

POLLUTION

Recycling of pesticide containers on the increase

CropLife SA has been instrumental in combating plastic pollution through the recovery of used plastic agricultural pesticide containers in South Africa. About 62% of all pesticide containers used in South Africa are currently recovered and recycled through the organisation's network of service providers.

"We take plastic pollution very seriously and our objective is to become a leader [when it comes to] the recovery and recycling of polyethylene pesticide containers and polypropylene bags used for seed," said CropLife SA spokesperson Elriza Theron.

The company's recovery rate would not have been possible



ABOVE: Approximately 62% of pesticide containers in South Africa are currently recycled, but CropLife SA aims to increase this to 90% by 2021. CROPLIFE SA

without the commitment of farmers, Theron said. Awareness about responsible stewardship was increasing, a trend underscored by farmers' growing sense of environmental accountability.

The plant protection industry used 8 000t of polyethylene pesticide containers annually, and during 2018 about 5 000t were recovered. CropLife SA aimed to

recover and recycle 90% of used containers by the end of 2021.

An initiative to recover and recycle polypropylene bags would be launched soon, Theron said.

She called on farmers to familiarise themselves with the guidelines for cleaning containers and bags on the CropLife SA website.

EMPTY CONTAINERS SHOULD BE TRIPLE-RINSED ON THE FARM

She cautioned them to dispose of empty containers only through companies and individuals officially approved by CropLife SA.

The empty containers should be triple-rinsed on the farm to remove all traces of pesticide residues, as deposits of pesticides made the containers unfit for recycling. – *Annelie Coleman*

MAIZE

SA to import maize despite increased crop forecast

The Crop Estimates Committee (CEC) has increased its forecast for maize production slightly in its fourth production estimate for the season.

The estimate for maize was increased to 10,9 million tons, up 2,3%, or nearly 250 000t, from the CEC's third forecast in April. This would be produced from an estimated area of 2,3 million hectares, with an expected yield of 4,74t/ha.

"The estimated maize crop is 13% smaller than the 2018 crop," the CEC said.

Agricultural economist Prof Johan Willemse concurred with the CEC's yield forecasts, saying the late arrival of frost had bolstered white maize expectations in particular.

He said that the yellow and white maize scenarios had played an important part in this estimate. Over the past two years, there

had been a white maize surplus of nearly two million tons, which had been taken up by the animal feed sector. Surplus yellow maize had been exported.

Willemse said the CEC's estimate of nearly 5,5 million tons for white maize would be enough to meet domestic needs, but not the requirement for animal feed. The yellow maize production forecast of about 5,4 million tons would also be insufficient.

Willemse said traders therefore estimated that yellow maize imports of between 400 000t and 600 000t would be necessary in 2019/2020. This, along with US maize plantings being delayed due to widespread flooding, had resulted in price uncertainty.

Willemse said that in May, US maize plantings had been at

only 58% of the five-year average, which had affected maize prices on the agricultural commodities exchange in Chicago, and had also resulted in a 20% increase in the domestic yellow maize price over the past two weeks.

The CEC left its estimates for the rest of the summer crops unchanged. Soya production was forecast to reach nearly 1,3 million tons from approximately 730 000ha at a yield of 1,77t/ha, and sunflower seed at just over 600 000t from about 500 000ha at an expected yield of nearly 1,2t/ha.

South Africa was expected to produce just less than 23 000t of groundnuts, slightly over 70 000t of dry beans, and 16 000t of sorghum.

The CEC will release its fifth production estimate for summer field crops on 26 June. – *Sabrina Dean*