

Update on Management of Specialist Advisory Requests (SARs) submitted to SASRI

RANGE OF SASRI SERVICES ON OFFER
Pathogen diagnostics
Pathogen, insect, weed and nematode identification
Real time irrigation advice
Biometry services (experimental design and data analysis)
Quarantine facilities
Sugar analyses
Collection and collation of climate and related data
NIR-based cane testing service and technical support.
Variety fingerprinting
Commercial insect rearing when there is spare capacity
GIS
Alien and invasive weed biocontrol
Crop forecasting
Mapping support

THE SOUTH AFRICAN SUGARCANE RESEARCH INSTITUTE (SASRI) ROUTINELY RECEIVES REQUESTS FROM A RANGE OF COMMERCIAL COMPANIES TO CONDUCT INVESTIGATIONS INTO NEW PRODUCTS TO TEST THEIR EFFICACY IN SUGARCANE. INVESTIGATIONS INCLUDE THE TESTING OF HERBICIDES, FUNGICIDES, RIPENERS, NEMATICIDES, AND FERTILISERS, AS WELL AS A RANGE OF OTHER GROWTH PROMOTING AND/OR PEST AND DISEASE CONTROLLING PRODUCTS. BESIDES THESE INVESTIGATIONS, SASRI ALSO OFFERS A RANGE OF OTHER SPECIALIST SERVICES (SEE TABLE ON LEFT).

SASRI receives many advisory requests each year and since the inception of the SAR Panel in 2008, 85 Specialist Advisory Requests have been received so far (see table below). The number of requests has been increasing steadily from 15 in 2008, to a projected 35 by the end of 2011. Interestingly, the need for SASRI's services has expanded beyond South Africa's borders with requests from 3 foreign countries in 2010 and 6 in 2011.

Year	Number of requests	Number accepted by SAR Panel	Number of SASRI researchers involved
2008	15	4	3
2009	22	8	7
2010	25	24	11
2011* (end Aug)	23	23	15
	85	59	36

It is also apparent that the quality of the requests submitted (in terms of scientific integrity and merit and applicability to the SA sugar industry) has increased so that the acceptance rate for requests has steadily increased from 4/15 in 2008 to 23/23 in 2011.

The SAR Panel will continue to scrutinise requests for SASRI services. Each request is unique in terms of design, methodologies and requirements. For requests that necessitate trial or experimental work by SASRI specialists, only those that are deemed to have a clear potential benefit to the sugar industry, have credible, scientific modes-of-action and where SASRI has available resources and manpower will be undertaken. ☺

Shaun Berry
Nematologist
South African Sugarcane Research Institute
South African Sugar Association

