

# SASRI'S SUGARCANE VARIETIES



**E**ACH YEAR SASRI PRODUCES ONE OR TWO NEW SUGARCANE VARIETIES FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN INDUSTRY. EACH COMMERCIAL VARIETY IS DEVELOPED OVER A PERIOD OF 11 TO 15 YEARS DURING WHICH TIME EXTENSIVE TESTING, SCREENING AND EVALUATION IS CONDUCTED. THOSE VARIETIES THAT ARE SUCCESSFULLY RELEASED HAVE BEEN SUBJECT TO A NUMBER OF SELECTION CRITERIA INCLUDING: SUCROSE YIELD, ESTIMATED RECOVERABLE CRYSTAL (ERC), CANE YIELD, RATOONING ABILITY, RESISTANCE TO SMUT, MOSAIC, RUST AND LEAF SCALD DISEASE, RESISTANCE TO ELDANA, LODGING AND STALK STRAIGHTNESS, PRONENESS TO FLOWERING AS WELL AS SOME MILLING CHARACTERISTICS. IN ADDITION, VARIETIES ARE SELECTED FOR THE MAJOR AGRO-CLIMATIC REGIONS IN THE INDUSTRY THEREBY ENSURING THAT RELEASED VARIETIES ARE DIRECTLY SUITED TO THE RANGE OF CONDITIONS EXPERIENCED IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN INDUSTRY.

New varieties are published annually in the *Government Gazette* and, for the South African industry, varieties are restricted for planting to designated control areas for which they are gazetted. Sustaining tight control of these regulations is an essential element that contrib-


utes to the management of varieties in the South African industry, thereby diminishing the likelihood of the outbreak of diseases as a consequence of planting unsuited varieties in the different areas.

Those varieties most suited to our irrigated conditions are also desirable to our SADC partners and form the basis of variety licence agreements with Swaziland, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Tanzania. However, while gazetting reduces the pest and disease risk to our industry, such restrictions do not apply to our SADC partners. It is therefore vitally important that they interrogate the agronomic potential and the inherent characteristics of a variety in order to minimise the risk of disease outbreaks and spread in their countries and across their borders.

All varieties produced by SASRI represent the intellectual property of the South African Sugar Association. Since South Africa is a member of the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), it acquired the right to issue plant breeder's rights for new varieties of plants.

Accordingly new varieties of sugarcane are all protected by Plant Breeder's Rights (PBR).

The duration of PBR varies amongst different agricultural/horticultural crops and for sugarcane the current period is 25 years. However, it is becoming clear that in view of the length of time that it takes for the development of a new sugarcane variety, which is akin to the time taken for the development of new varieties of forest trees that the period of protection could be extended to 30 years. Regardless of the time frames associated with the PBR, it is undoubtedly the specific knowledge regarding the attributes of each of the varieties and also their management that contributes to a significant element of intellectual property associated with the varieties, namely 'know-how'.

All of SASRI's variety licence agreements with SADC partners take this very important aspect into consideration. 



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