

This edition

Qualities of a good extension officer **P.1**

Tips for extensionists **P.1**

Understand popup windows in ESO **P.2**

Monthly National ESO User **P.2**

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QUALITIES OF A GOOD EXTENSION OFFICER

Matsunke Malefane and Michèle Cloete

With the start of 2013; we as extension officers should ask ourselves whether or not it wouldn't be in our combined interest to make a New Years' resolution about our profession, and to try and re-kindle the flame of extensionism?

During 2012, the DAFF, in collaboration with Phuhlisani Solutions organised workshops countrywide to facilitate the development of an agricultural extension and advisory policy to suit **our country's needs**. Various stakeholders (farmers, NGO's and academia) participated and showed their support for Agricultural Extension. From the perspective of the extension officers in the country, we also have much to offer. Why don't we start by a visit to those aspects that will improve the value of our efforts, and apply them in earnest, again? Aspects such as:

Personal Attributes, Qualities and Characteristics:

- **Professionalism:** It is expected that extensionists will at all times act in a professional manner. Standards of ethical conduct and behaviour are

essential to ensure standards over the total extension staff complement.

- **People Orientation:** Extensionists are essentially developmental change agents, demanding from them service orientation; sound understanding of human needs and behaviour; and good facilitation and persuasion skills.
- **Other attributes and qualities:**
Also required is:
 - A passion for agriculture;
 - A strong farmer support and service orientation;
 - A drive to capacitate people, transfer knowledge and skills;
 - Persuasion; and
 - Perseverance.



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- **Extension Models and Approaches:** Extensionists require a working knowledge and competence of extension models and approaches - essential for the successful transfer of knowledge, skills and information to the farmers they serve.
- **Facilitation Skills:** Extensionists spend much of their time in facilitating workshops for their farmers. To this end, good extensionists should develop relevant skills such as:
 - Understanding behavioural change;
 - Decision making processes;
 - Individual facilitation processes;
 - Group dynamics and group facilitation; and
 - Conflict resolution skills.

Formal Agricultural Knowledge (Academic Qualifications)

One of the national department's (DAFF) aims is to improve the qualifications of agricultural Extension Officers to a tertiary level in the agricultural sciences. During this up-grading and development period, ESO will still be there to provide a **helping hand** with agricultural specific information as required by our farmers.

Other Knowledge and Skills, to be honed are:

- **Communication Skills:** An EO should have good communication skills and must be able to convey messages, and listen to farmer's problems.

Community Development Skills:

Extensionists assisting large groups of farmers will additionally need community development skills and a good understanding of farming communities and the social/community environment within which small-scale farmers operate.

TIPS FOR EXTENSIONISTS

Matsunke Malefane and Michèle Cloete

Method demonstration

EO's use demonstrations to provide participants with useful techniques and practical information. The following will help in making the day effective:

- Create an informal atmosphere for raising questions.
- Give an introduction to explain the purpose of the event.
- Give an overview of the materials that are used.
- Provide time for farmers to practice the method to make them confident.
- Determine a date for follow-up interactions.



Extension Suite Online (ESO) uses popup windows to facilitate the display of additional information to users. An example of this is the display of disease information of plants and animals in a popup window after clicking the relevant link.

Displaying a popup window is a quick and easy way of getting the user's attention drawn to the relevant information at hand, as well as the display of information in a more ordered manner. Certain features that are available within a normal browser window are also available in the popup window, like enabling a user to print the information from the popup



window - or even copy the content. To access the print and copy functionalities within the popup window click the right mouse button to open a tools menu and select print or copy.

To prevent confusion, ESO allows users to open only one popup window at a time. Therefore, as a handy tip, if a popup window is not displaying when clicking on a link, take care to be sure that there are no other popup windows minimized in the Windows Start Bar, preventing the new popup window from opening.

MONTHLY NATIONAL ESO USER: DECEMBER 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. The monthly national ESO user will receive the

following prizes: First time National ESO User 2013: **4 Gig USB memory stick**, second time National ESO User 2013: **Sony Digital Camera**, third time National ESO User 2013: **Blackberry cell phone**, National ESO User 2013: **Samsung Galaxy Tab**.

Congratulations to Ms Vonani Stella Mabunda (Limpopo Department of Agriculture), who is the ESO National User for December 2012, Ms Mabunda is a first time winner of the ESO National User award in 2012, and therefore receives a 4 Gig USB memory stick, pen and certificate.



Ms Vonani Stella Mabunda

During January, we had the opportunity to ask Ms Mabunda a few questions regarding her ESO usage:

What is your responsibility at the department?

Extension Officer- Phalaborwa- General (both crops and livestock but mostly crops)

How long have you been working for the department?

22 Years.

How often do you make use of ESO? At least twice a week for an hour or anytime when I am in the field, as and when I need to check information.

What do you use Extension Suite Online for the most?

Mainly to check production information and Crop diseases.

What is the impact that ESO has on your relationship with your clients/farmers?

ESO has made my working life much easier and enjoyable and I'm able to face my farmers and solve most of their problems because I quickly refer to ESO either on my phone or on my Tablet while in the field.

Would you recommend ESO to your colleagues and why?

Definitely, because it is a solution to everything. I like

the discussion panel more because it is where one gets answers right away.

What section or module within ESO do you use the most?

Plant Production- (problem solver), Discussion section and Animal Production Section.

Do you have any tips to other users regarding ESO?

I would encourage all the Extension officers to spend more time on ESO. With ESO one is able to tackle challenging questions from farmers.

In a few words, how would you describe ESO as an Extension tool?

ESO is everything to me. It gives such relevant and accurate information at all times.

Does ESO really make the execution of your duties easier, and in what way?

Yes it does. It makes it a whole lot easier because if farmers have problems in the field, I am able to find solutions for them right -there- and-then and my relationship with them becomes smooth.

UTILISATION OVERVIEW FOR DECEMBER 2012

Piet van Zyl

Welcome back to the grindstone fellow ESO users. We, at Manstrat AIS trust that you will have a productive and fulfilling year ahead during which we will be able to use all available means and tools effectively to aid the farmers, we serve to improve their lot, as well as those who are dependent on them.

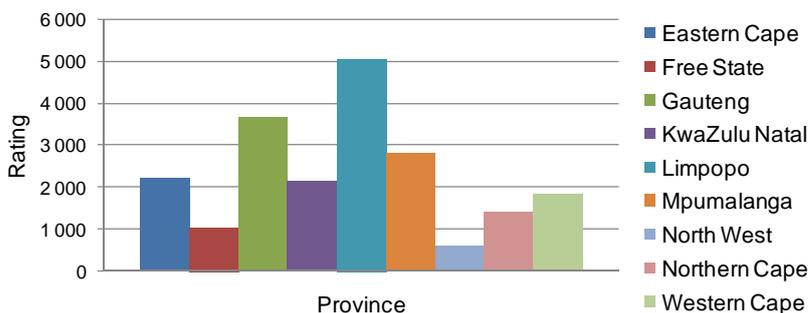
As is the norm, we use the December Report on Maintenance and Update, to look back on the past year, and to analyse our challenges and achievements in order to plan how we can improve ESO and its utilisation in the coming year.

With one or two exceptions 2012 has proved to be a quite impressive year as ESO utilisation growth figures in provinces show. The biggest increases in overall utilisation growth figures were 573.0% and 323.4% growth in Duration of Visits in two of the provinces, respectively.

We trust that 2013 will be a bumper year for our loyal users in more ways than just ESO utilisation, and that you will all be able to reach the advisory goals you've set for yourself.

Correction on edition #37: Top ESO User Sindile Magoda is from the Eastern Cape and not Mpumalanga Province as stated.

Provincial top user rating for December 2012



Top users in each province: December 2012

Eastern Cape	Sindile Magoda
Free State	Griffith Hadebe
Gauteng	Vhuthu Gavhi
KwaZulu Natal	Jabulani Mdluli
Limpopo	Vonani Stella
Mpumalanga	Sibusiso Themba Ngele
North West	Abel Bone Mokomele
Northern Cape	George du Preez
Western Cape	Malebogo Phetlhu