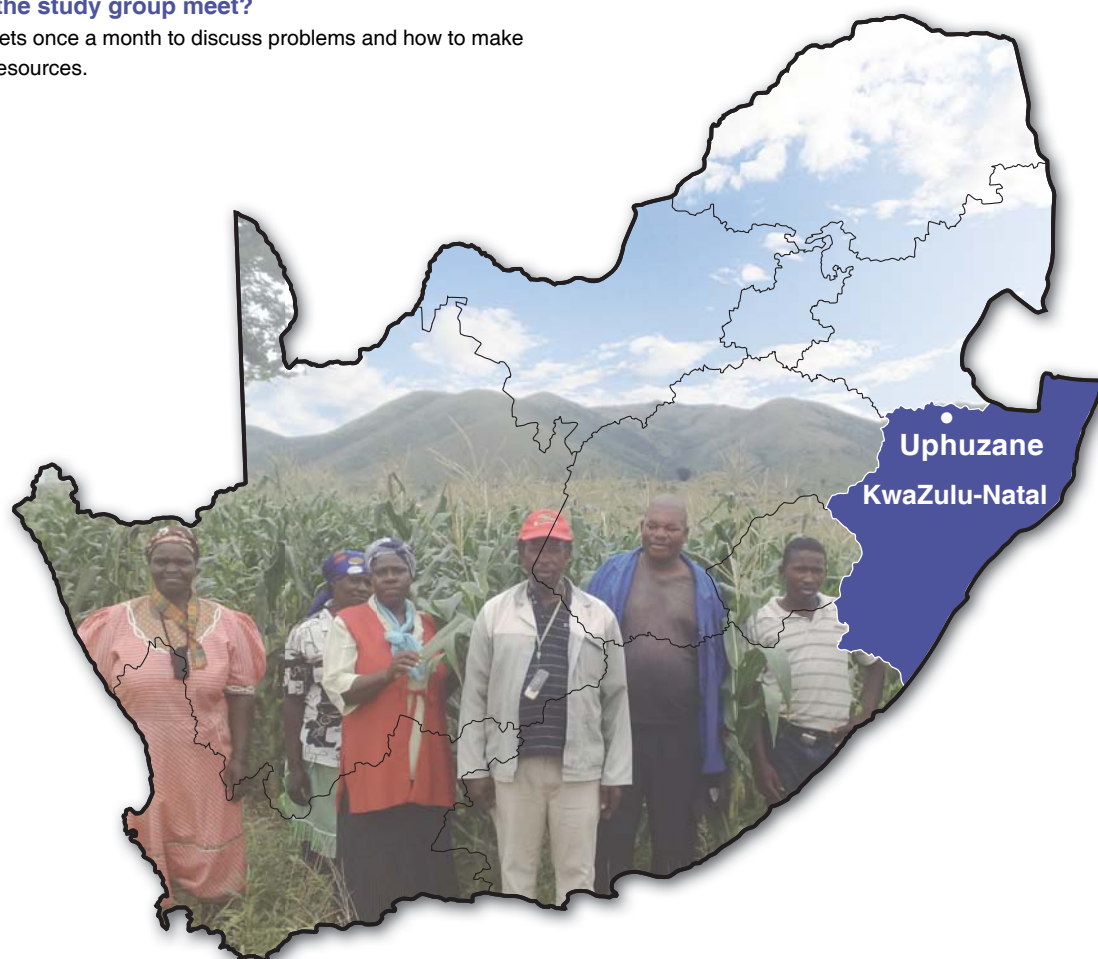
Great was my surprise to find that the producers have started using modern production practices (no-till) in the 2009/2010 season with great success. In this current season they have even increased the use of no-till maize with even greater success. Their willingness to change from the old methods of planting maize into the modern way proves that they are not resistant to change and that the training and development is bearing some fruit. (Walala wasala – if you snooze, you lose).

The producers find that they get a lot of information and knowledge from being part of a study group and attending farmer's days. And another means of getting a lot of experience is the use of trial plots to show the producers the right and modern way of planting maize.

Is there any interaction between the study group and the commercial farming sector?

There is interaction between the members of the study group and local commercial producers, but the distance from them and the commercial producers is challenging. The study group has a good relationship with the Department of Agriculture and the commercial producers in the area.

JURIE MENTZ, PROVINCIAL CO-ORDINATOR OF THE GRAIN SA FARMER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME





Get to know...

Victor Mahlinza

SIBONGILE VICTOR MICHAEL MAHLINZA WAS BORN IN ESTCOURT ON 14 JULY 1961 AND GREW UP IN THE NTABAMHLOPHE (WHITE MOUNTAIN) AREA. HE STARTED HIS PRIMARY LEVEL EDUCATION IN 1968 AT CORNFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL. IN 1976 HE ATTENDED MTSHEZI HIGH SCHOOL WHERE HE COMPLETED GRADE 11 IN 1982.

In 1983 he decided to go to Johannesburg where he worked as a secretary for a construction contractor for one year. Victor then worked as a storeman in a chemical company in Johannesburg till 1986. From 1987 to 1988 Victor was employed by M & L Distributors as a truck driver. From 1989 to 1995 he subcontracted to AMCA Construction delivering products. During 1996 Victor wanted to become a producer and returned home. He started farming and used oxen to cultivate his crop. He bought his first tractor in 2003.

Family life

Victor is married to Linah and they are blessed with five children; three daughters and two sons. Fikile (26) has two children. Sizwe (19) completed grade 12 in Pietermaritzburg at Zakhe Agricultural College and completed a vegetable course at Buhle College in Delmas and currently works with Victor on his farm. Zandile (15) is in grade nine at Abantungwa High School and Mpumelelo (11) is in grade four at Mathamo Primary School.

Victor is also engaged to Norah and they have three children; one son and two daughters. Ayanda (24) completed grade 12 at Mtshezi High School and obtained an N3 certificate in Civil Engineering at Berea Technical College in Durban. Ayanda also works with his father on the farm. His two daughters, Thakasile (20) is currently in grade eleven at Abantungwa High School and Bongeka (12) is in grade six at Mathamo Primary School.

Victor has two tractors; a Massey Ferguson 440 4 x 4 and a Massey Ferguson 5465 and also owns a Colt 2.8 car. He is going to achieve a lot in farming because he grew up in a farming environment. He has a vision and is brave enough to face the challenges of being a producer.

How does he finance his crops?

Victor does not make use of a financier but finances his own crops, which is currently a problem for him as he mainly uses communal land and hires about fifteen hectares of arable land from a commercial producer.

Where does he get his inputs?

He buys all his inputs from TWK in Winterton and buys his chemicals from Farmers Agri-Care in Winterton. Victor buys seed directly from Pannar and Monsanto and is very happy with the service that the input suppliers offer.

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

Victor sees the role of the Department of Agriculture as very positive in his area as they give him good support and he sees the Department of Agriculture as fulfilling its role. The local Department of Agriculture has helped the producers to plant yellow maize for SAB. His success in farming can be attributed to good planning and very hard work.

What does he see as a threat to his progress and success?

He feels his biggest threat to his progress is financing the crop right through to the marketing stage. Labour costs are also of a great concern to him.

Which aspects of his farming enterprise would he like to improve on?

Victor would like to improve on his cattle and goat farming as he sees this as a very important factor to stabilise his crop farming. His survival strategy for this year is diversification; seeing that he plants maize, dry beans, vegetables and chicory under contract for Nestle.



JURIE MENTZ, PROVINCIAL CO-ORDINATOR OF THE GRAIN SA FARMER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME



PULA IMVULA

*This publication is made possible by
the contribution of the Maize Trust.*

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Afrikaans, Tswana, Sesotho,
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Control unwanted weed seed in maize

HARVEST TIME IS DRAWING NEAR AND THERE ARE STILL A NUMBER OF LANDS THAT ARE FULL OF WEEDS. AS WE HAVE DISCUSSED MANY TIMES BEFORE, WEEDS ARE THE ENEMY OF THE CROP PRODUCER.

One of the most important aspects of grain production is the control of weeds. The presence of weeds in crops can be detrimental in many aspects, particularly in terms of crop losses and contamination of the seed. With a world shortage of edible grains, we cannot afford to have grain condemned as a result of contamination by weed seeds. Khaki weed seed cannot be allowed in maize as it results in a smell that is unacceptable to both man and animals. According to the plant improvement and seed purity acts, certain seeds are totally forbidden in maize. According to these acts, for example, there may not be even one *olieboom* (*datura*) seed in a load of maize. *Datura* is extremely poisonous to man and numerous cases of poisoning have been recorded.

One of the most important lessons to be learned in terms of weed control is to eliminate the causes of contamination. Maize that is not contaminated is the result of continued good

management of the maize crop rather than sporadic attempts at weed control.

Good farming methods include the following:

- The improvement of the soil fertility (certain weeds thrive in poor infertile soil);
- The use of good clean seed at planting time;
- Ensure that the neighbouring areas are not a source of weed seed;
- Good use of weed control methods to control weeds early in the season will prevent competition with the plant for moisture and fertility and prevent seed set that could cause later contamination;
- If the weed control early in the season was not adequate, the weeds should be chopped out and removed from the land before the harvest. This will prevent the seeds getting mixed up with the maize seed; and
- If large weeds are removed after they have set seed, it is advisable to burn them to prevent them germinating in the following season.

Remember that a good crop implies a lot of seed – a lot of clean seed!



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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.*