

## PEST, WEED AND DISEASE CONTROL TEAM

The Pest and Disease Control data, in Extension Suite Online (ESO), is the responsibility of the Pathology section of the Manstrat Information Centre (MIC).

The team consists of Dr. John Lapham (Expert Scientist); Mmabatho Pula and Mohlabane Mphahlele (Researchers); and Vic Victor (Scientist: Pathology), and is responsible for research on new and known pests, diseases and weeds; their identification, and as well as the accumulation and updating of pictures of pests and diseases.

They further update and maintain information on insecticides, fungicides, herbicides and other control measures, as well as the conversion of dosages and pricing of chemicals and the identification of newly registered and discontinued products.

Their message to users of ESO: "A cautious user of chemicals not only protects himself, but also others as well as the environment".

*Vic Victor*

### QUOTE OF THE MONTH

The only way of finding the limits of the possible is by going beyond them into the impossible.  
*Arthur C. Clarke*



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## An African Maintenance Team

This month Jeanne-Louise requested that I write a piece about our all African maintenance team. Those people who answer calls in the Call Centre, the scientists who update dynamic data components every day and those who undertake new research on behalf of our clients to ensure that the latest technology is included in Extension Suite Online.

After giving this some thought, I realised that Extension Suite Online has not grown to its current proportions on its own, but rather that our clients have started to make a variety of contributions which we were able to include into ESO. Our Data Maintenance team has taken additional and new information provided by extensionists in the provinces and prepared it for inclusion into ESO. Extensionists and Subject Experts in the provinces have begun to send us short articles and information pamphlets that could be included in the system. Users have requested us to undertake secondary research which led to the expansion of many sections and modules of ESO.

And then I realised, Extension Suite Online has now really become the Extension Tool which was originally intended. It is grown and maintained by its users, with a little help from Manstrat and its Maintenance team. This maintenance is done by

South Africans for the benefit of other South Africans and those that are involved in the support of farmers have become part of a huge knowledge base that is growing organically on a daily basis.

Through the maintenance of ESO, we are not only growing the knowledge base, but we are also linking farmers with the results of research. Moreover, we are providing a linkage between research and users of technology, the farmers, providing a conduit for the results of research down to grassroots level. This up and down stream linkage provides researchers access to, and an understanding of the true needs of farmers in specific areas. Perhaps ESO is the beginning of a national bridging of the agricultural research gap in South Africa – all due to its many African contributors.

And yes, we have an all African, all scientific maintenance team that looks after ESO on a daily basis, making sure that the system remains relevant, up-to-date, user-friendly and many more hyphenated to-daily's that is required to ensure that Extensionists in South Africa can provide farmers with appropriate information throughout the year. Happy holidays.

*Dr Roelof de Villiers*



## Making Extension Suite Online information searchable

*Extension Suite Online contains more than 800 Gigabytes of information. Printed, this information yields a pile of A4 paper three times from the floor to the roof.*

Extension Suite Online contains more than 800 Gigabytes of information. Printed, this information yields a pile of A4 paper three times from the floor to the roof. This wealth of agricultural information is increased daily through the contributions of ESO users, by means of the articles that they submit. Soon it will be quite impossible to find the relevant information manually since it will become just simply overwhelming.

In an effort to assist the user to find the relevant information quickly, Manstrat's Development Team has embarked upon the development of an

improved search system. This system indexes all information stored in the ESO databases, including articles, tools, tips and guides and makes it available to the user through a simple search toolbox. This search engine interprets the actual search phrase – the question – and queries the index database in an appropriate manner to provide solutions – answers – that are as accurate as possible. It also provides the user with a ranked result as well as groupings and additional information based on previous use and heuristics built into the search facility.

This new search engine is currently in a beta test phase and will be made available in the current version of ESO during 2011. It is expected that this facility will greatly enhance search results and will provide solutions across various fields, creating an integrated result rather than groupings based on subject boundaries. It will also allow users to tailor ESO to their specific needs and requirements and to provide a user interface to the knowledge base that can be selected by the user for specific purposes.

*Dr Roelof de Villiers*

## GROWING INTERNATIONAL INVESTMENT IN AFRICAN AGRICULTURE

To meet growing global food demand the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization estimates an extra six million hectares need to be brought under cultivation every year for the next 30 years. With sub-Saharan Africa estimated to hold up to 60% of the world's remaining uncultivated land suitable for farming, the region's agriculture is starting to look an interesting investment.

Whilst various factors teamed up to keep agricultural productivity low (thus chasing away investment in African agriculture), investor awareness is increasing regarding Africa's vast potential. Today, yields in sub-Saharan Africa are about a third of the world average at 1 ton per hectare, highlighting the potential challenges, but more importantly the opportunities, for investors. Forty-five private equity firms have for instance indicated that they plan to invest \$2 billion in the region's agriculture in the next three to five years. Within the SADC region China has also begun investing – with an investment of some \$800 million since 2008 in Mozambican agriculture, with other key investments in Angola, Tanzania and Zambia.

*Jantus van der Linden*

## TECHNOLOGY TIPS by Francois van der Merwe

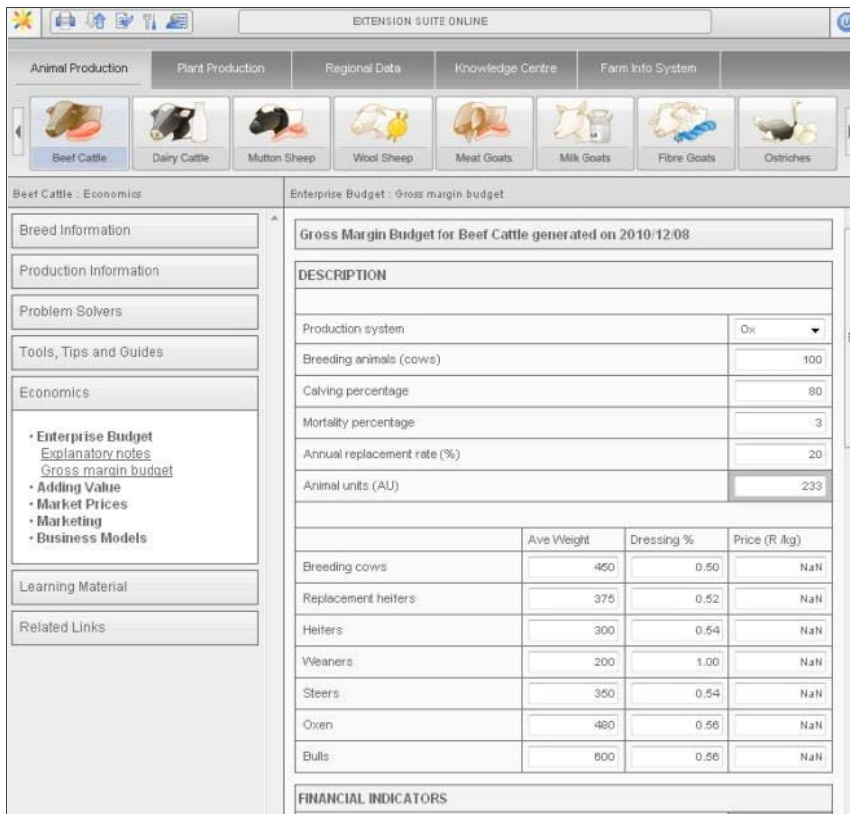
### Username and Password Sharing

Each Extension Suite Online user is given a username and password that must be used to gain access to ESO. This helps us control and maintain the security and integrity of ESO. When a user logs into ESO, we identify which user logged in and we then capture that specific session ID. This enables us to make sure that only one user is using a specific account. The reason for specific user accounts is to enable us to collect accurate user information. If a user



is redirected by ESO to a page that says "Your Extension Suite Online session has expired. Due to unauthorized usage of your security details", it means that someone else has used your username and password to log into ESO. If this happens you are advised to change your password immediately in order to prevent unauthorised usage of your account.

## Gross Margin Budgets: Animals



The gross margin budget is a very useful planning tool used as a guide to help evaluate different options when selecting an enterprise. It is defined as the gross income from an enterprise less the variable costs and does not include fixed costs. The **Gross margin budget** function can be found under the side bar heading **Enterprise budget** in the **Economics** module.

The information and values displayed are averages based on assumptions made for the different production systems.

individual farm realities. Enterprises can have secondary product incomes, e.g. wool in a mutton enterprise. Some values are fixed, such as dressing percentage, while others like the market prices can be changed accordingly. Market prices are updated monthly through the ESO maintenance program.

EXPENSES			
	Quantity	Unit price	Total
<b>Capital cost</b>			
Purchases	1	30000.00	30000.00
<b>Nutrition</b>			
Roughage (ton)	198	700.00	138600.00
Summer licks (kg)	4602	5.95	27371.90
Winter licks (kg)	20932	2.70	56516.40
<b>Production cost</b>			

Income and expenses vary according to general factors common to all farms, for example prices and seasonal conditions, as well as individual farm characteristics which includes pasture quality and management. Specific budgets, therefore, can be compiled for each specific farmer.

*Johan Hoogenboezem*

## Enterprise Budgets:

Enterprise budgets are useful for planning a new enterprise or for determining the profitability of an existing enterprise.

The **Enterprise Budget** section can be found under the **Economics** module of the ESO. **Explanatory notes** and the **Gross margin budget** are the two sub sections found under the Enterprise Budget heading.

Enterprise Budget comprises Provincial Combuds and the Gross margin budget.

The provincial Combuds provide detailed enterprise budgets for each province.

They are unique for each type of production system, for example sweetveld oxen- or sourveld weaner- , and also for intensive or extensive production systems. The budgets are income and costs budgets drawn up for short term planning purposes and are drawn up for situations of normal climatic conditions and acceptable management practices.

The gross margin budget relates to gross income derived from an enterprise less the variable costs incurred in achieving it. They don't include fixed or overhead costs which must be met regardless of enterprise size. Its use is explained in the accompanying article.

The explanatory notes provide notes that serve as a guide on using the livestock gross margin budget. Descriptions on the budget contents are provided in these notes as well as information on the general assumptions applied which will help the ESO user understand where the values come from and how they are used in the budget. Some of the values are based on Provincial Combud calculations while others are based on averages for each individual farm.

*Johan Hoogenboezem*

Assumptions are made regarding calving/lambing percentages, mortality rates and number of animals and these are used to determine animal sales and costs. These values can be changed according to specific

## Monthly Utilisation Reports

The monthly utilisation report measures and reports on the monthly, weekly, daily, and hourly visits by users for each province. It also selects and shows who the top 10 users (on a monthly and annual basis) in each province are.

From the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 2010 managers and systems administrators are able to monitor usage of all those users who were registered by or under them.

Access Extension Suite Online:

- Go to the **TITLE BAR** displaying the **TITLE ICONS** at the top of the screen;
- Click on **Access MANAGEMENT**;
- Click on **REPORTS**;
- Click on **USER REPORTS** and Open **USER REPORTS**
- Select the month and **GENERATE** a report.

This shows the users and their utilisation of ESO for the period selected.

Piet van Zyl

## THE MANSTRAT CALL CENTRE



**Support to extension personnel** is given via the Manstrat Call Centre. The Centre is manned by a Call Centre Manager and his staff, who receive queries via landline (**0860 eso eso**) or e-mail at **support@esuite.co.za**.

Once a call is received it is logged onto the network which allows the call centre manager and his superior to monitor progress of the query. The query is sent to the Animal, Plant or GIS Expert Scientist who decides on who will attend to the query. This may involve own and outside experts and scientists. Once the query is resolved and the Expert is satisfied with the answer supplied, the user is informed.

Piet van Zyl

## TOP EXTENSION SUITE ONLINE USER FOR OCTOBER 2010

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

**Congratulations!!!** [Lesego Phakedi \(DARD: Gauteng\)](#) You are South Africa's top ESO user for October 2010. Well done. Runner up: [Boiphelo Seekoei \(DOA: Free State\)](#)



*During November, we had the opportunity to ask Lesego Phakedi a few questions on why and how he uses Extension Suite Online.*

**What is your responsibility at the department?**

I am a Senior Agricultural Scientist at the department, and my main responsibility is as an Extension Officer.

**How long have you been working for the department?**

I have been working at the Gauteng department since 2006, but was previously employed at the KwaZulu Natal department and the North West University.

**How often do you make use of ESO?**

Usage depends on requests from farmers. Within the 1<sup>st</sup> week that we could go onto ESO I made sure that I used it everyday to get to know the system and to be able to work on it with ease and confidence.

**What do you use ESO for the most?**

I make use of ESO to do research for farmers.

**How does ESO influence your relationship with farmers or clients?**

Currently we do not have 3G at the department, which will definitely have a good influence, but never the less my relationship with clients and farmers has improved, Extension Suite Online has given me confidence in the information that I supply to the farmers.

**What section or module in ESO do you use the most?**

I make use of the vegetable modules the most, since I needed to build my knowledgebase in these subjects.

**What have you learned from ESO?**

I have learned of so many subjects through ESO, such as the most common diseases on crops, how to use enterprise budgets; I would say ESO is my friend.

**Do you have any tips to other users regarding Extension Suite Online?**

You can use Extension Suite Online at the comfort of your desk; you can, with ease, print material and take it to your farmers. "Let us be informed and improve extension services in South Africa"

**How would you describe Extension Suite Online as an Extension tool?**

I would describe ESO in 4 words as: "An excellent Extension Friend".

**Does ESO really make the execution of your duties easier?**

Yes it definitely does ease my duties, one does not need piles of books to do research, you can go directly to the information that you need. Extension Suite Online gives you confidence in your knowledge.

## Manstrat

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### PROVINCIAL TOP USERS FOR OCTOBER 2010

1	Eastern Cape	Boniswa Patience Mbanjwa
2	Free State	Boipelo Seekoei
3	Gauteng	Lesego Phakedi
4	KwaZulu Natal	Buyssisile Zungu
5	Limpopo	Jeff Mhari
6	Mpumalanga	Lawulawu Moses Silaule
7	North West	Molemoeng Diratsagae
8	Northern Cape	Vuyo Mphemba
9	Western Cape	Petrus