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# Biosecurity

in the SADC Region

One of the most important foundations necessary to ensure the long-term prosperity of the South African sugar industry is effective biosecurity. Biosecurity is the management of the risk of plant pests, diseases and weeds entering, emerging, establishing or spreading in South Africa. The broad aim of biosecurity is to minimise the impact of these threats on crop production and is built on four main pillars – prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. Prevention considers how to keep pests out or find new pests timeously. Preparedness is concerned with risk analysis, education, monitoring, funding and emergency service level agreements. Response covers eradication, minimising pest impacts, enforcement and compensation while recovery is concerned with reviewing and monitoring. Each of these four pillars form the framework of the South African sugar industry's biosecurity management plan.

**BIOSECURITY IS A COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY**  
Biosecurity is a shared responsibility and relies on all stakeholders, including government agencies, industry, and the public. For this reason, the specific objectives of the South African sugar industry's biosecurity system are to:

- ensure effective basic and applied research into existing and potential biosecurity threats;

- improve liaison with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries;
- improve surveillance at border control posts;
- regularise and standardise the functioning of Local Pest, Disease and Variety Control Committees (LPD & VCCs) in the industry; and
- facilitate the formation of a sub-Saharan biosecurity forum that reports on all P&D matters and enables the implementation of early warning systems.

Since sugarcane production is an extensive monoculture, this type of environment is highly conducive to the establishment and spread of pests, diseases and weeds. As a result, we are likely to continually face new challenges that need to be managed proactively, before these threats establish themselves and cause major yield losses.

#### A DUAL VIEW

A common view of biosecurity is one where the focus is on keeping new pests and diseases out of a country. This is true, but it is also equally important to manage the emergence and spread of pests and diseases within a country. Excellent research carried out at the South African Sugarcane Research Institute (SASRI) combined with an efficient extension service, working in collaboration with LPD&VCCs throughout the industry, form the basis of an extremely cost-effective insurance policy against the potential damage caused by pests and diseases. If we are to get to the place

# Demanding applications? We've seen them all.



**LEFT :** Biosecurity alert posters in Portuguese, SiSwati, Afrikaans, isiZulu and English on the sugarcane pest *Chilo* resident in Mozambique. These posters are available at border posts.

## SUSTAINABLE CONTROL REQUIRES AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

where biosecurity risks are contained and managed, growers will also need to take individual responsibility and implement best management practices. Too much reliance is placed on LPD&VCCs to identify and monitor the numerous biosecurity problems on growers' farms. Inspection teams simply cannot get to every field in a mill area and growers need to supplement LPD&VCC surveys by carrying out their own scouting exercises as well as implementing remedial measures such as roguing or even premature plough-out before being asked to do so by the LPD&VCC.

However, tackling problems at mill or even a regional level is simply not enough. Co-operation across our borders is also vitally important to keep new threats at bay and to contain them at their source. Many SADC sugar industries are based heavily on varieties produced by SASRI, and this places our industry at risk if a problem develops with any one of them. Recent efforts, particularly by SASRI, have been directed at securing our borders and building relationships with our SADC partners in order to create a regional awareness of biosecurity risks.

In every instance, the control of a particular pest or disease is affected by a combination of control factors. This gives rise to the concept of an integrated approach to pest and disease control where agronomic, chemical and biological control methods are all used appropriately to afford lasting and environmentally sustainable control. Unfortunately this type of approach is not often considered as it is far easier and more convenient to focus on a particular control method that yields the most rapid results.

While the South African sugar industry has everything it needs to protect itself from biosecurity threats, the commitment and involvement of all SADC partners at the highest level is critical – not only for the sake of the South African sugar industry, but for all industries in southern Africa as well.



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