

# The Felixton Outreach Seedcane scheme for SSGs

## A HUGE SUCCESS

**A** LARGE-SCALE GROWER INITIATIVE IN FELIXTON IS ASSISTING SMALL-SCALE GROWERS REGAIN PRODUCTIVITY BY MAKING GOOD QUALITY SEEDCANE AVAILABLE IN REMOTE AREAS.

### Background

In the late 1990s there was an increasing concern from Felixton large-scale growers (LSGs) regarding the condition and sustainability of small-scale grower (SSG) cane, due to the increase in smut and RSD infection. In addition to this, 80% of the SSG fields were planted with NCo376 which is a variety susceptible to diseases such as smut, mosaic, RSD and rust. The lack of access to good quality seedcane of the newer disease-resistant varieties in remote areas exacerbated the problem of decreasing cane yields, profitability and sustainability, as they were using unsuitable seedcane and replanting NCo376. The turning point came when Felixton

LSGs realised the importance of establishing a SSG seedcane scheme in order for sugarcane production among SSG to be sustainable and productive in the future.

### Formation of the Felixton Outreach Committee

The Felixton Outreach Committee (FOC) was formed in 2000 comprising of the following members: Felixton Cane Growers Association; Tongaat Hulett Sugar Felixton (THS); SASRI Extension; SACGA; Felixton Pest and Disease (P&D) Control and Felixton Mill Cane Committee representatives. The objectives were to provide good quality seedcane for the remote SSG areas, and to introduce newer disease-resistant varieties with better production potential and thereby improve production, profitability and sustainability of SSGs.

The Outreach project has been funded through a seasonal grower

levy from the Felixton Cane Growers Association as well as an annual contribution from THS Felixton. Funds have occasionally been sourced from the SASA Grower Development Account. This has enabled the FOC seedcane scheme to plant a significant area of seedcane over the past four years.

### Operations

The clear assigning and understanding of roles and responsibilities has ensured that the FOC seedcane scheme is run successfully. The THS Extension Technicians are responsible for the initial selection of potential seedcane plots, with the final selection being done by the Regional SASRI Extension Specialist, P&D Manager and the THS Area Manager. Strict selection criteria of potential seedcane plots are followed (i.e. fallowed, good growing potential without creeping grasses). However, the most important factor in selecting a grower is finding an individual who under-



A seedcane field of N41 planted in the Belina area.



Grower Mboneni Mdletshe in a seedcane field of N27 on his farm in the Ongoye area.



A seedcane field of N27 on Mboneni Mdletshe's farm in the Ongoye area.


stands that the seedcane plots are not for self-enrichment but for the use of the surrounding SSG community. This has to be an individual who is responsible and dedicated. Through a signed agreement it becomes this person's responsibility to ensure that the seedcane is weed-free and well looked after.

### Benefits

From the inception of the FOC seedcane scheme in 2000 until 2012, a total of 76 seedcane plots have been successfully established in various remote SSG areas in and around Felixton, from Ongoye in the south through to Kwambonambi in the north. Over the past four years 63.3 ha were planted supplying over

3 000 tons of seedcane for planting in 2012/2013. Newer varieties such as N27, N36, N39 and N41 have been introduced to SSG growing areas. The availability and accessibility of good quality seedcane under the control of P&D has made the management of diseases possible. The seedcane plots have also created awareness amongst SSGs growers of the importance of using good quality seedcane. The most significant outcome of the Felixton Outreach Seedcane Scheme has been a renewed interest in the re-development and resuscitation of SSG cane areas in the Felixton Mill supply area.

This LSG initiative aimed at assisting SSGs is a great example of the spirit of unity that exists within the Felixton sugarcane grower community. It is

also an important reminder that concerted efforts and partnerships yield positive results, and has provided a successful model that other regions would do well to emulate. The Felixton Outreach Committee hopes to secure additional funding in order to sustain the seedcane plots and ensure continued growth and development of SSGs. 

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