PULA

PGP
PHAHAMA GRAIN PHAKAMA

NOVEMBER 2026



2026 Farmer of the year winners announced...



PHOTO: Lizel Snyman

ON THE COVER: A delighted Vincent Masiu, the 2026 New Era Commercial Farmer of the Year, on his prize – a John Deere 5075E tractor.

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3 TIPS FOR NOVEMBER

A good harvest depends on understanding the seasons and how each season affects crop growth. Here are a few practical tips to help farmers stay on track during November.

1 **The Farmer Development team urges farmers to plan before they plant. Thorough soil preparation is critical before the seed goes into the soil. Deep ripping improves soil depth by loosening compacted layers, while discing produces a suitable seedbed for optimal crop establishment.**

2 **Jerry Mthombothi, regional development manager at PGP's Mbombela office, reminds farmers of the importance of weed control and urges them to scout the fields on a weekly basis. 'Control weeds while they are still young and actively growing. Use the correct herbicide that matches the crop, weed species and crop growth stages. Avoid spraying during strong winds or when rain is likely to wash off the herbicide.'**

3 **A dry season is anticipated, and farmers should ensure suitable plant populations are established to decrease competition for water and nutrients among the plants themselves, advises Phumzile Ngcobo, assistant regional manager at PGP's Dundee office. She also reminds farmers that diversification is crucial to reduce risk.**

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The views in articles by independent writers are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of Phahama Grain Phakama (PGP).

Department warns about El Niño



In the agricultural sector, El Niño conditions may bring below-normal rainfall and high temperatures, leading to dry conditions and heat stress. This often contributes to crop failure and livestock mortality, especially where risk reduction measures are not implemented.

Water restrictions may also be introduced during dry periods and usually affect irrigation farmers. Other concerns include pests and diseases associated with these conditions.

Crop farmers are encouraged to implement climate-smart agriculture to conserve soil moisture. Use implements suited to conservation and employ agricultural principles that preserve moisture and minimise soil erosion.

Implement risk reduction measures, such as avoiding unnecessary expansion of land under production and prioritising suitable cultivars that will withstand dry and hot conditions. Farmers are also advised to prioritise cultivars listed in the National Varietal List in compliance with the Plant Improvement Act (Act No. 11 of 2018) and remain within the planting window.

It is important to use water sparingly as it is a scarce resource. Farmers are always encouraged to irrigate at times that conserve water, such as in the morning or evening – and to comply with local water restrictions.

Livestock farmers are encouraged to keep livestock numbers in balance with the veld's carrying capacity and available grazing. This can be done by avoiding overstocking, which leads to overgrazing, exacerbates the impact of dry conditions and causes mortalities. Best veld management strategies should be implemented, such as rotational grazing and providing additional feed and watering points.

Anticipated hot conditions during the summer season are usually associated with related pests and diseases. Therefore, farmers are urged to continually scout and put control measures in place where necessary. Farmers should monitor weather and climate updates from the South African Weather Service.

Scan the QR code to read the complete media statement issued by the Department of Agriculture.

From the PGP desk

PHAHAMA GRAIN PHAKAMA

Khomotso Mashiloane is the new chief executive officer (CEO) of Phahama Grain Phakama (PGP) with effect from 1 November 2026. Grain SA and the PGP team look forward to following his leadership journey and PGP's continued growth, as it supports farmers and contributes to the development of South African agriculture.

'Taking on the responsibility of leading PGP marks an exciting new chapter in my journey. I see this opportunity not simply as a leadership position, but as a responsibility to help build a stronger, more inclusive and sustainable agricultural sector. I am joining an organisation with a rich history of supporting developing farmers, and look forward to building on this foundation alongside our dedicated team, farmers and strategic partners.'

His approach to leadership is simple: Listen, learn, understand and then strengthen. He believes that sustainable progress requires collaboration, accountability and a willingness to continuously improve. One of his greatest aspirations is to see more farmers move beyond receiving support to becoming productive, profitable and independent agricultural entrepreneurs. 'For me, the true success of farmer development is not only measured by how many farmers we reach, but by how many lives and farming businesses we meaningfully transform.'

A PASSION FOR AGRICULTURE AND EDUCATION

For Khomotso, agriculture has always been about more than producing food. It is about people, opportunities, dignity and the ability to transform lives. 'I have always believed that behind every successful farmer is a story of determination, resilience and the desire to build something meaningful.'

His own journey in the agricultural sector has been shaped by a passion for agriculture and people development. With qualifications in agriculture and training as an educator, he has built his career on the belief that knowledge, opportunity and the right support can unlock extraordinary potential.



He has worked in both the public and private sectors and gained experience in agricultural development, farmer support, stakeholder engagement, policy implementation and leadership. 'These experiences have allowed me to appreciate agriculture from different perspectives, but most importantly, they have taught me that meaningful development begins with understanding the people we serve.'

MESSAGE TO OUR FARMERS

As the new production season begins, his message to farmers is one of encouragement and hope.

Every season brings challenges, but it also presents an opportunity to grow. 'I encourage you to plan carefully, remain disciplined, embrace knowledge and never lose sight of your ambitions. Progress may not always happen overnight, but every step forward matters.'

He adds: 'At PGP, a farmer's growth is our purpose, and your success is our shared achievement. Together, we are not simply growing crops – we are growing people, building businesses and cultivating a future where every farmer has the opportunity to thrive.'

EDITORIAL TEAM

CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER, awards that inspire

Discussions on tough issues such as land ownership, water rights and harsh climatic conditions were balanced by celebrations of those whose hard work had literally enabled them to reap the rewards. This aptly sums up the Phahama Grain Phakama (PGP) and Red Meat Industry Services (RMIS) Ukukhula Conference and Day of Celebration, which was held at NAMPO Park on 8 October 2026.

A PLATFORM FOR GROWTH

Willie Aucamp, the Minister of Agriculture, delivered the keynote address. His attendance coincided with his first 100 days in office. Aucamp stressed the importance of agriculture to the country's economy. 'This is a strategically important sector that supports household food security, animal feed, agro-processing, employment, rural economies and regional trade. Without the farmer, we will not have food on our tables.'

He pointed out that South African farmers produce between 10 million and 16 million tons of maize annually, depending on climatic conditions, supplying both domestic demand and regional export markets. He also acknowledged the substantial contribution made by commercial grain farmers.

Referring to his recent discussions with the African Farmers' Association of South Africa (AFASA) president, AJ Mthembu, Aucamp raised a fundamental question: How can farmers succeed if they cannot invest capital in land they do not own?

In a joint effort, Aucamp and AFASA developed an initiative to identify 100 farmers per province who are currently renting government-owned farmland and assess the viability of their farming operations. The Minister of Land Reform and Rural Development would help transfer the land into the farmers' names, giving them greater tenure security.

Other speakers and discussion groups also highlighted the importance of land transfer, water rights and resilience. Attendees learned about issues such as risk management and the El Niño phenomenon.

Ukukhula GRAIN & LIVESTOCK PGP RMIS

***Pula* spoke to Ukukhula attendees to hear their views on the event, which was held for the second time:**

- Bush Masiu (Free State): I have attended before and found it interesting. Today, I am here to support my brother, Vincent.
- Engeline Mnisi (Mpumalanga): It is wonderful to be here. I have learned a lot about agricultural insurance.
- Esethu Kitshini (Eastern Cape): I am learning from my father. I came here to gain experience and learn more about the agricultural industry.
- Johanna Mabuza (Mpumalanga): It is my first time here, and I have learned a lot about fertiliser.
- Sam and Puseletso Ntsutle (Free State): This event is very inspirational. We hope to learn how to take our farming to the next level.
- Sizwe Ngwenya (Eastern Cape): I am here to gain the knowledge I need to get my farm more productive.
- Yanelisa Gcaba (Eastern Cape): It is my first time here. I have just started farming on 5 ha and want to know how to expand.



A panel discussion featuring facilitator Sylvester Lubambo from Afgri Farmer Development, Bongikhaya Dayimani (Director-General: Rural Development), Willie Aucamp (Minister of Agriculture), Jeremia Mathebula (Chairperson: PGP) and AJ Mthembu (president of AFASA).

THE 2026 FARMER OF THE YEAR WINNERS



The Grain SA/Absa/John Deere Financial Subsistence Farmer of the Year is Manqoba Nkosi from Donkerhoek, Mpumalanga. With him are Andrei van Heerden from John Deere Financial, Jeremia Mathebula (PGP Chairperson), Dr Langa Simela (Absa), William Raphoto (Grain SA board member) and Khomotso Mashiloane (PGP's CEO).



The Grain SA/Land Bank Smallholder Farmer of the Year is Lubabalo Jordan from Mthatha in the Eastern Cape. His award was presented by two Grain SA board members, Thobani Ntonga and Shadrack Mbele and Litha Kutta from Land Bank.



Kopano Lentswetshipi from Mooifontein in North West is the Grain SA/Pannar Potential Commercial Farmer of the Year. With him are Jeremia Mathebula, Reggie Mchunu (Pannar) and Thobani Ntonga (Grain SA board member).



Masiu Farming Enterprise received the award for the Grain SA/Absa/John Deere Financial New Era Commercial Farmer of the Year. Vincent Masiu credits Grain SA for playing the biggest role in his life and farming journey. Celebrating with him are Andrei van Heerden from John Deere Financial, Dr Langa Simela from Absa, Vincent's wife, Naledi, and Jeremia Mathebula.

HIGH-TONNAGE CLUB

1 000 Ton Club



Tau Itsebeletse (Free State)



Ngobile Matlaba (North West)



Zoliwe Nombewu (Eastern Cape)

1 500 Ton Club



Victor Mafoko (North West)



William Raphoto (North West)

2 000 Ton Club



Masiu Farming Enterprise (Free State)



Mpho Munyai (North West)

These new members were also welcomed to the High-tonnage Club.

500 tons:	Lebohang Khitleli (Eastern Cape)
	Masenga Farming (Eastern Cape)
	Mdibani Masilela (North West)
	Nkwe Metswamere (North West)
	Vincent Ntuli (North West)
1 000 tons:	Kevinot Farming (Eastern Cape)
3 500 tons:	Zacharia Legacy Enterprise (Eastern Cape)

3 500 Ton Club



Obakeng Mogogane (North West)



A BIG THANK YOU

PGP also acknowledged the contributions of its programme partners, whose support helps advance farmer development and strengthen agricultural enterprises.

The partners and their representatives recognised at the event were:

- **Absa**
- **Bayer**
- **Kagiso Trust**
- **Kgodiso Development Fund**
- **Khula**
- **Land Bank**
- **Land Bank Insurance**
- **Maize Trust**
- **Oil and Protein Seeds Development Trust**
- **Pannar Seed**
- **SA Winter Cereal Industry Agency**
- **Santam**
- **South African Cultivar & Technology Agency**
- **Standard Bank of South Africa Ltd**

KARINA MULLER – PULA CONTRIBUTOR



The band had the crowd on their feet dancing in the hall.



The 2026 New Era Commercial Farmer of the Year, Vincent Masiu of Masiu Farming Enterprise, on his brand-new John Deere 5075E tractor.



The smallholder and subsistence farmers during the breakaway session.



Jeremia Mathebula (PGP chairperson), AJ Mthembu (president of AFASA), Willie Aucamp (Minister of Agriculture), Khomotso Mashi-loane (CEO of PGP) and Dr Tobias Doyer (CEO of Grain SA) in front of the big prize.

Maak John Deere Financial jou toegewyde vennoot vir toekomstige groei.

2026

Day of Celebration: We were there!

All photos by Lizel Snyman

Secure the future with succession planning

In South Africa, over 80% of all businesses are family-owned, including agricultural enterprises passed down through generations. Yet only a fraction survives into the third generation. Developing farmers often overlook succession planning until it's too late, either due to cultural taboos, a lack of formal structures or urgent financial pressures.

As an agricultural economist working closely with farmer development, I've seen how unclear succession strategies can undermine years of hard work and sacrifice. Fortunately, tools and models can help families plan for and secure the continuity of both their business and legacy.

Succession planning is about more than choosing a successor. It's about preparing the farm business and the family for a smooth transition financially, emotionally and operationally. Without a plan, valuable knowledge is lost when the founder leaves, conflicts among siblings or extended family members often arise, and farming continuity is threatened. At its core, succession planning ensures that the business and family can survive and thrive across generations.

BUILDING THE RIGHT STRUCTURES

A good succession plan includes more than just choosing who takes over. It involves setting up governance systems that balance **family cohesion with business professionalism**.

Here are three important areas:

1. **Family governance**, which focusses on how the family interacts with the business. Questions to ask:
   - Who is allowed to work in the business?
   - What are the expectations of family members who work in the business and those who do not?
   - How will conflicts be handled?

Many successful families create a family constitution to guide behaviour, roles and values.

2. **Corporate governance** deals with how the business is managed. For example:
   - Is there a board or advisory group?
   - Who signs off on key decisions?
   - How are profits reinvested or distributed?

Clear governance avoids confusion when new generations step in.

3. **Ownership and roles**: Families have to decide who inherits what and when. Another decision to make is whether land and assets should be split equally, or whether single inheritance is preferred for business continuity. Families must also consider:
   - Shareholding structures
   - Voting rights
   - Emergency plans (e.g. if the founder becomes incapacitated)

Succession planning is not just for the rich or large-scale commercial farmers. It is essential for every developing farmer who wants their hard-earned legacy to continue. A well-prepared plan builds resilience, reduces family conflict and unlocks opportunities for future growth.



A legacy worth protecting – a farmer and his grandson looking at their crops.

By investing in governance structures today, developing farmers can ensure that their businesses not only survive but thrive into the next generation.

TOOLS TO GUIDE THE PROCESS

The three-circle model

This model distinguishes between **family** (who is part of the family), **ownership** (who owns the business) and **management** (who runs it daily). It clarifies roles, rights and responsibilities and helps family members manage overlapping roles.

The three-dimensional development model

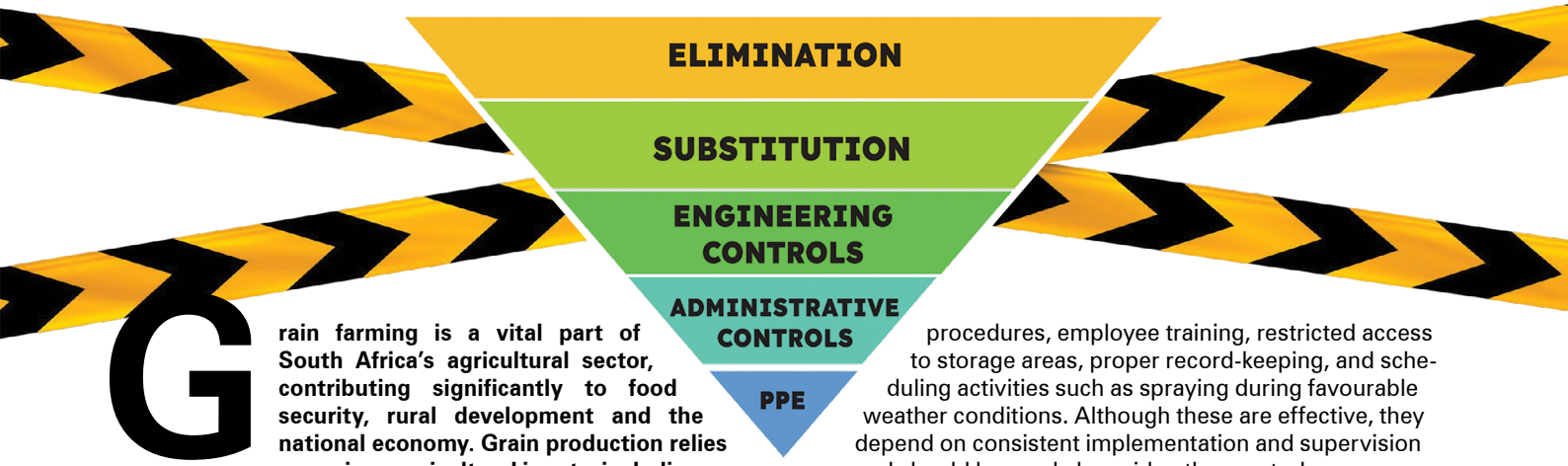
This framework helps family businesses understand how they evolve from **owner-managed** (founder stage) to **sibling partnerships** (second generation) and **cousin consortiums** (third generation and beyond). Each stage comes with different challenges, from rivalry and communication breakdowns to reduced cohesion.

Practical steps to get started

1. Start early: Don't wait for a crisis. Good succession takes years to plan.
2. Facilitate open dialogue: Create safe spaces for honest conversations between generations.
3. Document agreements: Whether it's a will, shareholder agreement or family charter, put it in writing.
4. Involve advisors: Legal, financial and agricultural advisors can offer critical insights.
5. Mentor the next generation: Involve successors in key decisions and expose them to all areas of the farm.

MLIBO QOTOYI – FORMER JUNIOR OPERATIONS MANAGER: PGP

Hazardous chemicals: Stay safe



Grain farming is a vital part of South Africa's agricultural sector, contributing significantly to food security, rural development and the national economy. Grain production relies on various agricultural inputs, including pesticides, herbicides, fertilisers, cleaning agents and fuel products. While these chemicals help maintain crop yields and manage pests, they can also pose serious risks to employees, surrounding communities and the environment if they are not handled responsibly.

Workers can be exposed to hazardous chemicals through inhalation, skin contact or accidental ingestion. Health effects may range from short-term symptoms such as headaches, skin irritation, nausea, dizziness and respiratory problems to long-term conditions including chronic respiratory illnesses, neurological disorders, certain cancers and other serious health complications. For this reason, employees must be familiar with the following:

- Types of chemicals
- How exposure can occur
- Associated health concerns
- Occupational health and safety protocols
- Where to report any spillages, accidental exposures or adverse health effects experienced

RATHER SAFE THAN SORRY

An effective chemical safety programme begins with a thorough risk assessment. Farmers should identify all hazardous chemicals used on the farm and evaluate how employees could be exposed to them.

Safety data sheets (SDSs), supplied by manufacturers, are valuable resources that provide information on health hazards, safe handling procedures, personal protective equipment requirements, first-aid measures and disposal methods. Understanding these risks allows farmers to implement appropriate controls to protect workers.

Hierarchy of controls

The most effective approach to managing chemical hazards is to follow the hierarchy of controls. This system prioritises measures that remove or reduce risks before relying on personal protective equipment (PPE) – see figure above.

1. The first option is **elimination**, where a hazardous chemical is removed entirely from the workplace.
2. Where elimination is not practical, **substitution** can be considered by replacing a hazardous product with a safer alternative.
3. **Engineering controls**, such as ventilation systems, splash guards and enclosed mixing areas, can further reduce exposure by isolating workers from hazards.
4. **Administrative controls** are another important component of a safety programme. These include workplace procedures, employee training, restricted access to storage areas, proper record-keeping, and scheduling activities such as spraying during favourable weather conditions. Although these are effective, they depend on consistent implementation and supervision and should be used alongside other control measures.
5. **PPE** provides an important safeguard when other measures are insufficient. Depending on the task, employees may require gloves, goggles, respirators, protective clothing or face shields. PPE must fit correctly, be inspected regularly and be maintained in good condition. However, never rely on PPE as the sole form of protection.

Keep the following in mind

Employees should receive regular instruction on chemical hazards, safe handling procedures, correct PPE use, label interpretation and emergency response. Ongoing safety discussions and refresher training help reinforce good practices and encourage workers to report unsafe conditions.

All chemical containers should remain clearly labelled throughout their lifespan. Labels provide essential information about hazards, safe handling requirements and emergency procedures.

Storage facilities should be secure, well-ventilated, protected from excessive heat and inaccessible to unauthorised persons, children and animals. Proper storage helps prevent accidental exposure, contamination and environmental damage.

Every farm should also have an emergency response plan. Spill kits, first-aid equipment, trained first aiders and clearly displayed emergency contact numbers can significantly reduce an incident's impact. Regular emergency drills ensure employees can respond quickly and effectively.

Include employees who handle hazardous chemicals in a medical surveillance programme to identify potential health effects as early as possible. Early detection allows interventions before conditions become serious and helps protect the wider workforce.

Safe chemical management is more than a legal requirement. By conducting risk assessments, implementing effective control measures, training employees and maintaining emergency preparedness, grain farmers can create safer workplaces while protecting rural communities, the environment and the long-term sustainability of South Africa's grain industry.

Article adapted from an article published in SA Graan/Grain, November 2025.

Scan the QR code to read the complete article on *www.sagrainmag.co.za*.

ELIZE LOURENS, SPECIALIST: CHEMICAL STRESSORS, DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR

Calibrate to spray accurately

Sprayer calibration must be done to ensure you spray the correct amount of spray mixture (water and the registered crop-protection product) onto the desired area. Farming is about profit, and the correct application of herbicide or pesticide can improve your profit. A once-off calibration is not enough – calibrate before the spraying season begins and re-calibrate frequently throughout the season.

HANDY HINT

If you know the field size, compare the volume applied with the calculated volume required. For instance, if you spray 300 ℓ of water per hectare and the field is 10 ha, you should have applied 3 000 ℓ of water.

You only need a stopwatch or timer, which most cellphones have, a measuring jug (marked in ml) and a measuring tape. In principle, you want to calculate how much water is sprayed per hectare.

CALIBRATING A BOOM SPRAYER

Clean the sprayer tank, filters and nozzles. Make sure all nozzles are the same type and colour, and that the sprayer pressure matches the nozzles' requirements.

Measure a distance of 100 m on the farm road. Use a measuring tape and mark both ends of the 100 m course with stakes. Fill the sprayer tank with clean water. Decide which gear will be used and at which revolutions per minute (RPM) – e.g. fourth gear at 2 500 RPM. Remember it is difficult to drive a tractor with a sprayer accurately, so don't go too fast. Now measure the time that it takes for the tractor to cover the 100 m – for example, 60 seconds.

Run the tractor stationary at the agreed 2 500 RPM and check the spray coverage on the ground. Set the pressure on the sprayer to give the desired effect (e.g. 3 bar). Using the same time that it took the tractor to cover the 100 m, engage the spray and measure the amount of water produced by catching the water delivered by one separate nozzle. Normally, you can use a few clean 2 ℓ bottles to catch the water delivered by letting the nozzle spray into the bottle, for example, 1 200 ml/1,2 ℓ for 60 seconds. Make sure that your measuring containers are clearly marked and will never be used for food or drink, as it may contain pesticide residue.

Use the average amount of liquid produced by one nozzle (for example, 1 200 ml/1,2 ℓ) and multiply this by the number of nozzles so that you know how many litres you are spraying out over 100 m. With all the nozzles in this case: 28 x 1,2 ℓ = 33,6 ℓ.

Measure the width of the boom (for example, 14 m). Now you know the width you are spraying and the amount of water you are spraying over that width over 100 m. The area covered by the sprayer over 100 m is 100 m x 14 m = 1 400 m². On this area, 33,6 ℓ of water is used. An area of 1 ha is equal to 10 000 m² (100 m x 100 m). The volume to be used on 1 ha will be 10 000/1 400 = 7,14 x 33,6 ℓ = 240 ℓ/ha.

To make sure your calculation is correct: If your nozzles are 500 mm apart, take the delivery of one nozzle and multiply it by 200. In this case, 1,2 ℓ x 200 = 240 ℓ/ha, which confirms the calculation is correct.

The label on the chemical container will indicate the amount of water required per hectare, as well as the amount of product required per hectare.

CALIBRATING A KNAPSACK SPRAYER

Measure 50 m using a measuring wheel or tape measure. Walk up and down the 50 m and measure the time it takes to cover the distance (50 m + 50 m = 100 m). Remember to walk at a steady pace, as you will need to maintain that speed. The faster you walk, the less liquid you will spray onto a particular area.

A sprayer demonstration during PGP's calibration course.





A group of farmers learn how to calibrate a knapsack sprayer.

Spray liquid from the knapsack sprayer into a measuring jug for the same number of seconds that it took you to walk the 100 m. You will now know how much liquid you would have sprayed out onto the 100 m. Example: Suppose you sprayed 1,75 ℓ of water into the jug. You know then that you will use 1,75 ℓ of water for every 100 m walked.

It is now necessary to calculate the number of rows in 1 ha. As you know, 1 ha is 100 m by 100 m. Assuming the row width is 0,9 m, there are 111 rows in 1 ha. If the liquid in the jug is 1,75 ℓ you will use 1,75 ℓ on one row. With 111 rows in 1 ha, which means to cover the whole hectare, you will need 111 x 1,75 ℓ of liquid = 194 ℓ/ha in total. The chemical label will indicate the amount of the specific chemical to apply per hectare or per 194 ℓ of water.

You now have the following options:

1. Fill a container with 194 ℓ (a standard large drum is 200 ℓ) and pour in the chemicals required per hectare. Stir well and continue stirring regularly to avoid the chemicals settling. You can then use this premix to fill your knapsack or spray tank.
2. If you are using several smaller water containers, for example 20 ℓ containers, or even if putting chemicals directly into the knapsack sprayer, multiply the concentration of the chemical per litre by the number of litres that the container holds.

Article adapted from an article in Pula October 2024.

Livestock farmers, take note

Forecasts show a strong chance that El Niño could affect South Africa in the coming months. Cattle farmers, especially those in the summer rainfall regions, are therefore encouraged to prepare for a drier summer and put practical drought plans in place.

According to Jaco Liebenberg, technical manager for feedlot and farms at Beefmaster Group, the success of drought management in the cattle industry depends on three things: Proactive planning, staying informed and acting when circumstances demand it.

Challenges facing livestock farmers are:

- Veld and grazing shortages
- Heat stress and animal health
- Lower pregnancy rates
- Diseases and pests
- Market pressures if farmers are forced to sell stock prematurely

WHAT FARMERS CAN DO

- Adjust herd sizes to match the actual carrying capacity of the veld to prevent destructive overgrazing and animal deaths.
- Implement structured rotational grazing systems to allow pastures to recover.
- Stockpile fodder, harvest and bale hay, and increase the number of accessible water and feed points across the farm.
- Maintain strict vaccination schedules and actively scout for heat-related pests and diseases.

Smart ways to prepare for drought

1. Determine which animals contribute most to your breeding goals and safeguard them when making sales decisions. This way, years of genetic progress are protected.
2. Manage grazing carefully. Healthy veld is the foundation of a successful cattle operation. Rotational grazing and erosion control can help protect the land during dry periods and promote recovery when rainfall returns.
3. Choose the right cattle for your area. Animals that are well suited to local conditions can use available grazing more efficiently. Look for cattle with good fertility and heat tolerance, and choose animals in good condition.

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PGP PHAHAMA GRAIN PHAKAMA

Farmer Development Programme

Feedback

A programme that is changing lives



Lessons from the field

During the 64 study group sessions in September, it was clear that the team supports farmers at every stage of their journey. Some groups received training, while others discussed preparations for the upcoming season, and crop index insurance.

Phumzile Ngcobo, assistant regional manager at the Dundee office, was the translator at the Carolina and Breyten Study Groups session, where farmers were introduced to parametric insurance. This product is tailor-made for farmers' needs and covers drought and excessive rains. It was emphasised that the insurer is not responsible for farmer negligence. Interested farmers began the application process. A follow-up meeting will be held to finalise the process, at which policy numbers may be issued and payment arrangements made.

At the Emmaus Study Group, the meeting focussed on preparations for the upcoming season and plant population. Because hand planting is labour-intensive, farmers often neglect important aspects such as seed depth, which leads to shallow planting. This exposes the seed to pests such as birds. There was also a discussion and practical demonstration with handheld planters.



The Carolina and Breyten Study Groups.



A new study group was established in Rustenburg, and discussions focussed on the past season and overcoming challenges. The members asked many questions about the work of Grain SA. A presentation about soil sampling and the benefits of grid sampling was delivered.



The Emmaus Study Group learned how to use handheld planters.



At the Sijamekuthuleni Study Group meeting, the regional development manager at the Mbombela office, Jerry Mthombothi, and Dr Lalamani from the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs Veterinary Section, discussed crop and livestock mixed farming. Those farmers were keen to learn more.

Mentorship at farm level

During September, the regional development managers (RDMs) and mentors made 42 farm visits to 27 farmers. Here are some of the activities that were recorded:



Free State farmer Jabu Matshinini, the 2025 Potential Commercial Farmer of the Year, was busy with land preparation when Jacques Roux (former RDM in the Free State) visited him. Jabu was very eager to start planting.



Du Toit van der Westhuizen from the PGP office in Lichtenburg visited Peele Karobe, who was completing his harvest.



Mdu Khumalo was applying urea to his wheat and barley crops.

Training for success



Two practical skills training courses on planters and boom sprayers took place in Lichtenburg, with 14 attendees.