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Winter crops in South Africa

Sabhinah Ncongwane

Not only the cold temperatures have an influence on the growth potential of the various types of crops grown through the winter period, but rainfall also plays an important role. Seasonal rainfall in southern Africa requires irrigation for good winter crop production (with the exception of the winter-rainfall areas of the Western Cape). The best option is always to grow crops during winter, best suited for the cold conditions.

A number of fruit tree crops, some vegetables, and irrigated and rain-fed wheat (in the Cape) are well suited for cold winters. A number of fruit tree crops prefer very cold winter periods to ensure optimum flowering and fruit production, referred to as the "chilling requirement". A "chilling unit" is one hour experienced at below 7 degrees Celsius by the tree crop. Apples have the highest requirement for accumulated chilling units, followed by cherries, apricots and peaches. A number of other non-deciduous fruit trees have chilling requirements but to a lesser extent.

To produce vegetables successfully during the winter, a producer must plant suitable crop varieties, but it is important to have ample water available for irrigation.

It is important to give close attention to vegetable crops' sensitivity to frost. "Frost-hardy" vegetables are broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage chou moellier (kale), onions, spinach and others. Some other crops, such as carrots, cauliflower, celery, peas and swiss chard, are tolerant of light frost.

Milder frost-free winter conditions are

experienced in some parts of the country such as the Lowveld, Limpopo valley and some coastal areas. Tropical and sub-tropical fruit crops can be grown including bananas, mangos and papayas. However, in marginal climatic conditions, unexpected frosts often damage the trees resulting in significantly reduced yields for the season. A wider range of vegetables can be grown in these conditions compared with cold, frosty areas. If there is a market demand, maize, for example, can be planted early (late winter) for green-mealie production.

In summary, the selection of the appropriate varieties for cold-season production, and for market demand, is an essential part of winter, vegetable production. For successful perennial fruit tree growth, varieties must be able to tolerate and benefit from the local winter conditions.

Extension Suite Online provides a wide variety of information on all of the above mentioned crops.



Sabhinah Ncongwane

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Tips and tools for advisors

Dr John Lapham

Classification of small-scale, emerging and resource-poor farmers

The terms small-scale farmers, emerging farmers and resource-poor farmers are all very similar concepts. Defining these terms too specifically often lead to misconceptions. According to the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) 2011 [1], small-scale farmers produce 70% of the global food production. However, there is no clear definition of who the small-scale food producers are because it is very difficult to define small-scale farmers. For instance, 2 hectares of intensive peri-urban cultivation in the Gauteng area will have a greater financial turn-over than 500 hectares of land in the Karoo. The use of farm size as a measure is therefore somewhat, misleading. Financial turn-over would be more appropriate.

Resource-poor farmers often lack enabling infrastructure, assets, information and credit amongst other impediments. In this respect, the use of mobile technology is an example of a tool promoting small-scale farming; it improves information flow and can provide financial services through mobile money. These measures can enable farmers to emerge from domestic production into mainstream agribusiness.

[1] Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication. www.unep.org/greeneconomy.

[2] J.F. Kirsten and J. van Zyl, Defining Small-Scale Farmers in the South African Context. *Agrekon*, Vol. 37, No. 4; December 1998.

TOP NATIONAL ESO USER:

The monthly national ESO user will receive the following prizes: First time National ESO User 2015: **4 Gig USB memory stick**, second time National ESO User 2015: **Digital Camera**, third time National ESO User 2015: **Nokia Lumia 520**, fourth time National ESO User 2015: **Samsung Galaxy Tab**.

Congratulations to **Louis Khomola** (Limpopo Department of Agriculture), the ESO National Top User for May 2015.



Louis Khomola

Mr Louis Khomola, a first time national winner, from Limpopo Department of Agriculture is the Extension Suite Online National Top User for May with a user rating of 12,513. Congratulations and well done from the ESO user fraternity.

Louis stays in the Mashamba Village and his nearest town is Mahkado. The people from Mashamba village are interested in both livestock and crop production. Most dwellings in the village have backyard gardens and a small kraal with cattle, goats or pigs. Louis says that these are some of the factors that motivated him to study agriculture so that he can assist his community towards creating a sustainable living from agriculture.

Louis studied agriculture management at university, although he did both animal and plant production studies he currently works mainly in plant production. He originally started work at Vhembe FET College of Agriculture in Mashamba as a lecturer after which he worked as a quarantine technician at Managa border gate between South Africa and Swaziland in Mpumalanga. In July 2011 he started to work at the Department of Agriculture in Limpopo.

Louis currently works in the Mahkado municipality at the Tshitale service centre where he advises the Slangar, Muwaweni, Lufufhe, Mukondeni and Tshivhangani communities through more than 30 farmers, 6 community groups and a primary and secondary school. His district manager is Mrs Raphunga, his municipal manager is Mrs E Mabasa and his service centre manager (acting), is Mr MG Masevhe.

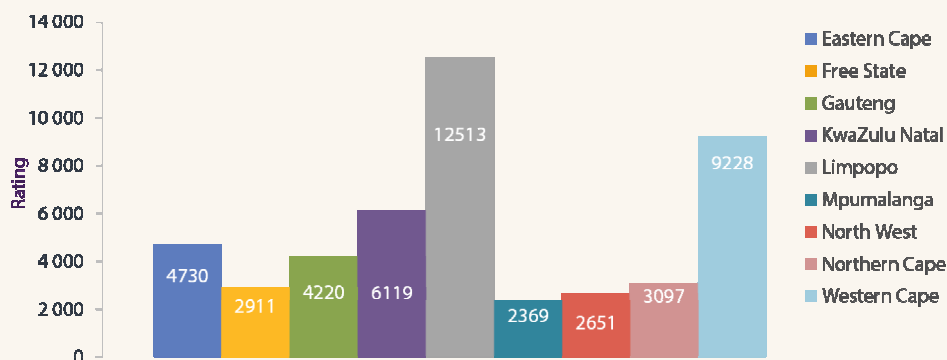
Originally working mainly in plant production Louis was able to further enhance his animal production knowledge by using Extension Suite Online. Through ESO he assists farmers, and encourages all officials to register and start using ESO, since it is a very helpful advisory tool.

EXTENSION SUITE ONLINE UTILISATION:

May 2015

Extension Suite Online (ESO) utilisation is determined through monitoring user utilisation in the nine provinces and by attaching values to Visits, Pages Visited and Duration of Visits; a rating is calculated to establish the ESO National Top User of the Month.

ESO PROVINCIAL TOP USER GRAPH



ESO PROVINCIAL TOP USERS

Province	Name
Eastern Cape	Mzuthule Nobadina
Free State	Griffith Hadebe
Gauteng	Lesego Phakedi
KwaZulu Natal	Thandiwe Sima
Limpopo	Louis Khomola
Mpumalanga	Lucas Shabangu
North West	Mompati Gabanakgosi
Northern Cape	George Du Preez
Western Cape	Riaan Nowers

DISEASE TALK: FEATURED DISEASE

Further information on all featured diseases can be found on ESO.

Scientific Name: *Xanthomonas campestris*

Popular Name: Black Rot

Leaves turn yellowish-brown from the edge and wither, smaller veins turn black.



Black Rot on Broccoli

ESO TIPS:

Departmental publications on ESO

Piet van Zyl

Extension Suite Online consists of nine independent information systems – one system for each province that, for all practical purposes, is the property of each province. This ownership not only implies that agricultural practitioners can use the system. Ownership also implies that provinces build and expand their systems for the benefit of all in the provinces and growing their provincial knowledge base.

Any relevant information that a province may have, and want to protect and share with colleagues, can be presented easily to Manstrat AIS for publication on Extension Suite Online. Provinces (and the National Department) are free

to request the publication of information/newsletters/notices on a continuous basis, or even the advertising of events and special notices. Requests, accompanied by an electronic copy of the required piece, may be sent to piet@manstrat.co.za or support@esuite.co.za to ensure that only approved information (by DAFF or the province) is published. We will do the rest.

Current Departmental Publications are available on the ESO Landing Page under "Extension Suite Online Additional" – "Departmental Publications". Special notices such disaster information can be highlighted on the "Extension Suite Online Landing Page" to ensure immediate attention from users.

Do you have any technology related questions? Send them to newsletter@esuite.co.za, with your name, province and the question and we will answer them in a following newsletter edition.



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