

**BEEES**

## Grain SA's bee-friendly guidelines

It was to be hoped that South Africa's canola producers were committed to ensuring healthy bee populations and the proactive use of bee-friendly insecticides registered for canola, said Dr Gerhard Verdoorn, CropLife South Africa's operations and stewardship manager.

This followed an announcement by Grain SA that the organisation had drafted a best practice and guideline document in this regard.

However, it remained the responsibility of beekeepers to obtain permission from farmers to place beehives on canola lands, Verdoorn said.

He added that in South Africa all pesticides were regulated by the Fertilizers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act No. 36 of 1947, and that anyone accidentally or deliberately killing bees with a pesticide would be contravening the Act.

Registration holders of insecticides had to undertake extensive research and trials to prove the efficacy and compatibility of the products with the natural and human environments.

Honeybees were the world's best-known pollinators of natural flora and a vast array of food and fibre crops, Verdoorn said.

"Technically, there's no reason for bees to perish because of the irresponsible use of insecticides in canola lands. All 22 products registered for canola are labelled clearly in accordance with the law on methods and time periods of use."

It was essential that farmers and beekeepers maintained close communication, and producers were encouraged to use the BeeMap mobile phone app, Verdoorn said. – *Annelie Coleman*

**EMPOWERMENT**

## Investing in KZN communal farming

AGCO Africa and Drakensberg Agricultural Services (DAS) have taken the uMmsinga Farming Project in KwaZulu-Natal under their wing, and will be investing in hi-tech agricultural solutions for the project's farming activities.

AGCO Africa is an international manufacturer and distributor of agricultural equipment, while DAS is a Massey Ferguson dealer in the region.

According to a statement by AGCO Africa, the uMmsinga Farming Project was initiated in the Umzinyathi District in KwaZulu-Natal by Dr Bahle Zondo, founder of the Bahle Zondo Foundation, to create more employment opportunities in the area.

In August 2018, he brought together three informal co-operatives on communal land with sites varying from 2ha to 50ha, following calls for the foundation to fund more job opportunities.

To date, the project had received R2 million in funding from the foundation, he said.

In January, Zondo approached AGCO Africa to inquire about introducing mechanisation on the farms to assist female farmers, in particular, with their farming activities.

He said he had taken this decision after witnessing the difficulties that farmers faced during their first planting season, when 16ha of beans were planted among the three co-operatives.

"The crops were badly planted, but they still [turned out] well. We'll be able to produce efficiently with assistance from [the two companies that] have visited the farms. [They'll also] provide advisory and mentoring on agronomy practices, technical support, ongoing product aftercare, as well as link the uMmsinga Farming Project to support services [from] successful agribusiness in the community.

"We've spent about R1 million on a tractor, loader and trailer, [and] need a further R400000 for a planter and a fertiliser spreader," Zondo said. – *Siyanda Sishuba*

**ACHIEVERS**

## Stock theft police honoured

South African Police Service stock theft units and officers were honoured during the Free State Red Meat Producers' Organisation's (RPO) recent congress in Kimberley. From left: Colonel Clayton du Plooy (head, Northern Cape detectives unit); Sergeant Jannie Barend (best investigating officer); Colonel Clive Lamoen (stock theft co-ordinator); Major-General Kolisa Otola (deputy provincial commissioner for crime detection); Joe Scholtz (chairperson of the organisation's stock theft and rural safety committee); Lieutenant-General Pieta Shivuri (Northern Cape police commissioner); Captain Johan Bates (commanding officer, Calvinia stock theft unit); Johan van der Colff (RPO chairperson); and Brigadier Dick de Waal (head of organised crime, Northern Cape). SABRINA DEAN