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### UPDATES AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS ON ESO

One of the main focus areas of the GIS group during 2011 was to improve the regional data section in ESO. The entire GIS data management system was redesigned to ensure a more effective system to replace and improve spatial datasets. The Infrastructure and Environmental sections under Regional Data have now been split into two, thus offering the user an Environment Main Menu Icon and an Infrastructure Main Menu Icon in the main menu Title Bar.

In both sections a small map was added to indicate the position of the selected farm or GPS location. This will give users a broad indication whether the correct farm or GPS point was selected or entered.

All the maps (90 in total) in the environmental section were updated and redesigned to match the improved GIS data.

Explanatory documentation within the Environment module was improved with the Land Type inventory and Vegetation Type descriptions as highlights. A new long term (10 years) grazing capacity map has also been compiled. Landcover-2000 data as well as a tree density map were used to identify transformed rangeland and areas with more than 50% tree canopy cover.

Dirk Pretorius

**Welcome** to the first ESO newsletter edition for the year. The ESO team wishes everyone a happy and prosperous 2012. There are many exciting articles planned for the year and our focus is on you the Extension Officer. We want to provide you with practical advice on extension and therefore we start the year off with an article titled "Effective Communication." During the year we will dedicate articles to new developments in ESO, together with guidelines on how to use these modules to its full potential. We have also developed a new section giving Extension Officers monthly helpful hints and tips that will be managed by our in-house Agricultural Extension Officers Matsunke Malefane and Michele Cloete. Lastly we encourage each and everyone to become part of the ESO newsletter author's team, by sending us interesting articles, hints, tips and tools that you would like to share with colleagues, to [contributions@esuite.co.za](mailto:contributions@esuite.co.za).

## EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

*A practical guide to effective communication for Agricultural Extension Officers*

Extensionists are constantly communicating information to and from stakeholders either through electronic presentation or disseminating information from Extension Suite Online to farmers. Communication proficiency is a priority in ensuring that information is correctly transferred from one person to another. Effective communication will increase trust building, learning, obtaining goals and will eventually, lead to empowerment and self-sustainable clients.

Communication is defined as "the process of sending and receiving messages through channels which establish common meanings between a source and a receiver" (van der Ban, 1988). The message can be verbal (words/explanation) and/or non-verbal (body language).

When communicating, the interpretation of a message must result in a common meaning to both the receiver and the sender. If not, conflicting scenarios might develop because of the fact that individuals have

different perceptions, ideas, knowledge, skills, etc. To prevent situations where two parties end up with different perceptions of the same message, Extensionists should ask themselves a few questions prior to sending out a message. These questions will assist in better understanding the intended message and the target audience.

For example, the presenter should ask: "What do I know about the topic?" To fully understand the topic, sufficient research is required. Extension Suite Online provides Extension Officers with ample research opportunities as well as documents containing tools, tips and guides, which can be printed as hand-outs to relevant role-players. In the figure below, guiding questions are provided to assist with effective message broadcasting.

In the next Extension article, "How to build lasting relationships with various stakeholders through communication" will be discussed.

*Matsunke Malefane and Michele Cloete*



### USEFULL TIPS FOR EXTENSIONISTS

This may be helpful when meeting a stakeholder for the first time:

- BE PUNCTUAL
- Be genuinely interested
- SMILE and be positive
- Be courteous
- Be yourself, be at ease
- Dress appropriately
- Be open and confident
- Determine a point of interest
- Listen Actively
- Don't judge
- Remember the farmer or stakeholder's NAME

| THE PRESENTER                             | THE MESSAGE  | THE AUDIENCE  |
|---|--|---|
| Who am I?                                 | What are the specific objectives of my message?    | Who is my audience?   |
| What are my capabilities and limitations? | Is my message applicable?                          | What are the needs, abilities, interests, etc of my audience?                       |
| Am I presentable?                         | When is it appropriate to communicate my message?  | Where does my audience come from? Values, culture, background etc.                  |
| Can I manage this task?                   | Is my message accurate and simply stated?          | What is the best communication medium for my audience? Newspaper, presentation etc. |
| What are my motives?                      | How much time do I have to communicate my message? | What is the most appropriate communication channel (see, hear, smell, etc)?         |
| What do I know about the topic?           | Is my message clear?                               | Will the message be appealing and attractive to my audience?                        |

In order to prevent unauthorised access into a user's Extension Suite Online (ESO) account, a secure and logical password should be selected by the user. There are several guidelines to help ensure that a password is not only secure, but smart as well. The implications of one's password being hacked may cause personal information to be exposed to unauthorised third parties. With bank and other fraud becoming a real threat, the public should take care to protect all personal information jealously. Listed below are tips to help with the creation of a secure password for ESO:

- Select a password that can be easily remembered;
- For example use the first letter of the word in a line from a song or poem that the user knows by heart;
- A variety of characters in a password makes it safer;



- Punctuation marks are excellent tools in a password.
- Use at least eight characters in the password;
- Don't use passwords that you are using elsewhere;
- Don't use a password that is listed as an example;
- Don't make your password all numbers etc., but mix them;
- Don't use keyboard patterns (asdf) or sequential numbers (12356);
- Don't repeat words/letters (appleapple); and
- Don't use passwords based on personal information.

The tips given will help you to create a password that is difficult to steal, but easy to remember. Don't select a password that you have to write down. Should you forget your ESO password you can retrieve it, by going to the link on the login page ([www.esuite.co.za](http://www.esuite.co.za)) named "Forgot Password." Just click and fill in your Username and Manstrat AIS will send the password to that e-mail address.

## NATIONAL EXTENSION SUITE ONLINE TOP USER: DECEMBER 2011

The top monthly ESO user is determined by monitoring user utilisation in the nine provinces. Values are attached to Visits, Pages Visited and Duration of Visits to establish the National ESO USER of the Month.

Congratulations to, **George du Preez** (Northern Cape Department Agriculture Land Reform and Rural Development), who is the ESO National User for December 2011, George is a second time winner of the ESO National User award, and receives a Sony Digital Camera.

During January, we had the opportunity to ask George du Preez a few questions regarding his usage of ESO:

**Q: What is the impact of ESO on the farmers that you serve?**

Extension Suite Online has an overall positive impact on farming production. The photo, included, shows me in front of a maize field of one of the farmers that I serve in the Phokwane Local municipality. The information that I have researched from ESO has enabled me to assist this farmer in correctly interpreting the soil analysis, and then to determine which fertilizer to use and the accurate quantities necessary. As a result the farmer's production has increased and height of the maize is currently of a good standard. The recommendations on ESO on maize fertilization have thus enabled this farmer to produce a better maize crop.

**Q: What would you advise a colleague to do, in order to become a better Extension Officer?**

Make use of ESO, I cannot repeat this enough; Extension Suite Online is your library of information.

**Q: How often do you use ESO per week?**

I use Extension Suite Online on a daily basis, as we speak I have it open in front of me, working out the



amount of diesel that we will need per hour for our planting process.

**Q: What would you describe as the highpoint in your career as an Extension Officer?**

To see the upcoming farmers grow and to be able to help them develop, especially when one of the farmers that I advise won the Small upcoming farmer of the year award.

**Q: How many farmers do you advise?**

I advise about 30 farmers.

**Q: Describe a typical day in your life as an Extension Officer**

My day starts at the office, I plan before I do, I take a look at the items that I did not have time for the previous day, and schedule them so that I can get them done. Furthermore I get the information from ESO that I will need and print it out to take with to a farmer. The remainder of the day I spend with the farmers.

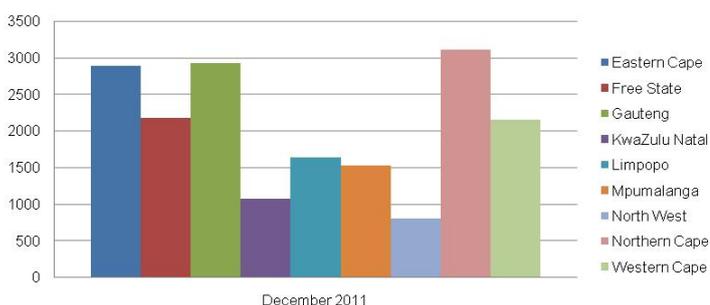
## 2011: AN ESO UTILIZATION OVERVIEW

ESO remains the primary extension decision making tool for 2011 as was shown by the 2 515 hours spent on the system by Extension Officers during the year. This represents an increase of almost 500 hours from the previous year.

Increasing utilisation figures are mainly the result of ongoing training and awareness activities by Provincial Management and Manstrat AIS; motivation and encouragement by supervisors; incentives given to top users by individual provinces; and individual users' own increased utilisation efforts as seen in the fact that many of them monthly exceeded the difficult 3 000 – 5 000 ratings barrier.

A new development is the Provincial ESO Info Packs that have been sent out since November through which provincial managers and administrators are informed of their province's utilisation and comparative position to the other provinces, and used for discussion purposes at the monthly meetings. *Thapedi Setshedi*

PROVINCIAL TOP USER RATING



NAME OF TOP USER IN EACH PROVINCE DECEMBER 2011

| PROVINCE      | NAME                     |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| Eastern Cape  | Mthobisi Zuma            |
| Free State    | Mamotsitsi Lesesa/Molapo |
| Gauteng       | Lesego Phakedi           |
| KwaZulu Natal | Mlamuli Perci Sikhakhane |
| Limpopo       | Mahlori Innocential      |
| Mpumalanga    | Adam Phasha              |
| North West    | Isaac Bino Tseladimitloa |
| Northern Cape | <b>George du Preez</b>   |
| Western Cape  | Wilton September         |