Extension Suite Online™
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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

www.newsletter.esuite.co.za

PRODUCT SUPPORT CENTRE

The Product Support Centre is responsible for the identification and fixing of bugs in existing dataware. The identification of bugs ranges from the testing for continuous functionality and grammar and spelling checks to economic corrections and fixing regional data.

This function is crucial to ESO and involves almost all scientists and researchers at AIS.

The Product Support team consist of: Johan Hoogenboezem, Dr. John Lapham, Ishmael Mohono, Sabhinah Mahlangu, Vic Victor, Colleen J van Rensburg, Pretty Duma, Monica van Huyssteen, Daphne Bakgoeng, Sabelo Gumede, Portia Maibelo, Suzan Bendu, Vincent Victor, Francois van der Merwe, Xolile Dlhamini, Jeanne-Louise du Plessis, Julia Staitai, Kabelo Malatetja, Lizette van Zyl, Mmabatho Pula, Mohlabane Mphahlele, Orateng Mampane, Thapedi Setshedi, and Zodidi Sivetshe

Article: Piet van Zyl

_____

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

He who gets to the water first, drinks the cleanest water.

Kenyan Proverb

Extension Suite Online *Lite*

Extension Suite Online is surprisingly fast considering that it is an internet based information system and that the amount of data passed from the ESO server to the client (user) is rather large, especially since many images and graphics have to be transferred between server and user. All of this makes for a pleasant user experience and ensures that the look and feel of the system remains consistent throughout.

However, high speed internet is not available in all regions of South Africa. Such slow connections, linked to even slower intranets and technology that sometimes are more than a decade old, result in the poor uptake of ESO in some parts of provinces. Since users mostly require information that can be passed as smaller packages over the internet, Manstrat has embarked on the development of a *lite* version that can be accessed efficiently under poorer network conditions.

ESO *lite* is currently 60% faster, which means that every 100 seconds download time are reduced to 40 seconds, every 50 seconds are reduced to 20 seconds and every 15 seconds reduced to 6 seconds. Since many graphics have been trimmed to not exceed IP package sizes, fewer timeouts occur resulting in an even higher return rate. Our software engineers have also cleaned up a considerable amount of code as part of our continuous effort to make ESO accessible to everyone in South Africa

ESO *lite* is in a β-test phase, meaning that only a selected number of users have been allowed access to the improved system and for testing and debugging only. It is estimated that this improved version of ESO will be provided as an alternative during logon. The user will therefore have the option to run the *lite* version under conditions where connectivity is poor and to again revert to the original version where high speed connectivity is available. The result: no reduction in user experience, just much faster.

Article: Dr Roelof de Villiers

TOP EXTENSION SUITE ONLINE USER FOR JULY 2010

By monitoring daily utilisation of all users in the nine provinces it is possible to select the country's top user monthly and ultimately the national winner **(for the Grand Prize!)** on an annual basis.

Congratulations!!!

Wilton September (DaO:WC) You are South Africa's top ESO user for July 2010. Well done. Runner up: Matobela Rhulani Herold (Free State)

Wilton has been working at the Western Cape Department of Agriculture and Rural Development for almost 7 years as Senior Agricultural Advisor (Horticulture) in Stellenbosch, Cape Winelands District.

He is an active cricket player, married with 2 children, 3 and 5 years old.

Regional Data as a Helpful Tool

The Regional Data module of Extension Suite Online (ESO) is a Geographic Information System (GIS). GIS is a computer technology that uses geographic information systems as an analytic framework for managing and integrating data; solving a problem; understanding a past, present, or future situation (the what, where and when [www] questions).

People are interested in knowing the actual location, the history and the profile of farms for making well informed decisions. The Regional Data module of ESO provides users with this information.

The module consists of an infrastructure section and environmental section. The infrastructure section provides information on agri-businesses, location and contact details of institutions, and any other related businesses within a selected area.

The environmental section provides information about the soil; climate; water; vegetation; and topography of a selected area:

Soil information includes the classification of soils, the type of soils, soil structure and depth.

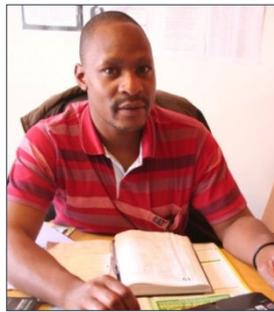**Climate** provides information about rainfall, temperature, humidity, evaporation, frost etc.

Water section consists of the location and capacity of dams, catchments and boreholes.

Vegetation information consists of veld types, carrying capacity, pastures, erosion and invaders.

Topography has information on slopes, erosion by water and wind, geology and land use map.

With this information one can make a well informed decision about what to farm where and when as well as construct appropriate conclusions on land and farm use characteristics.

Land use is not exactly a feature of the environment as such, it represent the current status of the land surface as a whole, and therefore reflects the condition of the environment as well. Several factors have dominated the development of South African land use patterns, of which the most important are rainfall distribution, mineral deposits, harbours and transport routes.

Rainfall and favourable climatic conditions have made agriculture possible, resulting in four major regions of farming activity. These are the intensive farming districts of the Cape mountain areas with their winter rainfall where wine, fruit and wheat are produced; the moist sub-tropical east coast region of KwaZulu-Natal with its sugar-belt as well as the eastern Lowveld; the summer rainfall area in the maize-producing region of Gauteng and the Mpumalanga Highveld, the North-West Province, the Northern Province, the Free State and the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands; and the high rainfall escarpment with its exotic forest plantations.

Article: Ishmael Mohono

Article: Ishmael Mohono

Strong emphasis on irrigation related capacity building in new Africa Version of ESO

The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) has recently stated that one reason why sub-Saharan Africa's agricultural productivity is just 56 percent of the world's average is because it is under-irrigating.

The sub-Saharan Africa region is only using one (1) percent of its renewable water sources for irrigation. The IFPRI report suggests that 60 percent of sub-Saharan Africa's rural population and small scale farmers in particular would dramatically benefit from the expanded use of irrigation. In reply to a question how big such benefits could be, the IFPRI indicated that irrigated crops generally give double the yields of rain fed crops.

Against the above call for increased investment in irrigation on the continent, the newly developed Africa Version of ESO has dedicated a large section to irrigation and irrigated production systems – ranging from information on best practices and means of calculating watering requirements, to irrigation equipment, etc.

Article: Jantus van der Linden

Manstrat

Manstrat cc
Manstrat Agricultural Intelligence Solutions (Pty) Ltd.
Manstrat Consulting (Pty) Ltd.

P.O. Box 2752
BROOKLYN SQUARE
0075

www.manstrat.co.za

TECHNOLOGY TIPS *by Francois van der Merwe*

Search Tips

When using the knowledge centre to search Extension Suite Online for information, there are a couple of tips that one can utilize to obtain the best possible results. As with everyday life, when you give the person helping you to search for something, a detailed description of exactly what you are looking for, it is more than likely that the person will find the correct item. The same applies to search engines, the more information given, the more accurate the result. When searching, the end goal and what information one is looking for, should always guide the search. Instead of entering a complete sentence, it should rather be broken down into keywords. Searching by just using keywords will give one more accurate results and a faster reply, and the more keywords one uses, the more accurate the results will be.