

Extension Suite Online Maintenance and support

Extension Suite Online (ESO) distinguishes itself from other web applications as it manages to remain relevant through regular update and support of all the dynamic data on the System. ESO maintenance and support is an ongoing process that entails updating dynamic main data types relating to commodity and market data, production related data as well as GIS infrastructure data liable to change. All maintenance and support of ESO is undertaken by Manstrat AIS Information Centre.

The Centre comprises of the following departments: Data maintenance, Help desk, Research department as well as Systems' awareness and training. Each department is equipped with the necessary experts (scientists, researchers, statisticians and software engineers etc.) and resources to run the system efficiently.

In addition to commodity price updates, the Centre also adjust Production Related Data that is used in the Gross margin budgets in the economic section of every commodity, as well as all data relating to Disease, Weeds and Pest control measures. The latter includes prices, dosage, new and de-registered chemicals etc.

The Centre is lastly also responsible for manning the Help Desk where all support to users is received and sent to the relevant experts for their solutions and assistance.

Portia Maibelo



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To receive the Extension Suite Online newsletter via email, register your details on:

www.newsletter.esuite.co.za

HOW DOES ESO FIT INTO THE FUTURE OF EXTENSION SERVICES IN THE WESTERN CAPE

The goal of extension services within the Western Cape is to ensure that the quality and quantity of extension services are improved in order to improve production rates and the quality and safety of agricultural produce. One of the Extension and Advisory Services' directives is to provide extension officials with the necessary tools to enable them to deliver the best possible advice and services to Western Cape farmers. The success of projects in turn, is largely dependents on the skills and knowledge of our beneficiaries.

Extension Suite Online (ESO) plays a major role in providing extension officials with access to essential educational and agricultural production information. The need for effective time management and access to accurate and reliable information on site is becoming key aspects in service delivery. ESO is a useful teaching and educational tool that allows Extensionists the freedom to work wherever they are and can ultimately empower the Programme, Department, Agricultural sector and Government in achieving their goals. Therefore the

Western Cape Department of Agriculture will need to ensure that Extension Officials have access to ESO via 3G networks.

To quote two of our provincial top users of ESO:

"I would most definitely recommend Manstrat to other extension officials. It is a quick and easy way of accessing reliable information while shortening the time spent on research thus giving officials more time to tackle other work issues."

Malebogo Phetlhu, Agricultural Training Advisor, Eden District Office and Top User on ESO for August 2011.

"ESO is an extremely handy tool to all agricultural students, including young extension officers especially within their first number of years of development. ESO has a multitude of user friendly and accurate information which is only a mouse-click away!"

Antony Louw, SMS: Animals, West Coast District Office and Top User on ESO for October and November 2011.

Jerry Aries (Extension and Advisory Services Western Cape Government, Agriculture)



USEFULL TIPS FOR EXTENSIONISTS

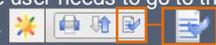
Matsunke Malefane and Michèle Cloete

Preparation Checklist for Farmer's Day

- Review the budget and discuss the needed resources with your superior.
- Find an appropriate area and time for the event, in consultation with the host farmer.
- Make sure farmer's day does not coincide with other activities.
- Select fellow colleagues to assist with the activity.
- List the farmers and opinion leaders that will benefit from the farmer's day and invite them.
- Advertise the farmer's day.
- Ensure that the demonstrator/host farmer understands and can explain the demonstration objective to the guests.

The Extension Suite Online Feedback Form was developed for the Extension Suite Online (ESO) users to enable them to send feedback information to ESO in an easy and effortless manner. Examples of feedback information a user can typically send through to ESO are; technical production related queries, general queries on the use of the application as well as general suggestions regarding ESO. Users can also notify the Extension Suite Online help centre of any errors or problems that they may encounter while using the system. This tool therefore provides every ESO user with the opportunity to give relevant feedback relating to ESO. In order to access the easily accessible feedback



form from anywhere inside ESO, the user needs to go to the top left-hand corner on the ESO toolbar. 

By clicking on the feedback form icon, a popup box will open requesting a user to insert his/her email address, subject and a description of the query, problem or suggestion. By clicking on the "Send message" button the message will be sent through to the relevant persons at the Extension Suite Online Information Centre. All ESO users are urged to communicate problems, queries and suggestions through to insure continued improvement to the value of ESO. This form can also be used to quickly view the ESO support contact details.

MONTHLY NATIONAL EXTENSION SUITE ONLINE USER: APRIL 2012

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 National ESO USER of the Month.

Congratulations to, **Sindile Magoda**, (Eastern Cape Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform), who is the National ESO User for the month of April 2012. Sindile receives an ESO 4 Gig USB memory stick, pen and certificate.

During April, we had the opportunity to ask Sindile Magoda a few questions regarding his usage of ESO:

What would you advise a colleague to do to become a better Extension Officer? It is important to be humble towards the farmers, because they are clever and experienced.

Would you encourage Extension Officers to increase their utilisation of ESO? It is important for them to visit ESO at least once a day so that they get up to speed with agricultural information. ESO is an agricultural reminder to all Extension Officers.

How often do you use ESO per week? I open it daily or at least 5 times a week and at times even during the weekends. Opening ESO, to me, is like opening my email – a regular thing.

How many farmers do you advise and where? I currently advise around 200 farmers in the Western Region of the Eastern Cape, including Nelson Mandela Bay and Cacadu districts.

What would you describe as the high point in your career as an Extension Officer? The high point in my career would be when I was awarded, one of the best Extension Officers in 2010, by MEC Zoleka Capa.

Give an example of how you made a difference to a specific farmer with ESO's assistance.

One of my farmers experienced problems with his dairy cattle; at first we thought it was Mastitis. With the help of the ESO problem solver we were able to identify the real cause. In addition, there was a tick infestation in the area and animals were dying, and ESO explained different dipping



Mr Magoda Sindile during tick collection at Kwamagxaki commonage in Port Elizabeth.

methods and techniques that we used to eradicate the ticks, which eventually solved the problem.

Describe a typical day in your life as an Extension officer. On Mondays and Fridays I do research and prepare for my farm visits. On Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays I visit my farmers and assist them where I can.

Which part of ESO do you use most frequently? I spend most of my time in the animal section, especially Animal Production, Problem Solver and the Economics section to keep up to date with the market prices for meat.

What are the biggest challenges that you face in your everyday work as an extension officer? The challenge comes in when I visit farmers and find them agitated concerning problems that we are not immediately able to solve.

What do you enjoy most about your work as an Extension officer? When I hear a farmer saying "Thanks man, my problems were solved because of you" I have a deep feeling of true fulfilment.

APRIL ESO UTILISATION OVERVIEW

National growth in ESO utilisation continued in April. Silindile Magoda from the Eastern Cape, a regular in the National Top 10 User lists, was our winner with a rating of 3 897.

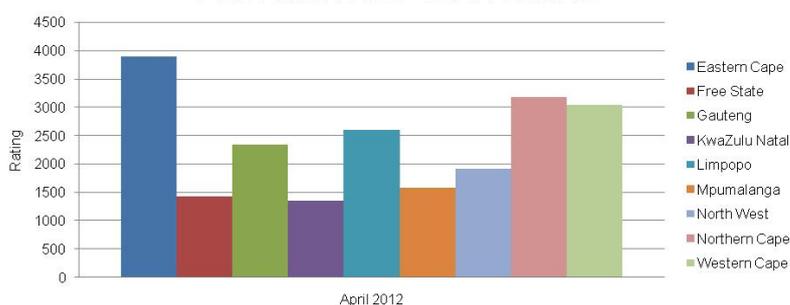
The Top 10 National users all achieved ratings exceeding 2 000, with three of them managing to score above 3 000. Time spent on the system nationally increased with 59 hours - a 22.5% increase - proof that officers who have discovered the value of ESO as an Agricultural Decision Support System, increasingly visit the system to use it.

The important question to Senior Advisors and other supervisors remain: "If an extension officer never or rarely uses ESO for information gathering to capacitate their farmers, what indeed are they using?"

Supervisors are reminded that agricultural information will help to arm their officers in the war against rural poverty. Nothing should prevent them from encouraging their officers to do just that.

Thapedi Setshedi

PROVINCIAL TOP USER RATING



NAME OF TOP USER IN EACH PROVINCE APRIL 2012

PROVINCE	NAME
Eastern Cape	Sindile Magoda
Free State	Moses Moshe Mbongo
Gauteng	Lesego Phakedi
KwaZulu Natal	Bambelelani Mkiti
Limpopo	Edgar Sebei
Mpumalanga	Sibusiso Themba Ngele
North West	Keemetswe Mosang
Northern Cape	George du Preez
Western Cape	Pieter Burger