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Empowering South Africa's Subsistence Farmers

Colleen Janse van Rensburg

South Africa with its well-established commercial farming sector has fulfilled the First Millennium Development Goal of combating hunger at a national level, and is ahead of the rest of Africa in self-sufficiency in food production. However, many needy rural families and communities continue to struggle to make a living and live well below the food poverty line.

The South African viewpoint of a "subsistent farmer", is one who is struggling to survive, with limited resources, no income, and producing just enough to feed his or her immediate family. Children raised in these homes have little or no ambition to farm - remembering the difficulties of a family struggling through each day. It is crucial that South Africans realise how important our subsistent farmers are - and get them to understand the importance of their contribution to food security in the country.

While the international commercial farming sector contributes a substantial amount of the world's supply of agricultural products, they cannot provide enough food for the whole world for many reasons, including the availability of produce to those who need it but cannot afford it. Many large operations implement the latest affordable technologies - reducing their reliance on entry-level labour. In South Africa, most available agricultural land is in the hands of small-scale farmers - many who farm purely to survive, while at the same time, the number of large commercial producers have decreased to the point where there are now less commercial farmers than 20 years ago.

Commercial farming is often assumed to be "large-scale" while small-scale farmers are considered often subsistent farmers. This is not always correct. Commercial farmers

produce at the median rate of production per hectare (crops or livestock) regardless of the size of their farm or enterprise. Many successful farmers produce on a small farm where they have the required resources available. Small-scale farmers on smaller farms could always consider farming more intensively, or farm with small animals such as chickens or goats. Having the right support and resources is essential for these farmers to become successful. Subsistent farmers can, by applying the correct methods, turn their farms into profitable businesses.

The government and the private sector have an important role in empowering subsistent farmers to become more than just "better" subsistent farmers. Rewarding these farmers' business and entrepreneurial skills, and providing support and access to finance and infrastructure, will encourage current subsistent farmers to aspire to contribute towards the eradication of hunger and food security in South Africa. Their success will also indirectly contribute to reducing rural poverty through the employment of community members and involving the youth in their agricultural ventures.



Colleen Janse van Rensburg

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Tips and tools for advisors

Weed Control

Portia Phahlane

Weeds are one of a farmer's biggest rivals and can have a devastating effect on the potential yield of crops as they compete with crops for space, light, water, and nutrients.

During the summer months, when climatic conditions are most favourable to them, weeds enjoy vigorous growing stages, posing an even more significant challenge - making a weed control strategy a crucial component in any farmer's management plans.

The longer weeds are left unattended, the more resilient and hard to kill they become. The best time to control them is in their early stages when they are still weak and fragile. It is also the phase when they consume costly amounts of nitrogen from the soil.

Weed control methods include, chemical, mechanical, cultural and biological control. Often, a combination of these methods yield the best results.

ESO National Top User

Portia Phahlane

The National Top User of Extension Suite Online® for October is Kayaletu Noqa from The Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform in the Eastern Cape. Kayaletu works as an Agricultural Development Advisor who specialises in crop production in Elliotdale, in the Mbhashe local municipality, Amathole District. He started working for the Department in 2003 and currently reports to Mr. Malungisa Kebeni (Controller), Mr. Mpahleni Mluleki (Assistant Director), Mr. Kholekile Golela (Deputy Director Mbhashe Municipality), and Mr. T Boko (Amathole Regional Director). Kayaletu's duties include technical advice to small-scale and subsistence vegetable and maize crop producers.

Elliotdale, situated along the coast, has a lot of potential for fruit and vegetable crop production because of its favorable rainfall conditions and its deep, fertile soils.

Our Top User enjoys his work with farmers – particularly the small-scale farmers, because they believe in agriculture as a source of income. This keeps them keen to learn new ways of doing things to maximise production. His approach is the simple one of "not giving a man a fish, but rather to teach him to fish". According to him, this ensures the sustainability of these farmers through better decision-making, the latest techniques, and agricultural information for increased agricultural production.

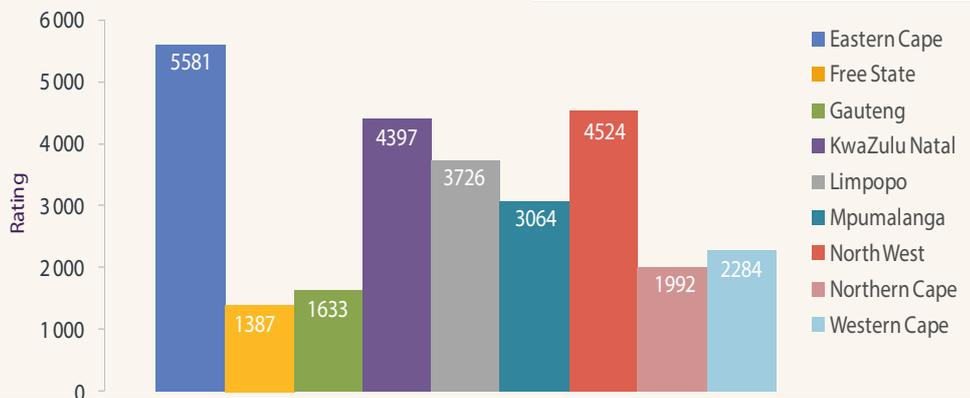
Kayaletu started using ESO as his primary source of information in 2011 to assist his farmers on a daily basis. The system has also helped him with his studies (B.Tech. Agricultural Management). According to him, ESO plays an essential role in building his career. It offers him current knowledge to boost his confidence in doing presentations on information days, field visits, demonstrations and as a point of reference during meetings. The module that he uses mostly on ESO is the Plant production module – vegetables, grains, industrial crops, root and tubers, problem solvers and the application and use of pesticides.

Kayaletu believes that "Extension Practitioners should make use of ESO – as it is the best source of relevant, current information towards agricultural development."

EXTENSION SUITE ONLINE® UTILISATION: October 2017

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

ESO PROVINCIAL TOP USER GRAPH



ESO PROVINCIAL TOP USERS

Province	Name
Eastern Cape	Kayaletu Noqa
Free State	Motshehwa Mokgohloa
Gauteng	Grace Pule
KwaZulu Natal	Dumisani Nzama
Limpopo	David Ndiafhi
Mpumalanga	Anikie Sebenzile Khoza
North West	Rapula Klaas Joseph Monnana
Northern Cape	Johan le roux
Western Cape	Riaan Nowers

CLIMATE WATCH

Issue #22

October started off with the first summer thunderstorms over large parts of the summer rainfall region. Many areas reported 10 mm and more during the first 10 days of the month. Some noticeable rainfall totals during the week include Bothaville 40 mm, Boshof 30 mm, Lephalale 32 mm and Mopane 40 mm. Read more...



Read the full article on the Manstrat AIS website.

www.manstrat.co.za - Climate Watch

ESO TIPS:

Thulani Zengele

Cyber Theft

Digital migration, cloud storage, and social media interactions have increased the risk of publishing private information online which may lead to cyber theft. Criminals or hackers are not always to blame for this – our own negligence and ignorance is often to blame for exposing vital personal data to the wrong people. These people may exploit this information to their advantage by cleaning out our bank accounts, illegally using credit and debit cards, and they can even use this information to embarrass us in public.

To prevent cyber theft, take note of the following:

- Always leave a web page or site that required your personal details by logging off properly;

- Complete any work on your digital profile and log off before leaving your device, even if you are leaving for a few seconds;
- Always choose the "do not remember password" option, especially for a site that has your personal details;
- Avoid using multiple devices to log on simultaneously to the same web pages that require your credentials;
- If you need to log onto more than one device/platform, LOGOUT from the device you are not using at the time;
- Logging out is extremely important when using public internet cafe facilities to ensure others cannot continue where you left off.

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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