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PUBLISHING PROVINCIAL RELEVANT INFORMATION ON ESO

Piet van Zyl

As it stands, there is an ESO system for each of the nine provinces in South Africa with each province the legal owner of the unique system that carries its name. The data available on each individual provincial ESO system originated either from the province itself, or from Manstrat Agricultural Intelligence Solutions (MAIS) researchers on behalf of the province.

The maintenance of ESO remains an integral part of MAIS's responsibilities. This implied that management and personnel in the provinces would take ownership of their particular systems and that each therefore had the added liberty and responsibility to contribute as much as they possibly could to their ESO systems.

MAIS has always viewed itself as a company of agricultural practitioners who build software systems, rather than the other way around. Our main interest will always lie in expanding and improving our client's systems, for the good of agricultural advisory and the farmers they serve.

The type of information that provinces would normally provide for publication covers a wide range of topics and material:

- All extension and advisory personnel in South Africa are aware that there are excellent scientific and other printed fact sheets, manuals and documents available in all the provinces of which the hard copies are not going to last forever. MAIS has the facilities and know-how required to copy these documents and place them on a particular province's ESO for use by all their users;
- Newly created scientific and printed fact sheets, manuals and documents information are often not distributed effectively as the means to do so are limited. In this regard ESO is the perfect vehicle to ensure that all registered users in a province will have access to information; and

Piet van Zyl

- Some provinces already supply MAIS with grain market reports; forecasts; courses, course dates and content; as well as Early Warnings.

All that is required is that any province, through their Management or a publications committee contact MAIS at piet@manstrat.co.za who will present the content to the MAIS ESO Content Committee for content verification and eventual publication.

We therefore invite and encourage all provincial decision-maker s and stakeholders to participate in expanding their ESO systems and to become active in collecting and providing ESO with electronic and hard copies of material relevant to their ESO systems.

TIPS AND TOOLS FOR ADVISORS
Matsunke Malefane and Michèle Cloete

The advantages of Co-operatives in farming

- They strengthen farmer's bargaining power.
- They create and maintain access to competitive credit and input sources.
- They enable farmers to compete more effectively in the formal market economy.
- They help farmers to capitalize on new marketplace opportunities, including value-added processing.
- They allow more effective risk management.
- They allow for easy access to technical assistance and other services.

Extension Suite Online (ESO) allows users to obtain current (previous month) and historical (previous three years') market prices for plants and animal products by showing market prices for the 19 municipal Fresh Produce Markets in the provinces.

Animal and agronomy market prices are based on monthly average national prices obtained from a variety of sources. Manstrat AIS economists update animal and grain prices weekly and other commodities monthly. To navigate the market prices on ESO take the following route:

Step 1: Select Plant/Animal Production and then click on the required commodity Module e.g. **Vegetables**, **Broilers** etc;

Step 2: Then select Crop/Breed information, and use the dropdown menu to select the required crop/breed; and then

Step 3: Go to Economics in the side bar and select **Market Prices,** click on **Commodity prices** and the Market Prices will show.

In both the plants and animals market price modules, the user has the opportunity to instantly change to a different fresh produce market, crop, commodity, or class. Users also have two options for viewing prices – a Table format or an Opportunity graph format.

Table:
Opportunity graph:

MONTHLY NATIONAL ESO USER: MAY 2013

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: **Digital Camera**, third time National ESO User 2013: Blackberry cell phone, National ESO User 2013: **Samsung Galaxy Tab.**

Congratulations to **Mr Sindile Magoda (Eastern Cape Department Rural Development and Agrarian Reform),** who is the ESO National User for May 2013. Mr Magoda will receive certificate of recognition as well as a digital camera.

During May, Mr Sindile Magoda once again featured as the top provincial user in the Eastern Cape. Now, for the second time this year, we also honour him as the May 2013, **National** Top User. Sindile Magoda was born in Willowvale, a small town approximately 150 km from East London. Willowvale these days has been elevated to a renowned tourist attraction because of its rich marine life. Sindile enjoys television programs such as "Growing Tomorrow" and "Living Land" on SABC 2 and listens to the radio whilst driving.

As an extension officer in the Eastern Cape province he overseas around 30 poultry farmers, 20 piggery farmers and about 120 livestock farmers (40 small stock and 80 large stock) and also a few dairy projects around the district. He started consulting ESO when one of the farmers he advised was faced with a challenge where his animals were not performing as expected. The answers including pictures just popped out at him while he was browsing through ESO. Sindile says that the section that assists him the most is Animal Production, because of his advisory direction, followed by Regional Data.

He further expands on ESO, saying that it is a

Mr Magoda finished inspecting the Nguni herd for Nue-bathesda Beef Project in Graaff-reinet

very handy and friendly tool for extension officers. It is a magical feeling when I, as an extension officer, can assist the farmer right there on the farm. Using one of his poultry farmers as example, he tells us that the farmer's chickens were behaving in a peculiar manner. With the assistance of ESO he was able to determine that the strange behaviour of the chickens were due to the fact that the temperature in the room was too high. Sindile testifies: "All I am saying is that this tool is really helping our clients and in turn making the life of officers easy in building confidence between clients and us as government officers."
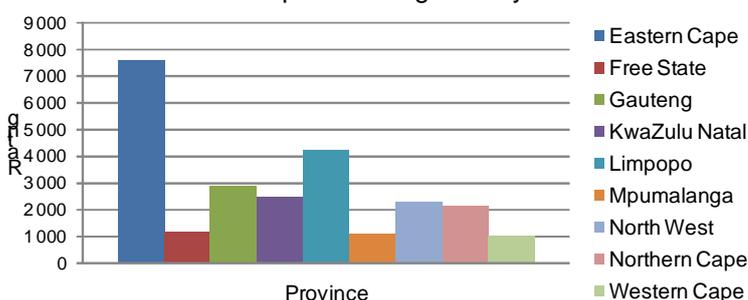
UTILISATION OVERVIEW FOR MAY 2013

Thapedi Setshedi

May 2013 was an excellent ESO month due to increases in user numbers (9.9% in terms of registrations), account activations rose to 58.5%, and overall utilisation of the system (7.9%). Much of the increases in usage and user figures can be ascribed to intensified user training that took place in a number of the provinces, notably KwaZulu Natal and North West provinces. Despite the winter cold taking a sudden hold on the country, and agricultural activity slowing down in places, there were 2,354 visits to the system during the month.

As indicated in the April edition, the improved approach to the reporting of utilisation figures for ESO definitely gives a more accurate picture of the extent of ESO utilisation and the amount of data being downloaded from the system: The total number of pages visited by the users was an impressive 147,766 pages, with data being transferred amounting to 7,212 Megabytes while 479 hours were spent on ESO.

The national top user for May 2013 was Sindile Magoda from the Eastern Cape with a 7,636 points rating.

Provincial top user rating for May 2013

Top users in each province: May 2013	
Eastern Cape	**Sindile Magoda**
Free State	Griffith Hadebe
Gauteng	Lesego Phakedi
KwaZulu Natal	Bambelelani Mkiti
Limpopo	Tebogo Thobakgale
Mpumalanga	Siyabonga Nkosi
North West	Dineo Mokgatlhe
Northern Cape	George du Preez
Western Cape	Ferdie Endemann