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**Monthly ESO
National Top User:**
Louis Khomola

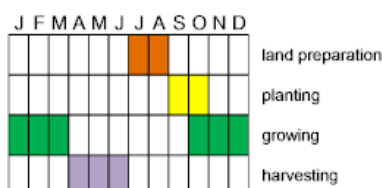
Managing Crop Production

Dr John Lapham

Poor timing of activities and lack of resources are major causes of low yields, particularly in small-scale production. For example, planting of cereal crops is often delayed until well into the rainy season when the operation can be easily completed. The reason for this may be something like the lack of draught power for land preparation. But the result is slow and poor crop growth caused by leaching of fertility, competition from weeds in wet conditions, increased pest and disease problems, and slow growth in overcast weather. All of which mean lower yields and quality.

Consequently, planning is needed. The first step is the use of a "crop calendar" which highlights the periods during which the main activities must be completed for the specific crop and area. Dates can be set for the start and completion of activities. Often an activity must be completed before the next can begin; for example, ploughing and disking in the field, or the production of seedlings in the nursery, must be completed before planting can begin. As already mentioned, delaying planting can have severe effects on crop yields and quality.

Crop calendar example:



Planning must also include the acquisition of resources; that is, the resources needed to complete the task must be available. Planning includes not only equipment needed to do the task (tractors, sprayers, irrigation) and inputs to be used (seed, chemicals, fertilisers), but also personnel. Sufficient people with the necessary skills must be available. Plans must be practical and realistic so that, when implementing the tasks, they can be completed in good time without any delays.

All these activities have a cost and the second step is financial planning. These costs must be calculated and a budget produced. From the activities planned on the crop calendar, it is now known when this money will be spent, and it is easy to produce a budgeted cash-flow. The cash flow will show how viable the project is and if it should be modified or even abandoned.

A cash-flow must also be used to compare the budgeted figures, month by month, with the actual spending and income. Any variations must be explained, and if the project is not progressing as planned, then changes must be made to recover the situation.



Dr John Lapham

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Tips and tools for advisors

Soil fertility

Portia Phahlane

Healthy, fertile soils are essential for crops to achieve full harvest potential. Successful farmers understand the importance of knowing the fertility status of the soil when planning which crop(s) to plant.

Soil sampling and analysis is the most efficient way to check soil fertility and harvest potential. It also provides farmers with the necessary recommendations that will inform them on the following:

1. The nutrient status of the soil including: the levels of nutrients in the soil compared to optimum levels and the amount and type of fertiliser to apply for the crop(s) in question;
2. The pH levels of the soil that will show the alkalinity or acidity levels present in the soil, compared with the best range; and whether the soil requires lime (to correct the pH level), and how much to apply.

Getting to know the ESO Provincial Top users



Mompoti Gabanakgosi

In this issue of the ESO Newsletter, we introduce one of our nine ESO Provincial Top Users for February. He is Mr Mompoti Gabanakgosi from North West Province. Mompoti works in Taung (Greater Taung Municipality, Dr Ruth S Mompoti District).

According to Mompoti, this area is rich in minerals like diamonds, gold and coal. A large part of the area is rocky and therefore mostly used for grazing, with about 3 500 hectares under irrigation, with water from the Vaalharts dam. Crops produced in Taung include Lucerne, Maize, Cotton, Groundnuts, Wheat, and Barley.

Mompoti has been with the Department of Agriculture since 1975 - 41 years of service – an achievement on its own! He is an agricultural extension advisor specialising in crop production. Mompoti sees his duties as the empowerment of farmers with knowledge and technology so that they can become independent and prosperous as farmers. He advises farmers on farming practices, including soil preparation, crop selection, and irrigation methods. Mr G.E Phutiyagae is his immediate supervisor while Mr J Dire is his district director.

Our top user works with a community group, Bathlaping baga Phudukhutswana, comprising of 435 Taung irrigation farmers. His clients also include cooperatives where the farmers are organised into primary and secondary cooperatives, to assist them in coordinating their marketing efforts more efficiently.

Mompoti explains Extension Suite Online as a valuable tool for Extension Practitioners as it provides answers related to agricultural production like animal production, crop production and regional demarcations among others. The tool has extensive information and using it assists him greatly in his agricultural decision making. He concluded by saying that "the system is a complete information centre as it provides accurate answers, saving me lots of time".

NATIONAL ESO TOP USER:

Congratulations to **Mr Louis Khomola**, the National ESO Top User for February 2016.

Monthly National ESO Top Users receive the following prizes: First time National ESO Top User 2016: **4 Gig USB memory stick**, second time National ESO Top User 2016: **Digital Camera**, third time National ESO Top User 2016: **Nokia Lumia 520**, fourth time National ESO Top User 2016: **Samsung Galaxy Tab**.

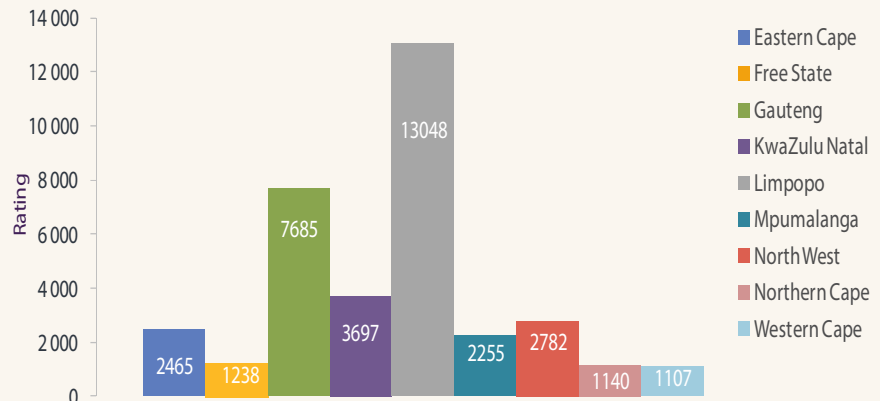
EXTENSION SUITE ONLINE UTILISATION: FEBRUARY 2016

Extension Suite Online (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 ESO National Top User of the Month.

ESO PROVINCIAL TOP USERS

Province	Name
Eastern Cape	Sindile Magoda
Free State	Setene Mooko
Gauteng	Sizwe Nzuza
KwaZulu Natal	Dumisani Nzama
Limpopo	Louis khomola
Mpumalanga	Petunia Magolela
North West	Mompoti Gabanakgosi
Northern Cape	Ernst Meissenheimer
Western Cape	Pholoso Malatji

ESO PROVINCIAL TOP USER GRAPH



CLIMATE WATCH

FEBRUARY 2016

January 2016 started with heat wave conditions over large parts of the summer rainfall region, but fortunately also broken in the second week, when many areas of the summer rainfall region received much-needed rain.

Satellite Imagery for January 2016 will show the impact of the rain received over the summer rainfall region and its impact on the current drought situation South Africa is experiencing.

Read the full article on the Manstrat AIS website.
www.manstrat.co.za - Climate Watch

ESO TIPS:

Buying a new tablet

Carlo Schluter

When buying a tablet, the first step is to decide on what your needs are – is it to watch movies, take pictures, read, type documents, Skype, Blog, etc.?

Second is the operating system. The choice today is mostly between iOS 9, Android and Windows 10, and is normally made based on past experience with similar systems, and personal preference.

If the tablet is for work or movies, screen size should be at least 10-inches, but your budget will have the final say here.

Mobile games, video watching and picture storage all require at least 8GB of memory and a decent amount of RAM. MicroSD cards (Android and Windows) are important as internal storage is unchangeable.

Wi-Fi-only models are much cheaper, and convenient when Wi-Fi is available but for external use, one would need a 3G or 4G LTE function.

Battery life is vital and one should look it up or ask. Ten hours (iPad) battery life is the benchmark, and a device that can't hold a charge for a few days, in the beginning, will get much worse as time passes. Other factors to consider include; Webcam for Skype, Bluetooth, keyboard docking facilities, weight and transporting, etc.

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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