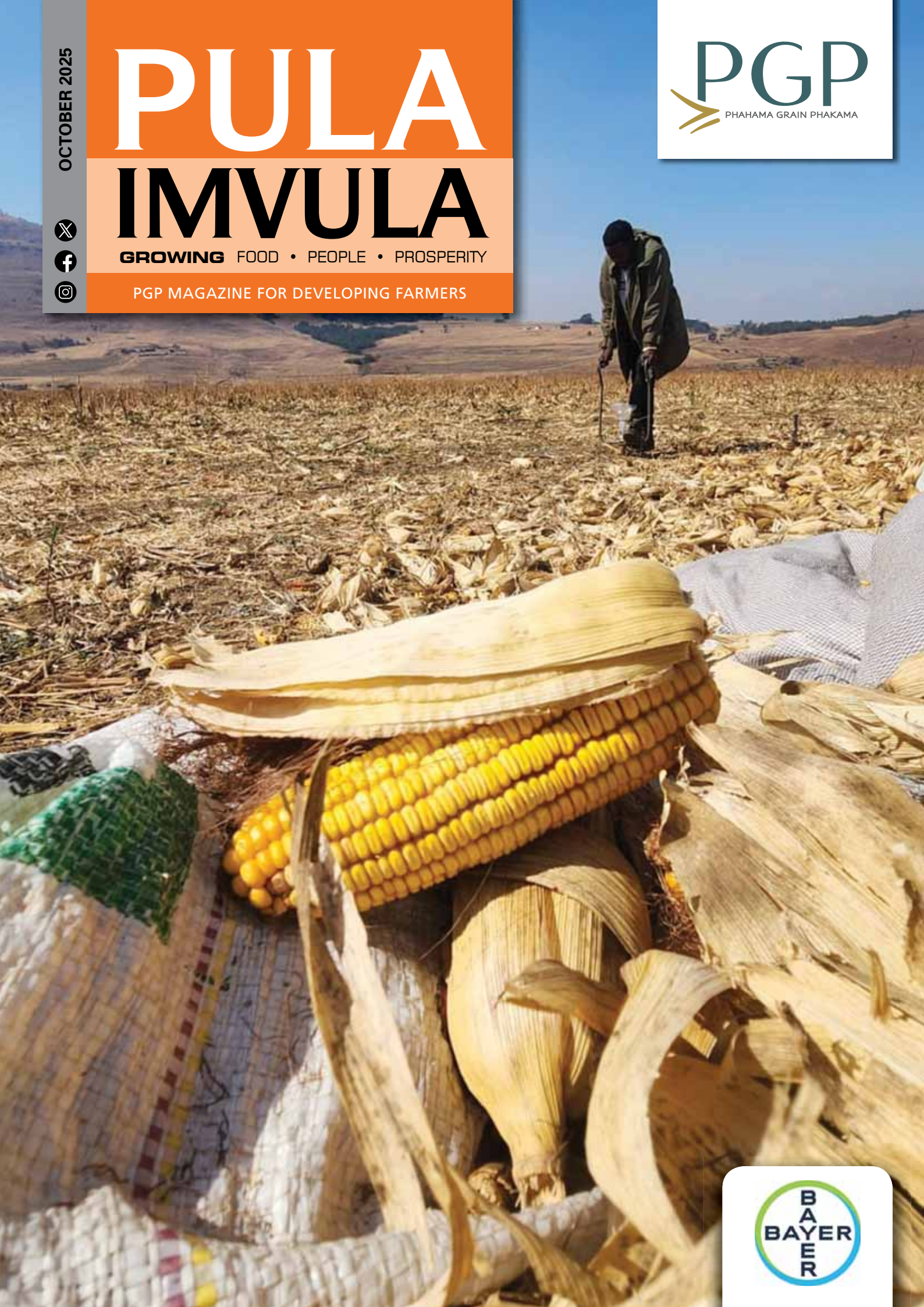
OCTOBER 2025

PULA IMVULA

GROWING FOOD • PEOPLE • PROSPERITY

PGP MAGAZINE FOR DEVELOPING FARMERS

PGP
PHAHAMA GRAIN PHAKAMA



BAYER

PULA IMVULA

Editorial team

PHAHAMA GRAIN PHAKAMA: PRETORIA
PO Box 74087
Lynnwood Ridge
0040
■ 086 004 7246
■ www.grainsa.co.za

EDITOR AND DISTRIBUTION
Jane McPherson
■ 082 854 7171 ■ Office: 012 943 8285
■ jane@grainsa.co.za

PUBLISHING PARTNER
INFOWORKS MEDIA PUBLISHING
Assistant editor – Louise Kunz
■ louise@infoworks.biz
Team leader – Johan Smit
■ 082 553 7806 ■ Office: 018 468 2716
■ johan@infoworks.biz
Publishing – Elizma Myburgh, Joritha Hechter

PGP Farmer Development Programme

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT MANAGERS
Free State
JACQUES ROUX
■ 082 377 9529 ■ jacques@grainsa.co.za

Mpumalanga
JERRY MTHOMBOTHI
■ 084 604 0549 ■ jerry@grainsa.co.za
■ Office: 012 943 8289 ■ Lanalie Swanepoel (Office assistant)

KwaZulu-Natal
GRAEME ENGELBRECHT
■ 082 650 9315 ■ graeme@grainsa.co.za

PHUMZILE NGCOBO (Assistant: Dundee)
■ 060 477 7940 ■ phumzile@grainsa.co.za
■ Office: 012 943 8287 ■ Nkosinathi Mazibuko (Office assistant)

North West
DU TOIT VAN DER WESTHUIZEN
■ 082 877 6749 ■ dutoit@grainsa.co.za
■ Office: 012 943 8290 ■ Lebo Mogatlanyane (Office assistant)

Eastern Cape
ERIC WIGGILL
■ 082 620 0058 ■ eric@grainsa.co.za
■ Office: 012 943 8277
■ Luthando Diko (Office assistant: Kokstad)
■ Cwayita Mpotyi (Office assistant: Mthatha)
■ Lindie Pretorius (Office assistant: Maclear)

Western Cape
MJ SWART
■ 072 090 7997 ■ mj@grainsa.co.za
■ Office: 012 943 8285 ■ Hailey Ehrenreich (Office assistant)



MAIZE TRUST
OPDT/OAC

THIS PUBLICATION IS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE MAIZE TRUST AND OPDT

CONTENTS

Cover: Farmer Sizwe Innocent Ngwenya taking soil samples on his farm in the Piet Retief region.

From the PGP PHAHAMA GRAIN PHAKAMA desk

Partnerships are vital to keep the Farmer Development Programme running. The Phahama Grain Phakama (PGP) team believes that by partnering and working together, farmers can fight hunger, strengthen farms and build a better future for agriculture in South Africa.

SUPPORTING GRAIN FARMERS

On 23 July, the PGP team met with the chief director of the Department of Land Reform and Rural Development (**DLRRD**) to discuss joining forces to support grain and oilseed farmers across South Africa. This partnership means more support for all farmers, from beginners to farmers already producing on a larger scale.

Leaders from the African Farmers Association of South Africa (**AFASA**) met with PGP to discuss closer collaboration in support of grain farmers. Both organisations have committed to formalising this relationship through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

TRAINING THE TRAINERS

Another partner, **Villa Crop Protection**, delivered specialised training to regional teams on the safe and effective use of crop protection products. This partnership ensures that Grain SA employees are equipped with the latest knowledge to support farmers better and enhance crop yields for the 2025/2026 season.

THANK YOU

For many of these farmers, this donation means healthier soils, stronger crops and hope for the future. Partnerships like this keep the farming communities thriving.

Together, everybody is working to ensure all farmers have access to the support they need to thrive and lead.

Source: PGP Facebook page

A big thank you to SA Lime & Gypsum for a donation of 1 360 bags or 68 t of micronized lime which was delivered to 272 small-scale farmers in the Amersfoort and Piet Retief areas.

COMPILED BY THE EDITORIAL TEAM

Choose the best method

to apply fertiliser

THE YEAR IS SPEEDING TO AN END, AND FARMERS MUST MAKE SURE THAT EVERYTHING IS DONE TO MAXIMISE THEIR CROP YIELD. IT IS IMPORTANT TO MANAGE THE CROP ACCORDING TO THE FIRST PRODUCTION PLAN – ESPECIALLY THE FERTILISATION AND CHEMICAL PROGRAMMES. THESE PLANS MUST CONSTANTLY BE EVALUATED AND ANY NECESSARY CHANGES SHOULD BE MADE.

Production conditions play a significant role in determining the best method for applying fertiliser. Soils differ in fertility status. Sandy soils, for example, typically have lower fertility levels than soils with more clay. Certain soils have specific clay minerals and chemical properties that can retain applied nutrients, making them less accessible to plants. These are usually soils with a high clay content. The soil moisture and temperature also play a significant role in root growth and will determine whether plants can absorb nutrients efficiently.

The most important principle to consider is that the plant nutrients applied should be as easily absorbed by the plants as possible. The closer the nutrients are to the roots, the better the plants can absorb them.

There are two ways to apply the extra fertiliser, namely banding and broadcasting (scattering). With banding, the fertiliser is placed close to the plant by using a cultivator equipped with fertiliser bins. Broadcasting is done with a spreader where the fertiliser is scattered over the total area. With banding the fertiliser is concentrated near the plants, while this is not the case with broadcasting.

Table 1 shows the effect that the method of application (banding/broadcasting) will have on the uptake of specific nutrients. The type of fertiliser and application rate will also be determining factors. According to **Table 1**, phosphate (P) and potassium (K) are less suitable for broadcasting.

The main reason for this is that these two elements are mainly absorbed through diffusion. This means the fertiliser moves from the fertiliser band into the root due to the concentration difference. A high concentration in the band is essential for the uptake of phosphate and potassium. Certain soils can also bind phosphate and potassium. In these soils, banding will also be a better application method.

On well-developed soils with higher fertility, banding will have a smaller impact than on sandy soils. Micro-elements such as zinc, manganese, copper, iron, boron and molybdenum will also be better absorbed in a band. Be careful to apply micro-elements in quantities that are toxic to the plants.

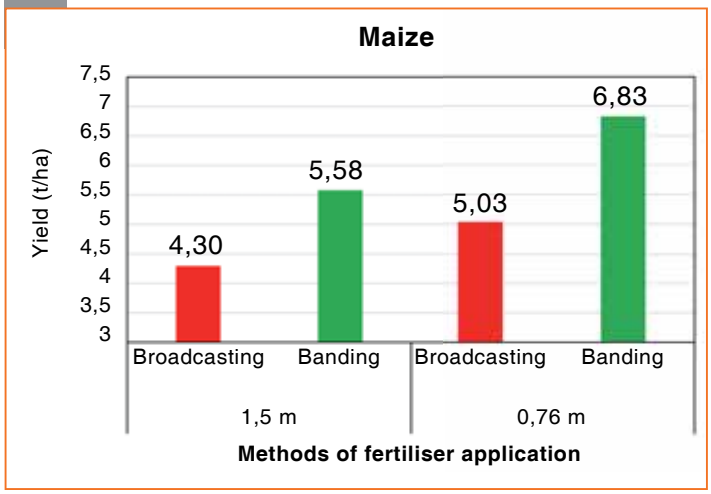
Graph 1 shows the yield response of maize at two row widths (1,5 m and 0,75 m), where fertiliser was applied using banding and broadcasting. The differences in the examples are significant and confirm the importance of applying plant nutrients as close as possible to the plant roots for fast and effective uptake. In both examples, the same product was used at the same application rate. Only the application method differed.

In this case, the farmer received much better value for money by using banding rather than broadcasting. Most grain farmers use both banding and broadcasting as fertiliser application methods. Ensure that the application action supports effective nutrient uptake. If this is not the case, the application method should be adjusted for maximum efficiency.

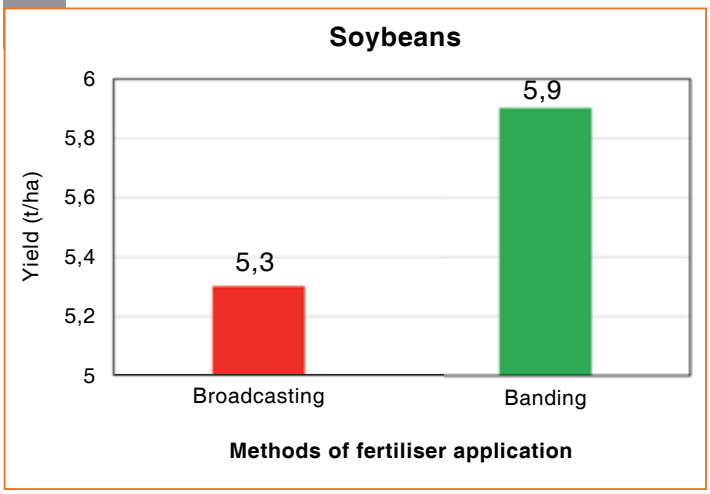
1 ***Nutrient uptake and method of fertiliser application.***

Service centre	Banding	Broadcasting
Nitrogen (N)	☑	☑ Only products that do not volatilise
Phosphate (P)	☑	☒ For correction only
Potassium (K)	☑	☒ For correction only
Sulphur (S)	☑	☑
Calcium (Ca)	☑	☑
Magnesium (Mg)	☑	☑
Zinc (Zn)	☑	☒
Manganese (Mn)	☑	☒
Copper (Cu)	☑	☒
Iron (Fe)	☑	☒
Molybdenum (Mo)	☑	☒

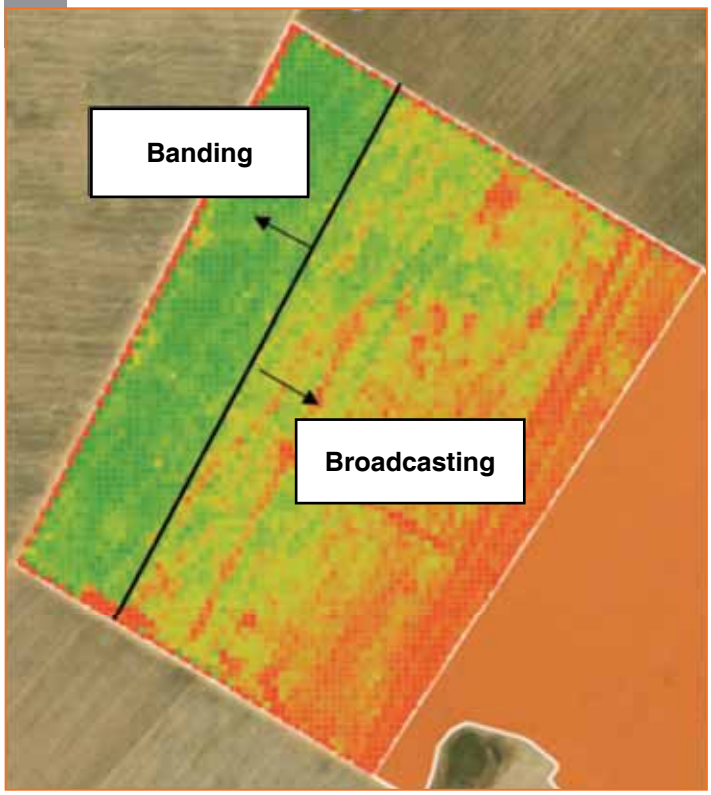
1 ***Yield response of maize to different methods of fertiliser application, using the same product, applied at the same rate per hectare.***



2 ***Yield response of soybeans to different methods of fertiliser application, using the same product, applied at the same rate per hectare.***



1 ***Satellite image showing the visible difference between banding and broadcasting.***



Fertiliser that is broadcasted after emergence depends on the rainfall to ensure the nutrient uptake, while fertiliser through banding is already in the soil, where more moisture is available for absorption.

Graph 2 shows the yield response of soybeans to fertiliser through banding and broadcasting, using the same product at the same application rate. Just like with maize, the yield difference is significant. The row spacing used for the soybeans was 0,86 m.

It is not only the differences in the yield that are significant between banding and broadcasting. Satellite image data also clearly shows the differences, as indicated in **Figure 1**. The section on the left side of the photo had banding and is growing much stronger than the section on the right side, where broadcasting was used. The planting date and fertilisation were the same for both application methods.

All the examples indicate that plants respond better to a higher concentration of plant nutrients. In the fertiliser band, this concentration can be artificially created. Therefore, wide-ranging broadcasting of fertiliser cannot compete with banding on a concentration basis.

To achieve the maximum yield, ensure that high-quality fertiliser is used at the correct application rate and with the best possible application method. ■

KOBUS VAN ZYL, SENIOR AGRICULTURIST, OMNIA NUTRIOLOGY® AND PIETMAN BOTHA, INDEPENDENT AGRICULTURAL CONSULTANT

Don't let weeds destroy your crop and profit

EARLY WEED CONTROL IN SUMMER CROPS IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT AS WEEDS LOWER CROP YIELDS BY COMPETING FOR SOIL MOISTURE, NUTRIENTS, SPACE AND SUNLIGHT. GOOD WEED CONTROL MANAGEMENT IN SUMMER CROPS IS THEREFORE ESSENTIAL FOR THE PRODUCTION OF HIGH-YIELDING AND PROFITABLE CROPS. FOR HIGH-COST AND HIGH-VALUE IRRIGATED CROPS, COMPETITION FOR LIGHT AND NUTRIENTS IS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT.

Weeds are one of the most significant problems farmers face. It can seriously harm a crop and are especially difficult to control during the hot summer months, when it grows quickly and the weather helps it to thrive.

The best time to control weeds is in the early stages of their development, when they are still small and weak. Unfortunately, due to poor time management and planning, farmers sometimes miss this window. It then leaves the difficult task of trying to keep weeds under control when they are growing at full force and at their strongest.

Although it is more challenging to manage weeds at this time, it still has to be done. Weed control is a constant job, and staying on top of it can lead to better harvests and higher yields. It is extremely important not to let weeds take over.

HOW WEEDS AFFECT YOUR YIELD AND PROFITABILITY

Crop production, particularly under dryland conditions in South Africa, presents numerous challenges and risks that need to be managed. Weed control and crop care make up a significant part of this.

Yield losses caused by weeds can vary enormously – from an almost minor yield loss to the complete loss of a crop. Farmers must aim to reduce weed numbers and then maintain control with an ongoing control programme throughout the season.

Due to low rainfall and uneven distribution of rain during the growing season, poor weed control can drastically increase the economic impact on crops. Weeds in the young stage of the crops can easily take up to 60% of the crops' yield, and without weed control, it can be even more.

Crops must be able to benefit maximally from the nutrients naturally in the soil and from the fertilisers applied during planting, to develop strong roots that will result in a hardy, strong plant. If the small seedlings are forced to share these nutrients with young weeds, especially invasive and strangling grasses, it will never yield what it is supposed to.

This farmer is busy spraying soybeans in order to control weeds and pests.

The Mngadi brothers in the Dundee region getting ready to do weed control.

Weeds can also restrict the essential amount of sunlight that is required by the planted crop, especially in the early growth stages. Additionally, some weeds act as hosts to various insects and disease pests. It is vital to learn which weeds will grow rapidly and significantly impact the potential planned crop yield.

Don't be fooled by the height or size of the weed, compared to the height or size of the crop planted. A young maize plant may seem healthy and stand tall in comparison to the surrounding weeds, but if it has to compete for food, its growth has undoubtedly been compromised.

It is essential to control a potentially harmful infection, either before or after planting, timeously to prevent a significant economic loss.

WEED CONTROL

The best time to control weeds is early in its development cycle, when it is at its weakest. When weeds are left too long, it becomes more resilient, which makes it much harder to kill. Weeds also have a much higher nutrient and moisture intake when it is young and actively growing – therefore, when farmers spray at this time, its intake of chemicals will also be higher, giving the best results.

Weed control must start with pre-season practices and even as far back as during the previous growing season, when weeds should not be allowed to form seed. If at all possible, ploughing should be done in the winter for maximum moisture control or at the least disking should be done in the early spring to control these early germinating weeds.

Another good way of controlling the early spring weeds is to have a good sprayer set with the correct nozzles and then to apply a good quality herbicide such as Roundup.

Good crop rotation systems, rotating herbicides and combining both chemical and non-chemical weed control methods are all methods that can be used. It is also essential to control weeds along fences, contour banks, waterways, irrigation channels and other non-cropping areas.

The control of weeds post-emergence is critical. It is a big mistake to neglect weed control practices and risk sacrificing as much as 20% of the potential crop at this stage of plant development.

Weeds also cause harvest problems. It influences the plant in a way that reduces the actual quality of the grain. Weed-seed contamination of grain can result in your harvest being downgraded, and your fields will experience a re-infestation, which will negatively influence the next crop.

Many spray programmes are available for genetically modified and normal crops that can be applied before planting, during planting and after planting. Keep in mind that the correct spray procedures must also be used in both a no-till system and a conventional crop production system. Always consult your herbicide supplier or agent before undertaking any programme you have in mind.

SCOUTING FOR WEEDS

Scouting is defined as a process of exploring to gain information. In this instance, the information gained concerning the specific weed problems on your farm will enable a relevant weed control programme to be developed and implemented.

Scouting for pests or weeds is usually carried out by walking through the lands in a zigzag or M pattern, and assessing and counting the various weeds found in a square metre steel square placed on the ground, for example, every 50 m or 100 m. The idea is to create a random but representative picture of the intensity and prevalence of the problem weeds.

The scouting and monitoring should take place during the period between crops, before planting, and in maize production at the 4th to 5th leaf stage, at a stage when annual broadleaf and grass weeds are less than 38 mm tall.

If the lands are too wet, weed control has to be done manually because the tractors can get stuck in the mud.

Remember that weed infestations at the edge of a land may not represent the population of weeds found within the land. Sample carefully and objectively, and consider the size of the land when deciding on the number of points where measurements are taken. A rule of thumb would be to do each 25 ha separately.

CONCLUSION

As the use of herbicides is an expensive exercise when the total cost of each spraying operation is taken into account, it is vital to assess the problem in time accurately. The increasing problem of herbicide resistance must be taken into account. Many farmers are returning to mechanical weed control, combined with the optimum application of chemicals, to reduce the overall cost of weed control, but within the context of realising profitable yields on their farms.

REFERENCES

- *https://www.grainsa.co.za/be-a-winner-in-the-war-against-weeds*
- *https://www.grainsa.co.za/early-weed-removal-is-important*
- *https://www.grainsa.co.za/scout-and-control-weeds-before-and-after-planting*
- *https://www.grainsa.co.za/weed-control-is-essential-for-crop-health*

COMPILED BY THE PULA EDITORIAL TEAM

Replanting: **Consider all the factors**

SOMETIMES, AT THE START OF A GROWING SEASON, A FARMER'S HARD WORK TO GET SEED INTO THE GROUND RESULTS IN POOR EMERGENCE. AT TIMES, THE DAMAGE TO A MAIZE CROP CAN BE SO SEVERE THAT IT CAN LEAD TO CROP FAILURE. THIS IS USUALLY THE RESULT OF A NATURAL PHENOMENON – PERIODS OF EXTREME HEAT AND DROUGHT, PESTS SUCH AS LOCUSTS OR WORMS CAUSING SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE, OR A STORM WITH HAIL, STRONG WINDS OR EVEN FLOODING.

TO REPLANT OR NOT

At this point, the farmer must decide whether there is still enough time in the growing season to achieve a harvest with the current crop stand, or whether it makes sense to replant. The question also arises whether it makes economic sense – whether costs can be recovered, and whether the farmer can still realise a profit. It can be even more complex: If no planting is done, the loss of income could harm the farmer's reputation and future chances of securing financing.

As each farmer's situation is unique as far as soil, the climate, other resources and crops are concerned, this is not an in-depth economic analysis, but just a suggestion of the principles that should be considered.

IMPORTANT FACTORS TO CONSIDER

The farmer can start by considering a few key points:

- Determine the yield potential and value of the current damaged crop stand.
- Assess the yield potential and value of a replanted crop stand.
- Calculate the difference.
- Determine the additional replanting costs and compare them to costs already incurred.

Essentially, this is a cost-benefit calculation, which sounds simple but is not that straightforward.

The farmer may reason that he has already invested significantly in the specific field through soil preparation, pest and disease control and nutrient management. Decide whether this investment will still have value in the next season, or whether it should preferably be utilised now.

Farmers planting manually, trusting that there will be rain to help their crops grow.

Another consideration is the costs that must be covered again – and here, the most important expenditure is seed. Depending on the crop, input costs are certainly one of a farmer's most significant expenses – and seed is by no means a minor part of this. The availability, price and nature of the seed (such as a shorter growing season) will be significant here.

The farmer must also consider other additional costs such as mechanisation, fuel and labour. Time is also a crucial factor. Consider whether there is still enough time to achieve a harvest with the available cultivar, which is competitively priced.

In short, a percentage of the typical input costs for planting actually doubles. The primary consideration is whether the estimated additional costs still allow for a break-even point and the possibility of profit.

CONCLUSION

Two principles stand out:

- Firstly, the calculations must be accurate – precise figures are crucial. Yes, there will be assumptions about the yield, cost and price, but these are informed estimates.
- The second principle is that the farmer must know his farm, soil and resources (natural, physical and human). This knowledge of the potential of given resources is decisive.

Furthermore, it is essential to know how long the window period for establishment is. There is no point in replanting if the expected yield is likely to be suboptimal.

Clearly, the decision to replant or not is not an easy one. However, an informed decision, based on reliable data and knowledge, is essential and can mean the difference between a crop failure and a reasonable harvest – or even a good result.

DR AART-JAN VERSCHOOR, SENIOR MANAGER, ARC AGRIMETRICS. FIRST PUBLISHED IN SA GRAAN/GRAIN, MARCH 2025

Economic impact of cutworm damage to maize and soybean

THE INCREASED PEST STATUS OF THE COMMON CUTWORM, *AGROTIS SEGETUM* (*LEPIDOPTERA: NOCTUIDAE*), HAS BEEN A CONCERN FOR GRAIN FARMERS OVER THE PAST FOUR CROPPING SEASONS. ALTHOUGH THE REASONS FOR THE INCREASED IMPORTANCE OF THIS PEST ARE NOT CLEAR, IT IS MOST LIKELY DUE TO A COMBINATION OF FACTORS. THESE INCLUDE CHANGING CLIMATE AND RAINFALL PATTERNS, THE ADOPTION OF HERBICIDE-TOLERANT CROPS, AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REDUCED TILLAGE PRACTICES THAT RESULTED IN MORE SUITABLE ENVIRONMENTS FOR THIS PEST TO SURVIVE AND MULTIPLY.

Cutworms are an early-season pest of maize and soybean. The larvae sever seedlings just above or below the soil surface, after which seedlings wilt and die. If infestations are severe, significant stand losses may be experienced soon after seedling emergence, often necessitating costly pesticide applications and even replanting.

A severed and wilted maize seedling and a cutworm larva curled into its distinctive C-shape.

> The larvae sever seedlings just above or below the soil surface, after which seedlings wilt and die.

SURVEY ON ECONOMIC IMPACT OF CUTWORMS

A survey was conducted during 2024 to assess the economic impact of this pest and to determine whether certain agronomic practices may be associated with the increased pest status of cutworms. A total of 65 farmers participated, all of whom were directly affected by cutworm infestations. For the purpose of this survey, the grain production area was subdivided into the following three regions: Eastern, Western and Eastern Cape + KwaZulu-Natal (EC + KZN).

Results on the area in each region that was affected and that had to be replanted due to severe stand losses are presented in **Table 1**. A total of 12% of the maize surface area under cultivation by the 65 respondents was affected by cutworm and of that 3,9% had to be replanted. In total, 6 062 ha of maize and soybean had to be replanted.

Overall, respondents reported stand losses on 12 183 ha in maize fields and 6 054 ha in soybean fields. Although cutworms are mostly associated with maize, this survey showed for the first time that soybean is also greatly affected by this pest.

The economic impact of the abovementioned cutworm damage was estimated by using available data on input costs to calculate the cost of replanting and chemical control, as indicated by affected farmers (**Table 2**). The economic impact of replanting of maize and soybean after cutworm-inflicted stand losses on the surface areas indicated in this survey illustrates the importance of this pest.

The overall cost to replant maize and soybean during the 2023/2024 season was estimated at R30,6 million (Table 2). These costs do not include direct expenses in terms of insecticide applications. Assuming that at least a single insecticide application was made with planting to prevent cutworm damage, it is estimated that the overall cost of chemical control on the total maize and soybean affected area of 18 587 ha, amounted to R14,2 million. It is therefore estimated that the overall economic loss experienced on the total surface area of 150 363 ha represented in this study was R44,8 million.

AGRONOMIC PRACTICES THAT INFLUENCE CUTWORMS

Conyza, grasses and Amaranthus were the most common weed species reported by farmers. The period between pre-plant weed cultivation and planting ranged widely between farmers, with the mechanical and chemical burndown of these weeds being implemented, on average, 14 days before planting. This period is too short to have a significant influence on the survival of cutworm larvae that use these weeds as their host plants.

Weeds are the host plants of cutworms during winter months.

Economic impact of...

1 *Areas (ha) of crops planted, affected and replanted due to cutworm damage per production region.*

Region	Area planted	Area affected	Area replanted
	Maize (ha)		
Eastern	45 155	7 057	2 457
Western	31 950	1 905	200
EC + KZN	24 461	3 221	1 303
Total maize	101 566	12 183	3 960
	Soybean (ha)		
Eastern	19 388	4 279	888
Western	14 760	400	150
KZN	12 846	1 375	1 064
Total soybean	46 994	6 054	2 102
	Lime		
Eastern	415	-	-
Western	1 388	350	-
KZN	-	-	-
Total sunflower	1 803	350	-

A cutworm larva feeding on a maize seedling.

2 *Estimated costs of replanting of maize and soybean by 65 grain farmers in the Eastern, Western and EC/KZN grain production regions.*

Region	Eastern		Western		EC + KZN	
	Maize	Soybean	Maize	Soybean	Maize	Soybean
Replanted area (ha)	2 457	888	200	150	1 303	1 604
Soybean (ha)						
Seed	R3 880	R1 625	R1 998	R1 671	R3 709	R1 760
Fuel	R1 419	R941	R1 696	R1 583	R1 479	R897
Insecticide	R703	R824	R821	R1 591	R931	R407
Total	R6 003	R3 391	R4 517	R4 846	R6 119	R3 064
Total replanting cost						
Ha replanted x cost/ha	R14 751 287	R3 011 669	R903 446	R726 999	R7 973 057	R3 260 096

Cutworm damage to a maize seedling.

Most respondents that experienced severe infestations indicated that the crop residue cover (%) on fields at the time of planting ranged between 26% to 50%. Crop residue does not only provide shelter for cutworm larvae, but also has a negative effect on the efficacy of pesticide applications. This is because the amount of pesticide that reaches the soil surface where larvae move around at nighttime, is not sufficient. Furthermore, pesticides may also be adsorbed by organic matter.

As a result, fields with abundant crop residue cover and an abundance of weeds shortly before planting are likely to provide suitable conditions for cutworms to survive until crop seedlings emerge.

MANAGEMENT OF CUTWORMS

Correct timing of weed control or chemical burndown of weeds is crucial for effective cutworm management. Previous recommendations that fields must be kept free of weeds for a period of 35 days before planting are still valid. Keeping fields free from weeds for such a long period ensures that any larvae that survived the winter on weeds will starve to death before crop seedlings emerge.

The cultivation of herbicide-tolerant maize and soybean and the move towards reduced tillage practices are factors that may have contributed to the increased pest status of cutworm.

This study was partly funded by Grain SA who also distributed the questionnaire to its members. The assistance of Syngenta, who initiated the survey and managed the online questionnaire, is highly appreciated (specifically Gustav Venter). ■

PROF HANNALENE DU PLESSIS, PROF JOHNNIE VAN DEN BERG AND ZUNEL VAN EEDEN, ALL FROM THE NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY.
FIRST PUBLISHED IN SA GRAAN/GRAIN, SEPTEMBER 2025

Top tips FOR FARMERS

By October all harvesting should be completed and maize should be stored or sold. Planning for the new season should have started a few months before the onset of the planting season. Advanced planning is crucial to the success of a farming enterprise. October is the time for getting all the nitty-gritty sorted for the new production season. The Farmer Development team is always ready to assist you in maximising your potential.

Financial planning

Before planning for the upcoming season, ensure that your production loan from the previous year has been settled. If this is not possible due to drought or unforeseen circumstances, it is essential to make arrangements to pay back the carry-over debt. Once your finances have been taken care of you can focus on farming.

Order in time

Farmers are always advised to take soil samples after harvesting to check the soil nutrient levels as this will impact fertiliser orders. **Jerry Mthombothi**, regional development manager at PGP's Mbombela office, reminds farmers that these orders should be placed a few months in advance in order to save on any possible price increases that may occur before the planting season starts. 'Farmers who are part of the BA project can expect deliveries of their input supplies in October,' says Jerry.

It is also important to decide in advance what maize cultivar you want to plant and what your seed requirements will be. A seed representative can guide you in making these decisions. Place your seed orders early to avoid any possible shortages of seed.

Do's and don'ts of storage

Take note of the following:

- To store fertiliser, keep it in its original packaging, in a cool, dry place – preferably off the ground.
- Seeds should be stored in a pest-controlled area, separate from chemicals and somewhere where theft can be prevented. Do not store seeds near chemicals or in damp, hot areas as this can cause spoilage. Handle bags of seed carefully as rough handling can cause the seed to burst or be damaged. Internal damage is often only visible after the seed has germinated.
- Allow for air flow to prevent high temperatures, humidity and the growth of mould.
- Keep the area clean and pest-free: A clean, dust-free environment is crucial. Do regular inspection for pests such as rodents, insects and weevils, and take action when needed.

SOURCES:

- *https://www.grainsa.co.za/october-=-plan--prepare-for-next-season#:~:text=After%20harvesting%20it%20is%20good,more%20money%20and%20increased%20profits.*
- *https://www.grainsa.co.za/store-seed-correctly-for-future-use* ■

COMPILED BY LOUISE KUNZ, ASSISTANT EDITOR: PULA

Pass the baton to the right person

IMAGINE ALL THE HARD WORK YOU PUT INTO YOUR FARM EVERY DAY. YOU WANT YOUR FARMING TO BE SUCCESSFUL AND TO PROVIDE A GOOD LIVING FROM THE HARVEST. WHAT KEEPS YOU GOING? WHAT HELPS YOU TO PUSH THROUGH TOUGH TIMES?

For many farmers, the goal is not just money. It is to leave a legacy that can be shared with the next generation. Look around you. Who is with you, and who will be with you in the future? Family members are often the main reason many farmers keep going and succeed.

Think of farming as a long race. You work hard now to build something you can hand over to your family. It is like a relay race with many runners. Each person must do their best and then pass the baton to the next person. If the baton is dropped or runners go in the wrong direction, the race does not finish well.

Succession planning in farming is like passing the baton from one generation to the next. It helps the farm keep running even if you can no longer manage it yourself anymore. A farming career can last a long time for some people, but for others it ends early because of health problems, money worries or other limits. Successful farmers prepare so that the next generation is ready to take over. They know a lasting farming legacy is bigger than one person.

So, how can you join other successful farmers and protect your farm for the future?

> A strong legacy comes from involving family members, workers and partners, and making sure everyone understands the goals and the path to reach them.

REMEMBER IT IS NOT ABOUT YOU ALONE

Farmers often work alone but building a lasting legacy means thinking about others. Identify who depends on the farm now and who will depend on it in the future. What happens to your family if you are not there to run the farm? Will they be able to keep farming if they want to?

Think about the people who rely on the farm right now. Then think about the people who may need the farm later. Is there a plan to help them learn and participate? A strong legacy comes from involving family members, workers and partners, and making sure everyone understands the goals and the path to reach them.

IDENTIFY YOUR SUCCESSOR

When a farmer is at the peak of his career, inviting someone else into the business and teaching him the trade can feel difficult. Many farmers do not identify or train a successor in time. There are sad stories of farms that have run for generations but must be sold because the next generation is not ready or able to take over. The baton falls to the ground, and the race ends prematurely.

A successful farmer finds successors and prepares them for what lies ahead. When the time comes, the successor should be willing, able and prepared to continue the farming work. How can you prepare them?

- Include them in discussions about the farm.
- Share the farm's financial information and management details.
- Introduce them to your partners and stakeholders.
- Teach them why you make certain decisions and how you manage the farm.
- Let them see how you think and how you act in different situations.
- Help them understand the farm's vision, goals and plans.
- Share your dreams and concerns with them.

When a successor is involved early, he learns to think similarly and can carry the work forward more smoothly. This increases the chances that the farm will reach its goals, even if you are not there to guide him every day.

HAVE A PLAN

A family farm rests on three building blocks: The family, the farm(s) and the management of the farming business (the day-to-day work). Each block needs a clear plan that everyone understands. This plan is called a succession plan. It should be developed well in advance with help from advisors to make sure the baton can be passed smoothly.

A key part of a succession plan is a last will or testament. Think of the will as the baton you pass to the next runner. It is your final act as an athlete, marking the official transfer of the business from one generation to the next.

If there is no plan in place, the successor may have to start over from the very beginning, which can create chaos and confusion. A clear plan helps the transition happen in a steady, orderly way.

DRAW UP A LAST WILL OR TESTAMENT

A last will or testament is a legal document that explains what happens to your property when you die. It specifies the following:

- Who should receive your belongings.
- Who will be in charge of carrying out your wishes (the executor).
- And who should take care of your children (a legal guardian).

A will is written while you are still alive, and the instructions are carried out after your death. It is an essential part of your estate plan, which helps settle your affairs the way you want. A will can also include arrangements for surviving accounts or care for another person, such as an elderly parent.

The will appoints an executor – the person who makes sure your wishes are followed. Usually, a court supervises the executor to ensure the wishes in the will are carried out correctly.

To be legally valid, the will must be signed by a person who is of sound mind and mentally capable. If you do not have a will when you die, you die intestate. In these cases the government decides how to handle your property.

Considerations when writing a will

- Decide who you want to hire to draw up the will and find out what it will cost. Some organisations offer free will services, but they may want to be the executor and receive a fee for handling the estate.
- Identify your beneficiaries.
- Choose a legal guardian for your children if they depend on you.
- Decide who will be the executor for your estate.
- Consider any other wishes you have.

It is essential to discuss your will with your family. This helps everyone to understand what will happen and what to expect. Inheritance is a privilege, not a right. Sharing plans in advance helps set realistic expectations for the future of the farm.

Do not leave your hard work to chance. Put the necessary plans and documents in place to build a farm for the future. With a clear plan and a willing successor, your farm can provide a lasting legacy for generations to come.

KEY STEPS YOU CAN TAKE NOW

- Discuss the future of the farm with your family.
- Identify potential successors and start teaching them the basics.
- Create a clear succession plan with help from advisors.
- Prepare a last will or testament and choose an executor.
- Discuss guardianship if needed, and any other important wishes.
- Keep information organised and up to date, so it is easy to carry out your plan when the time comes.

Discussing these plans with family members helps everyone to understand what will happen and why.

Remember: A lasting farming legacy is built through careful planning, open communication and careful preparation. By taking these steps, you can protect your farm for the future and ensure that your successors can enjoy a thriving, enduring legacy.

YOLANDI MARAIS, AGRICULTURAL ADVISOR AT DUNAMUS

WORDS OF WISDOM

A farm is more than land and crops.
It's a family's heritage and future.

~ SOURCE UNKNOWN

COMMON PIGWEED

COMMON PIGWEED (*AMARANTHUS HYBRIDUS*) IS PROBABLY ONE OF THE MOST WIDESPREAD AND COMMON WEEDS ACROSS SOUTHERN AFRICA. SINCE THE DISCOVERY OF HERBICIDE-RESISTANT POPULATIONS OF PALMER AMARANTH (*AMARANTHUS PALMERI*) IN 2018, A LOT OF FOCUS HAS BEEN PLACED ON THIS SPECIES, BUT IN THE LAST FEW SEASONS COMMON PIGWEED HAS EMERGED AS A SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE TO FARMERS IN THE SUMMER RAINFALL REGION OF SOUTH AFRICA, ESPECIALLY IN CROPS LIKE MAIZE AND SOYBEAN.

Not only are we seeing an increase in cases of glyphosate resistance (HRAC group 9/G) but also populations resistant to active ingredients in the ALS-inhibitor group (HRAC group 2/B) and even cases of multiple resistance to both groups. This article explores some of the latest research findings from the South African Herbicide Resistance Initiative (SAHRI) at the University of Pretoria, the threat posed by herbicide-resistant populations of common pigweed as well how farmers can manage the problem.

THE THREAT

Common pigweed is a fast-growing, highly competitive weed that can significantly reduce crop yields if left uncontrolled. It belongs to the *Amaranthaceae* family, a group of weeds known for their adaptability and rapid reproduction. Common pigweed competes with crops for vital resources like light, water, and nutrients. It is especially adapted to the warmer and wetter regions of the summer production areas but also has the ability to tolerate drought conditions. Seeds germinate in a wide band of temperatures ranging from 15°C to 41°C with an optimum between 30°C and 35°C.

Its aggressive growth habit and ability to produce hundreds of thousands of seeds per plant make it particularly difficult to control. The ability to produce large amounts of seed can lead to a rapid accumulation of seeds in the soil. These seeds can remain dormant in the soil for extended periods, allowing the weed to re-emerge in future growing seasons.

Seeds also germinate in flushes throughout the season allowing it to potentially escape early-season control with pre-emergence herbicides. If left unchecked, it can reduce crop yields by up to 90%, causing severe financial losses for farmers (**Figure 1**). Its high seed production rate is also linked to its ability to rapidly develop herbicide resistance.

Resistance to glyphosate is especially concerning when trying to control it in Roundup Ready crops, especially broadleaf crops like soybean. Populations showing resistance to multiple herbicide modes of action (glyphosate and ALS-inhibitors) are even more concerning.

A recent study conducted by researchers at SAHRI confirmed the first cases of glyphosate-resistant populations of common pigweed in South Africa. Populations of this weed collected from Bergville and Winterton in KwaZulu-Natal were resistant to glyphosate, even at four to eight times the recommended rate (**Figure 2**). Investigating the mechanism of resistance revealed a rare triple mutation in the EPSPS enzyme (normally inhibited by glyphosate) that prevents the glyphosate molecule binding to the target enzyme.

Both the Bergville and Winterton populations also showed resistance to the ALS-inhibiting herbicide active chlorimuron-ethyl at four times the recommended field rates. When we investigated the resistance mechanism, various mutations in the target enzyme that confers resistance to a variety of the active ingredients in the ALS herbicide group were identified.

1 ***Common pigweed in maize.***

is a growing threat

HERBICIDE RESISTANCE IS A GROWING PROBLEM

Glyphosate is a broad-spectrum, non-selective herbicide that has been used extensively in South Africa due to the widespread adoption of glyphosate-resistant (GR) Roundup Ready (RR) crops like maize and soybeans. However, over-reliance on this herbicide has led to the emergence of a range of glyphosate-resistant weed species. Among those listed in South Africa are Palmer amaranth (*A. palmeri*), hairy fleabane (*Conyza bonariensis*), rigid ryegrass (*Lolium rigidum*), buckhorn plantain (*Plantago lanceolota*) and, more recently, common pigweed (*A. hybridus*).

ALS-inhibiting herbicides are also commonly used in South Africa. ALS-inhibitors are comprised of five chemical families, namely imidazolinones (IMIs), sulfonylureas (SUs), pyrimidinyl benzoate, triazolinones, and triazolopyrimidines (TPs).

At least ten different mutations have been identified in the ALS gene that can confer various levels of resistance to one or more of these families. In South Africa the following species have been recorded as resistant to ALS-inhibiting herbicides: Palmer amaranth (*A. palmeri*), wild oat (*Avena fatua*), rigid ryegrass (*L. rigidum*), wild radish (*Raphanus raphanistrum*), little-seeded canary grass (*Phalaris minor*), common chickweed (*Stellaria media*) and now common pigweed (*A. hybridus*) as well.

MANAGING RESISTANCE

While the spread of herbicide-resistant common pigweed poses a significant challenge, there are several strategies that South African farmers can adopt to manage this weed effectively. Preventing resistance from developing or spreading between fields is the most effective strategy, and preventing the spread of pigweed is critical.

- Farmers should clean their equipment between fields to avoid transporting weed seeds from one area to another.
- Also manage field borders and non-crop areas to prevent the weed from establishing and spreading into cultivated fields.
- Rotation of herbicide modes of action and herbicide mixtures is essential. The use of pre-emergence herbicides with residual activity is essential, especially in crops with limited post-emergence options and where tillage is not used for weed control.
- Early detection of resistance is important to prevent resistance from spreading. Ongoing resistance screening at SAHRI has been able to identify cases of resistance to glyphosate and ALS-inhibitor herbicides across the summer rainfall season.
- Early intervention can prevent resistant populations from building up seed banks in the soil. Preventing seed set from any remaining plants in the field is more effective than trying to control large populations in the next season.
- Crop rotation in fields where resistance is present is important, with maize offering more alternative chemical control options compared to soybean.
- Planting cover crops like sorghum or rye can help suppress the growth of pigweed by outcompeting it for resources.

By implementing integrated weed management strategies, rotating herbicides, and preventing the spread of resistant weeds, farmers can protect their crops and livelihoods from the damaging effects of pigweed. Now more than ever, it is crucial to stay informed and proactive in the approach to weed control. The future of South African agriculture depends on it. ■

2 ***Response to different doses of glyphosate 14 days after application.***

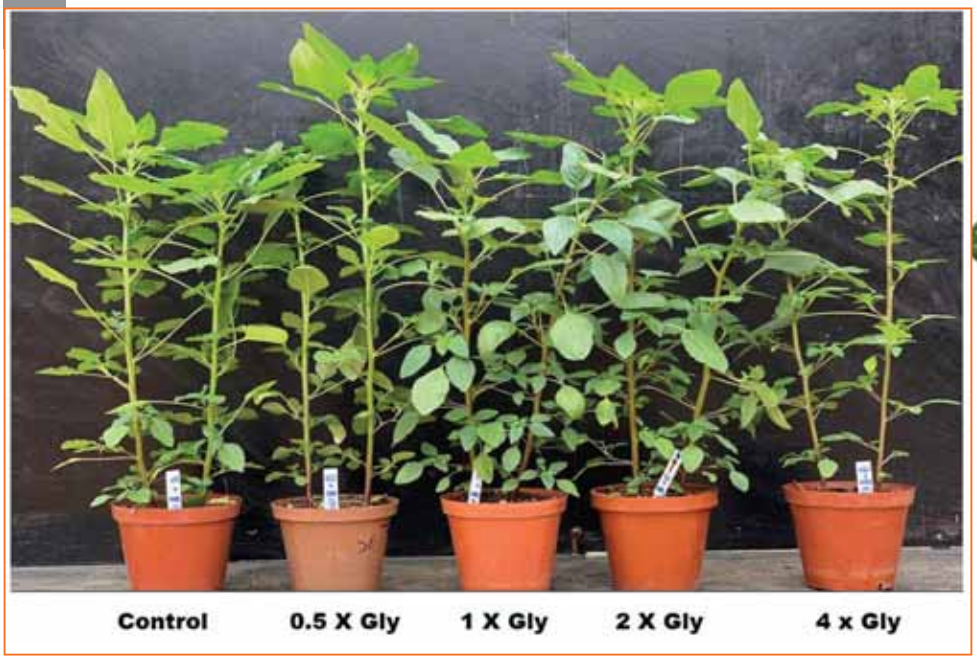


Photo: N. Shabangu

PROF JUAN VORSTER, SOUTH AFRICAN HERBICIDE RESISTANCE INITIATIVE (SAHRI), UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA. FIRST PUBLISHED IN SA GRAAN/GRAIN, SEPTEMBER 2025.

Reduce risks with these biosecurity guidelines

INFECTIOUS DISEASES CAN HAVE A DEVASTATING IMPACT ON THE PRODUCTIVITY OF ANY LIVESTOCK OPERATION. VIRTUALLY EVERY DISEASE RESULTS IN PRODUCTIVITY LOSSES, AND IN SOME CASES, THESE LOSSES CAN BE SUBSTANTIAL, PARTICULARLY ON LARGER OPERATIONS IN WHICH MORE ANIMALS ARE AT RISK. PRODUCTION AND QUALITY CAN DECREASE, RESULTING IN NEGATIVE FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES.

BIOSECURITY GUIDELINES

The following biosecurity guidelines should be taken into consideration:

Disease familiarity

To be able to prevent the spread of disease, farmers need to have basic knowledge about the common diseases that are prevalent in their area – this includes symptoms and treatments.

Contact with wildlife

Livestock should have minimum access to cats, dogs and wildlife – all of which are capable of spreading diseases.

Isolating new additions

When purchasing animals, ensure you know the disease status of the source operation. Ask for a veterinary certificate to prove that the new livestock are free from disease. Follow these steps:

- Upon arrival, the new stock may have been exposed to disease but are not yet showing clinical signs.
- Isolate new stock for 28 days.
- Quarantine camp should be a minimum of 20 m to 30 m away from the home herd.
- Isolation areas should be located down-wind and down-flow from the home herd.
- No feed bunks or water sources may be shared between the two herds.
- Ensure you know the vaccination programme for the previous farm – this will help you know for which disease they have been vaccinated.

> When purchasing animals, ensure you know the disease status of the source operation.

Controlling traffic

Employees or visitors, especially those who have contact with animals from other livestock operations, can introduce disease agents from another farm via their boots, clothing, vehicles or other equipment. Follow these directions to prevent this:

- Limit number of people dealing with animals and accessing facilities.
- Implement the use of footbaths and wheel baths on your farm. Make sure that everyone uses them and regularly clean and refill it with an appropriate product to ensure effectiveness.
- Begin working with the animals that are youngest and most susceptible to disease first.
- Control vehicle traffic, particularly rendering or delivery trucks.
- Keep a record of visitors.

Sanitation

Understanding and implementing waste management procedures and maintaining clean operating facilities and equipment are critical biosecurity management tactics for which all employees should share responsibility. These are important rules to implement:

- Ensure that everyone also washes their hands regularly.
- Always wash and sanitise boots before and after entering separated groups of animals.
- Ensure that all overalls are washed on a regular basis.
- Keep all feed ingredients clean, dry and as free as possible of rodents, which are notorious disease-carrying pests.

Vaccination plan

Vaccinating against the most economically devastating diseases is added insurance against disease outbreaks.

- Customise a vaccination plan for your farm.
- Consider compulsory vaccinations.
- Vaccinating young animals helps build a well-protected herd/flock.
- Maternal antibody interference with the vaccination, the impact of stress, nutrition and infectious organisms, the importance of boosters and adverse reactions should also be taken into consideration

Colostrum

Newborns need time to develop antibodies and therefore must rely on antibodies obtained from the mother via colostrum, which immediately helps protect the young. Newborns should receive 10% of their body weight of quality colostrum within the first twelve hours of life. Within six to nine hours after birth, they lose 50% of their ability to absorb antibodies via the colostrum. By 24 hours, virtually all antibody absorption ability is gone. Make sure to deworm youngsters and ensure the drinking water is not stagnant.

Mortality

Animal deaths represent the least desirable health outcome. Once a death has occurred, determining the cause is important in preventing future death and improving the health of the herd.

- Animals should avoid going anywhere near the material of a dead infected animal, such as carcass, saliva or blood. Animals should also avoid grazing in an area where a diseased animal died.
- The animal material should be disposed of properly by burial/burning in a secluded area. ■

RED MEAT INDUSTRY SERVICES

Corner Post

BY LOUISE KUNZ, ASSISTANT EDITOR

MPHO MUNYAI (44) IS ONE OF THE FINALISTS IN THE 2025 NEW ERA COMMERCIAL FARMER OF THE YEAR CATEGORY. THIS HUMBLE FARMER HAS AN IMPRESSIVE RÉSUMÉ, AS HE HELD VARIOUS TRANSFORMATION LEADERSHIP ROLES IN BIG COMPANIES SUCH AS SHELL, NEDBANK, PWC AND PUMA ENERGY. HE ALSO RECEIVED SEVERAL ACCOLADES IN THE BUSINESS WORLD, BUT BEING A SUCCESSFUL FARMER IS THE ACHIEVEMENT HE IS THE PROUDEST OF.

His decision to leave the corporate world proves that the things you are passionate about keep calling you. After 15 years in the corporate world, Mpho says he now feels as if he is on holiday because he is doing what he loves. 'It is really a fulfilling calling – I am at peace, content and hopeful about my future.'

Mpho is an example that grandparents often have an influence on the decisions their grandchildren make. He developed an interest in cattle production at a young age while looking after his late grandfather's Afrikaner cattle. As a young boy, he also worked in the crop fields alongside his grandmother, who continues to play an important role in his farming activities. She is still one of Mpho's role models, and he regularly taps into her wisdom.

Today Mpho, who farms at Vlakfontein near Magaliesburg and Syferbult in North West, is a recognised cattle farmer with two studs – the Vhanyai Boran Stud and the Vhanyai Droughtmaster Stud. In 2022, he received the national mentor of the year award at the 2022 ARC Beef Performers Awards, and in 2023, he was acknowledged as the national elite developing breeder of the year by South African Stud Book.

In 2021, he decided to include crop production as a way of diversifying his agricultural enterprise, as well as maximising the utilisation of land. He joined PGP in 2023 and attends the Ventersdorp Study Group, where he grabs any opportunity to increase his agricultural knowledge about crop production.

A FINALIST'S THREE TOP TIPS FOR FELLOW FARMERS:

- Record-keeping is essential. It helps you to make informed decisions on things you want to do or are planning to do. Reflect on past decisions that contributed to success or failure.
- It is crucial to do what you love. Without passion for farming, it becomes a cross you have to bear. You must also not lose your passion because of challenges.
- Be teachable and learn as much as you can wherever you can – even if it is through challenges.

When he planted for the first time, he used a contractor, which caused a delay in the production cycle. After joining PGP, he realised the importance of owning your own equipment and invested in the future of his farming operation. He hopes to own his own harvester in the near future. He has achieved an average yield of 6,5 t/ha – a yield that compares well with his commercial neighbours.

MPHO'S STORY

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED SINCE BECOMING A CROP FARMER?

Farming is a lifestyle, and you must know that you are never going to get what you want – so it keeps you humble. There are many challenges in farming, as you are gambling with the environment and you have no control over it. It is a leap of faith. Planning is important and you need to be disciplined. Keep your lands clean and free of weeds. I also learned that there is no instant gratification, as it is not a six-month project you work on, so you have to be very patient. To farm, you need faith, perseverance and tenacity.

WHAT HAS CONTRIBUTED TO YOUR GROWTH?

Knowledge is the cornerstone of my success. I don't mind asking other farmers for advice, and wherever I travel, I try to learn from others. PGP is also a fantastic source of information – and the mentorship programme is a huge part of my journey.

FARM FACTS

Farm: Vhanyai Ranch, Vlakfontein
Nearest town: Magaliesburg
Region: North West
Size: 1 400 ha
Type of farming operation: Mixed – plants maize and runs two studs (Boran and Droughtmaster cattle)

PGP'S CONTRIBUTION

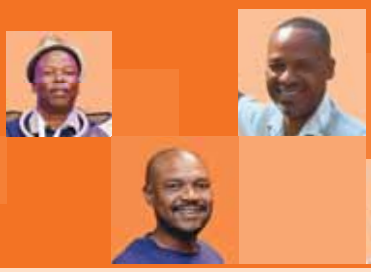
- Joined PGP in 2023
- Ventersdorp Study Group

Training courses completed:
Has completed several courses, including:
- Introduction to farm management and farm finance

A mentor's view:
Du Toit van der Westhuizen, regional development manager in North West, says Mpho is a dedicated farmer who is keen to learn and improve his agricultural practices. 'He has shown excellent progress and is a real ambassador for development in South Africa. His main aim is to plant more hectares to contribute to the country's food security.'

Du Toit van der Westhuizen

A programme that is changing lives



Making sure farmers reach their full potential

ALL ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN WITHIN THE PHAHAMA GRAIN PHAKAMA (PGP) FARMER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (FDP) ARE TAILORED WITH THE SPECIFIC INTENTION OF TRANSFERRING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS. EVERY ACTIVITY IS DESIGNED TO TARGET AS MANY FARMERS AS POSSIBLE IN A MEANINGFUL WAY. THESE ACTIVITIES INCLUDE SUPPORT TO ADVANCED FARMERS, STUDY GROUP MEETINGS, TRAINING SESSIONS AND DEMONSTRATION TRIALS.

Between 12 July and 22 August, a total of 78 **farm visits** were made to assist farmers with the harvesting process, and to ensure that the marketing of crops was done correctly and in time. Some of the advanced farmers also had to complete their business plans, which had to be submitted to the various funders for the loan application process to be finalised.

ONE-ON-ONE SUPPORT

When Jacques Roux, regional development manager in the Free State, visited farmer Ranko Tsotetsi, they did a calculation on the harvested hectares. A yield of 7 t/ha seemed possible.

This excited farmer from North West, Itumeleng Mongane, shared that for the first time in his farming career, he has to have a trailer on both sides of his land – meaning the harvest looks good. He is looking at an estimated yield of about 4 t/ha.

Farmer Ramoso Pholo delivered his first load of groundnuts (282 bags) to Triotrade, with a possible second load following. During the farm visit, he was waiting for the combine harvester to harvest his remaining sunflowers.

Farmers face numerous challenges, and although rain is necessary, excessive rainfall can be problematic, even during harvesting. Farmer Alfred Gondo from the Louwsburg region had to harvest by hand in the wet patches, which added considerable costs to his production.

Mentor Chris de Jager visited farmer John Jabulani Ngwenya in the Dundee region, when his contractor was busy harvesting. It appeared that he would achieve about 4 t/ha this season.

LEARNING THROUGH GROUP SESSIONS

At **study groups**, farmers have access to information and expert advice. Through study group visits, the FDP team gets to know the farmers and the farmers learn to trust the team for advice and guidance. These visits also ensure the appropriate transfer of information – both theoretical and practical. Mentors and managers can be instrumental in updating farming systems. A total of 98 study group visits took place over the July/August period in the following regions: Dundee, Free State, Kokstad, Maclear, Mthatha and Mbombela.

When it comes to meeting attendance, the Amandengane Study Group gets a golden star! They are among the study groups with the best attendance. The purpose of this meeting was to help the farmers with administration.

Members of the Lower Tsitsana Study Group each received a copy of the **Pula Imvula** *magazine.*

At the Vrischgewacht Study Group in the Lichtenburg area, Du Toit van der Westhuizen, regional development manager in North West, did a practical demonstration of soil sampling and explained to farmers why this is so important. Du Toit gave all the farmers the opportunity to take a soil sample using an auger. He also showed them how to do it with a spade if they do not have augers.

The atmosphere was buzzing with excitement at the Pixley Ka Seme Study Group. A total of 320 bags of 50 kg micronised lime were distributed among the farmers. It was a very cold day, but the farmers braved the weather and worked well together to ensure that the distribution process ran smoothly. The farmers expressed their gratitude to PGP.

Eric Wiggill, regional development manager in the Eastern Cape, visited the Ramafole Study Group in the Maclear area. Apart from the 29 members who attended, 40 potential new members also participated in the meeting.

Farmers who attended the Newcastle Study Group meeting shared information about the yields obtained and income derived. This raised the importance of expenses vs income, break-even and profitability. Farmers need to be encouraged to consider all costs, from land preparation to harvesting, to investigate the profitability of the enterprise.

At the Ga-Riba Study Group meeting, Jerry Mthombothi, regional development manager at the Mbombela office, discussed the nutritional requirements for maize production, the types of fertilisers and how to apply them, as well as all the aspects of planting maize.

The farmers from the Bethamoya Study Group were extremely grateful for the donation from SA Lime & Gypsum in partnership with PGP. A total of 160 bags were distributed among the farmers of this study group. This will aid the fields well, particularly after the past season's excessive rains, which resulted in possible nutrient leaching.

DEVELOPING FARMING SKILLS

Skills development in agriculture is an investment in the future. Six **training courses** were held in the Free State during this period:

- 'Introduction to wheat production under irrigation' (a five-day course).
- Two 'Practical skills for planter and boom sprayer' courses.
- Two contractors' courses.
- One 'Tractor and farm implement maintenance' course.

Trainer Danie van den Berg presented the practical skills course in Excelsior. The attendees are keen for more courses of this nature to be presented in the area to help them develop their farming knowledge.

These farmers attended an introduction to wheat production course by trainer Danie van den Berg.

It takes generations to build a legacy!

When you look at your farm, you don't just see crops, you see your hopes and dreams for the future, built on generations of hard work and determination. No matter the size of your farm, **DEKALB®** has your back! For over 20 years, we've been helping build communities from the ground up, one seed at a time. Let's keep planting success together for generations to come.

acceleron® | CLIMATE FIELDVIEW™ | Roundup Ready® MAIZE 2 | YieldGard® MAIZE 2

BAYER

#DEKALBdifference | @Bayer4Crops

www.cropscience.bayer.co.za /// www.bayer.co.za /// Tel: +27 11 921 5002

DEKALB® 20 years