

Local Environmental Committees SUPPORTING BETTER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

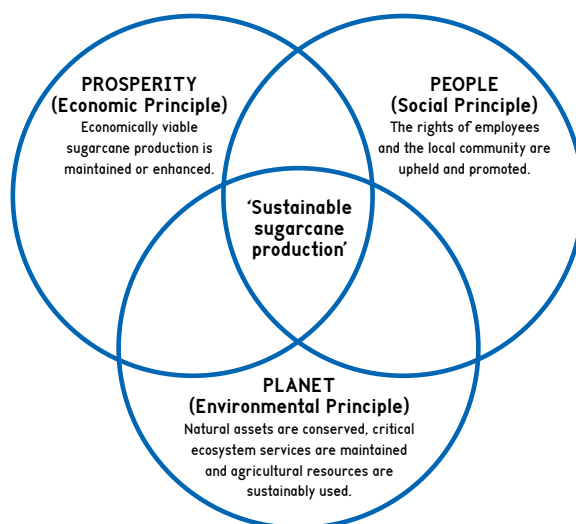
THE SOUTH AFRICAN SUGAR ASSOCIATION (SASA) HOSTED ITS SECOND ANNUAL LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE (LEC) SYMPOSIUM IN KWAZULU-NATAL ON 19 SEPTEMBER AT THE NOODSBERG COUNTRY CLUB. THIS SYMPOSIUM HAS BEEN FORMED TO PROVIDE A PLATFORM FOR DISCUSSION, INTERACTION AND NETWORKING FOR MEMBERS OF THE LECs WHICH ARE DISPERSED THROUGHOUT THE SUGARCANE GROWING BELT IN KWAZULU-NATAL AND MPUMALANGA.

It is SASA's intention to focus each LEC Symposium on different issues pertaining to sustainable natural resource use and management. Therefore, it was appropriate to dedicate this year's symposium to better management practices (BMPs) and the Sustainable

Sugarcane Farm Management System (SUSFARMS®) which will be implemented in the industry through the South African Sugarcane Research Institute (SASRI) Extension Specialists.

The symposium attracted diverse speakers from corporate, legal and SASA to address various aspects related to BMPs, SUSFARMS®, legislation and corporate approaches to sustainability standards for sugar.

SUSFARMS® is a sustainable sugarcane farm management system. It incorporates economic, social and environmental management principles. It is based on the implementation of BMPs, be they legal requirements or BMPs derived from scientific studies. It is a management tool that has been developed specifically for use in the context of sugarcane farming.



From left to right: Michelle Binedell (SASRI Knowledge Manager), Ferdie Potgieter (LEC Chairman), Irvin Lawrence (ENS Law firm), Geoff Maher (SASRI Extension Manager), Ashlin Ramlochan (Kraft Foods) and Marilyn Govender (SASA Natural Resource Manager).

Key drivers behind the SUSFARMS® review and update



An electronic version of the manual was distributed at the LEC Symposium. Each CD contained a pdf version of the full manual, and an excel spreadsheet of the SUSFARMS® Progress Tracker.

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The SUSFARMS® Progress Tracker is a tool that can be used in assessments and to monitor progress towards the achievement of legal requirements or BMPs. It serves as a checklist of each and every measure, against which one can indicate full achievement, partial achievement or non-achievement of a requirement or practice. Notes for each of the measures in SUSFARMS® have been linked within the SUSFARMS® Progress Tracker. This allows easy access to relevant information and can assist in understanding the legal requirements and BMPs.



The Progress Tracker, once completed, provides a progress report that can be used to develop an action plan that can serve to plan the way forward towards the implementation and achievement of new measures.

A recent desktop survey undertaken across extension areas, using the SUSFARMS® Progress Tracker, served to assess whether legal requirements were being met. The results revealed that the industry is not legally compliant (i.e. not all legal requirements have been met). This exercise has highlighted the need for a legislation awareness programme. Further efforts will continue to promote best practice and the implementation of BMPs.

*An eye
for detail*

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The short road ahead

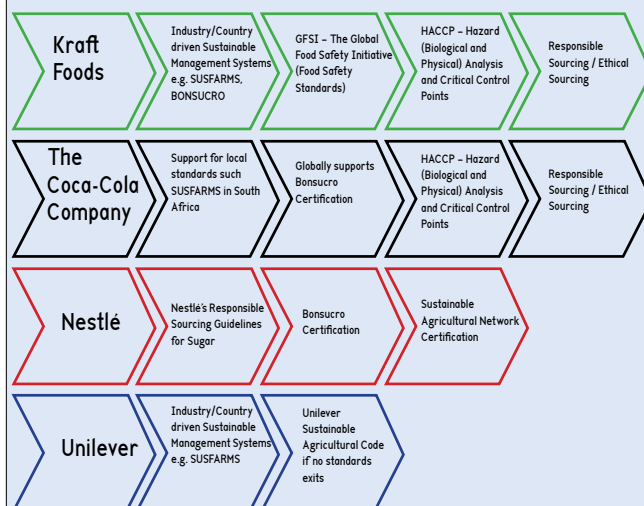
Electronic copies will be distributed amongst growers, followed by workshops, training and road shows. Within six months of the dates of road shows, in those extension areas where growers have committed to the implementation of SUSFARMS®, SASRI Extension Specialists will be required to follow up with individual growers and assist further with implementation.

Target for sustainability for sugar

In recent years many multinational companies have made bold commitments to sustainability, with sustainability standards / certification schemes seen as a crucial tool for achieving those commitments. Bonsucro has set a global target to certify 20% of the world's sugarcane production by 2017; while Unilever has signaled that by 2020, all sugar both cane and beet will be sourced sustainability.

Some of the frequently quoted standards or certification schemes associated with sugar production globally include SUSFARMS®, Sustainable Agricultural Network, ISO International Standards, Bonsucro and Fairtrade.

Standards and certification schemes supported by Industry Customers



However, with all these different standards and certification schemes buzzing around globally, it is important to keep in mind that SUSFARMS® does not conflict with or contradict other standards but will assist the industry in implementing BMPs and in responding to market pressures.

BMPs in action

The symposium was concluded with a BMP field trip in the Noodsberg area that illustrated BMPs for high conservation areas, waterways, contouring, use of lime, and clearing of alien invasive species in riparian areas.

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