

Just a Spoonful

SASRI scoops top awards

TWO RESEARCHERS FROM SASRI, DR MICHAEL VAN DER LAAN AND DR PETA CAMPBELL WON TOP AWARDS AT A COMBINED CONGRESS HELD IN BLOEMFONTEIN DURING JANUARY 2010. THE VARIOUS SOCIETIES AT THE CONGRESS INCLUDED THE SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY OF CROP PRODUCTION, SOIL SCIENCE SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA, SOUTHERN AFRICAN SOCIETY FOR HORTICULTURAL SCIENCES AND THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN WEED SCIENCE SOCIETY.

The conference was attended by more than 280 delegates from five countries with six delegates representing SASRI. There were 94 oral and 46 poster presentations in total.

Dr Michael van der Laan, a systems modeller, was awarded the prestigious Daan F Retief floating trophy for his paper titled “Estimating leaching losses from mobile and immobile soil water nitrate concentrations”. His paper was chosen as the best paper in the crop production category for a scientist younger than 40 years of age.

Dr Peta Campbell, a weed scientist, was awarded the CropLife award for the best paper in the field of weed science. Her paper was entitled “Economics of Cynodon control and replanting for emerging farmers”. Dr Campbell is the first recipient of this new award.

One of the keynote addresses titled “More sugar with less water in the Australian sugar industry” was given by Dr Geoff Inman-Bamber, a former SASRI crop modeller who is now based at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) in Australia. ☺



Dr Michael van der Laan was awarded the prestigious Daan F Retief floating trophy.



Dr Peta Campbell was awarded the CropLife award.

SA Association of Botanists Congress

THE 36TH ANNUAL SOUTH AFRICAN ASSOCIATION OF BOTANISTS (SAAB) CONGRESS WAS HELD IN POTCHEFSTROOM IN JANUARY 2010. SASRI'S EFFORTS WERE RECOGNISED WHEN DR ALISTAIR MCCORMICK, A FORMER SASRI STUDENT WON THE PRESTIGIOUS SAAB BRONZE MEDAL FOR THE BEST PHD IN 2008. HIS PHD THESIS INVOLVED THE "SINK REGULATION OF PHOTOSYNTHESIS IN SUGARCANE". THE PROJECT WAS SUPERVISED BY SASRI'S DR DEREK WATT AND UCT PROFESSOR, MIKE CRAMER.



From left to right: Dr A McCormick and Prof J Farrant (SAAB President).



MSc students P Nkwanyana and N Devnarain.

In addition, the prize for best poster in the Molecular Biology/Physiology category was won by Natrisha Devnarain, an MSc student at SASRI. Natrisha's poster focused on various *in vitro* screening methods for evaluating sugarcane susceptibility to smut and eldana.

Oral presentations were made by MSc student Phumla Nkwanyana, and Dr Sumita Ramgareeb, a pathologist who presented on behalf of MSc student, Aimee Koch. Aimee's project focussed on the screening of sugarcane in *in vitro* plants in order to evaluate its herbicide tolerance, while Phumla compared the effect of different *in vitro* culture systems on sugarcane yields.

All of these MSc projects were conducted at SASRI's Biotechnology Unit under controlled laboratory conditions. ☺

Innovation award for RDA



President of the South African Institute of Chemical Engineers (SAIChE), Dr Beki Hlatshwayo (right), presents the institute's innovation award to Dr Craig Jensen and Mr Leon Smith of Tongaat Hulett Sugar (THS) for the development of the Rotary Distribution System (RDA). The RDA is a device that allows solid-fluid contacting processes to be employed in a highly efficient manner and on a large scale and at relatively low cost. THS have installed 4 RDA's including a liquid fructose plant at the Hulett's Refinery in Durban where the technology represents the first application of large scale industrial continuous chromatography in South Africa. The RDA technology has been licensed to IONEX separations – a USA based company – who are now selling the technology worldwide. The RDA technology is not limited to sugar but can be used in a number of areas including mineral processing.