this edition

WHY SHOULD EXTENSION OFFICERS KEEP GOOD RECORDS?

Xolile Dlhamini

Current farming operations are becoming more business oriented. 'Love for the soil' and trying to be a good farmer is just not good enough to be successful. The key for success in any farm business enterprise is being a good farmer as well as a good financial manager. There is often a misconception that the only reason why a person needs records is to get funding for a farm-business. Farming is a business and records are important in planning improvements for that business and making proper management decisions.

Extension officers (EOs) continuously encourage farmers to keep record of their production and financial operations but the question remains whether Extension Officers themselves lead by example? Do they keep records about their activities?"

The ultimate success of any EO lies in the success of the farmers s/he advises. An efficient EO needs to have a complete profile of the farmers s/he advises as well as maintaining good relationship(s) with them. As an EO, it is common to have a 'mind profile' of a farmer you interact with, however this information is not of much use if it cannot be used for decision making purposes. It is important for an EO to keep good, accurate records and to establish a sound record system for recording farmers' profiles. Extension officers need proper records in order to make informed management decisions that will help maintain or improve farm performance in terms of reporting and providing support to farmers. Such records can be used to determine the monthly targets for the farm and EO, problems

and challenges, farm infrastructure and machinery as well as general information about the farm.

Farm records range from simple, hand accounting systems using pencil and paper to sophisticated computer recording systems. It is important to choose a system that is easy to understand and that will provide the necessary information for understanding the activities of the farm operation and provide this information when needed. In an effort to encourage proper record keeping, the Department of Agriculture have made available a wide range of record systems for Eos. One of them is the *Farm Information System* found on **Extension Suite Online.**

To create a database of the farmers they advise, EOs can use **Extension Suite Online** to list, add, edit, view and delete farms by clicking on the *Farm Information System* title bar, **Farm Records** menu. Information that can be added on the farm records **include**: General farm information; Infrastructure; Machinery and equipment; Farm field information; Monthly farm targets; Monthly extension targets and problems or challenges addressed. **The importance of keeping good farm records cannot be overemphasised.**

Xolile Dlhamini

INTRODUCING THE ESO SMS CAMPAIGN

Piet van Zyl

There are currently 4,390 users registered nationally on ESO of which 2,693 (61.3 %) have activated their accounts. Although the activation rate is excellent for an information system, we all know that this figure can be increased dramatically with a little effort. What is required is for each activated accountholder to encourage just one colleague to go to www.esuite.co.za, log in, and activate their ESO account. This should not take more than ten minutes, but it will immediately project them into the 21st century of agricultural extension by gaining immediate access to wide ranging information on animal and plant production, as well as up to date GIS information covering infrastructure and environmental data.

Our SMS campaign is already bringing in the results with a 69% spike in utilisation after the first batch was sent out! The idea of the campaign is to encourage officers to use ESO, and at the same time to enable them to compete for prizes and recognition for their efforts. To hear more about prizes and how to win, watch your ESO SMS's, and make sure that your cell number appears on you user profile. If you don't know how to put it there, contact us at support@esuite.co.za or 0860 376 376.

NATIONAL ESO USER: FEBRUARY 2014

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: Nokia Lumia 520, fourth time National ESO User 2013: Samsung Galaxy Tab.

Congratulations to Mr Riaan Nowers (Western Cape Department of Agriculture), who is the ESO Top National User for February 2014.

Mr Riaan Nowers

South Africa's Top National ESO User (Extension Suite Online) for this month is Mr Riaan Nowers from the Western Cape Province: Department of Agriculture. Congratulations Riaan! As a second time top national user Riaan is also awarded with a digital camera to show our appreciation for hard work and diligence.

Riaan studied at the University of Stellenbosch (BSc Agric); University of Pretoria (BSc Agric Hons and MSc Agric Cum laude); and Free State (Masters in Sustainable Agriculture – Cum laude). Although he majored in Agricultural Economics, having Animal Science and Agronomy as his main subjects, provided him with an excellent background and understanding of agriculture in general.

As we have mentioned in previous interviews with Riaan, he uses ESO to collect market related data which is transformed into graphical representations. These are then sent out by him on a weekly basis to close to 100 officials, they inturn then use these to determine trends and opportunities for their clients. Riaan says that he enjoys collecting data and putting the "pieces" together which for him is similar to doing a jigsaw puzzle where you need to find all the pieces to build the bigger picture.
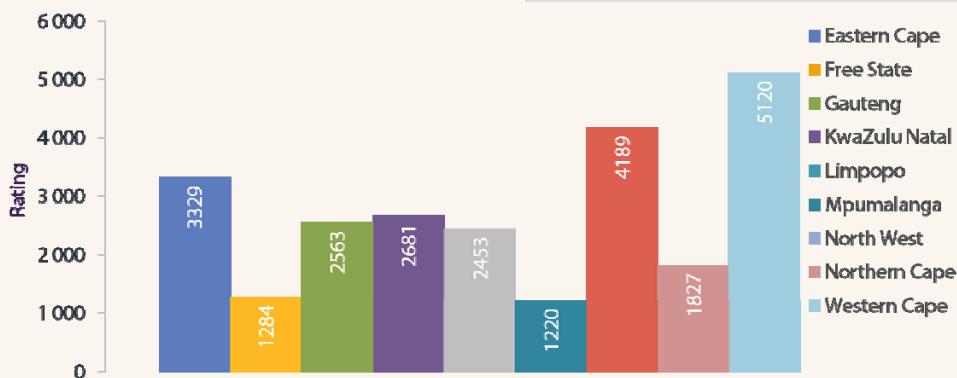
Riaan shared the following tips for users:

- Extension Officers should know in detail what's available on ESO;
- Evaluate the data and then to construct their own tailor-made databases for their own unique purposes; and
- Riaan strongly advises officials to ensure there is not unnecessary duplication between their own databases and those of ESO.

ESO UTILISATION:
FEBRUARY 2014

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.

PROVINCIAL TOP USER GRAPH

PROVINCIAL TOP USERS

PROVINCE	NAME
Eastern Cape	Sondlo Nokwanda
Free State	Griffith Hadebe
Gauteng	Lesego Phakedi
KwaZulu Natal	Primrose Ndlovu
Limpopo	Vukeya Roinah Basani
Mpumalanga	Sweppies Masombuka
North West	Tlou Harrison
Northern Cape	George du Preez
Western Cape	**Riaan Nowers**

DISEASE TALK:
FEATURED DISEASE

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

Bean Maggot
Scientific Name: *Ophiomyia phaseoli*
Popular Name: Bean Maggot

Seedlings collapse when they are still below the surface; maggots feed in the germ shoot. Bean Maggot is particularly troublesome in cool moist soil very rich in decaying organic matter.

Bean Maggot

Send your pest or disease related questions to newsletter@esuite.co.za with your name, province and the question and we will answer you via ESO's Question and Answer module or in the newsletter.

DOWNLOAD AND APPLY THE ESO WALLPAPER

Lizette van Zyl

Tired of looking at yourself or your dull old computer desktop background? Treat your screen to a new look with ESO's monthly exclusive desktop wallpapers created especially for you!!

Below are three easy steps on how to download, save and apply a wallpaper to your computer desktop.

Step 1: Determine your computer screen resolution
(To insure you download the correct wallpaper size, you first need to determine your computer screen resolution)
1.1: Click on the Start button, then on "Control Panel". Under "Appearance and Personalisation" select "Adjust screen resolution".

1.2: In the drop-down Resolution list, the size displayed is your screen resolution, for example 1920x1080.

Step 2: Download the wallpaper
2.1: Click on the desired wallpaper size in the Extension Suite Online email signature. (The wallpaper image will open in a new browser window).
2.2: Right click on the image and select "Save image (as)". Navigate to the folder where you want to save this image on your computer and click on save.

Step 3: Apply the wallpaper to your desktop
3.1: Navigate to the folder where you have saved the image.
3.2: Right click on the image and select "Set as desktop background".

It's as easy as 1, 2, 3!

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.