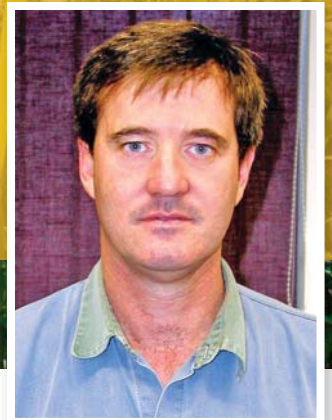


Technological Excellence in the Sugar Industry



One of the industry's hallmarks is its technological excellence. The South African Research Institute (SASRI) contributes to the industry remaining at the forefront of innovation.

Recently this excellence was awarded with the recognition for SASRI specialists by the Fertiliser Association of Southern Africa (FERTASA). The Association's mission is to provide a credible platform to promote sustainable soil fertility and plant nutrition in Southern Africa. FERTASA recently held their 2015 awards ceremony in Somerset West. At the ceremony Dr Rian van Antwerpen, SASRI Senior Scientist: Soil Physics, was awarded the Silver Medal for research. This honour is generally awarded to a scientist who has successfully conducted research in the plant production discipline in South Africa over a period of time, with particular reference to soil fertility and/or plant nutrition. The research findings should contribute significantly to the subject literature and, ideally, should lead to its successful implementation in agriculture.

At SASRI, Rian's responsibilities include conducting research into soil physical aspects restricting sugarcane yields; developing procedures and guidelines to improve the soil environment for sustained sugarcane production and transferring this technology to extension specialists, growers and other role-players in the South African

sugar industry. Rian serves as manager of the Systems Design and Optimisation (SDO) programme at SASRI. This programme focuses on designing and improving farming systems that account for the economic, social and environmental issues impacting the sustainability of sugarcane production. Rian is also currently president of the Soil Society of South Africa (SSSA), a prestigious scientific society comprising of several internationally-acclaimed and dedicated soil scientists.

Bonghi Bhengu, SASRI Extension Technology Resource Specialist, was recently elected provincial chairperson of the South African Society for Agricultural Extension (SASAE) Board at the 49th Annual Conference in Mpumalanga. The SASAE is a scientific society that aims to promote science and the vocation of Agricultural Extension.

Bonghi was initially employed as an Extension Specialist for small-scale growers in Mpumalanga and thereafter transferred into her current role of Extension Technology Resource Specialist in 2010. In her current role, she is responsible for developing and evaluating the small-scale and land reform growers extension programme. Bonghi serves as liaison between SASRI and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). Bonghi is also the current chairperson of the Extension Venture Agreement (EVA) Monitoring Committee. EVA is a joint



INSET FROM LEFT:

Dr Rian van Antwerpen
(SASRI Senior Scientist: Soil Physics)
Bongi Bhengu (SASRI Extension Technology Resource
Specialist), Sifiso Hlela and Patrick Ngcobo
(SASRI small-scale extension specialists)
William Gillespie (SASRI Small-scale Extension Specialist)

agreement between the sugar industry and government whereby SASRI provides specialist technical support to promote agricultural development among small-scale growers.

SASRI's other achievements at the SASAE conference include the "Most Popular Paper" award, for a paper by William Gillespie, SASRI Small-scale Extension Specialist. The paper "Measuring the effectiveness of Extension for small-scale sugarcane growers: A case study" was co-authored with FJ Mitchell (Scientific Manager, Natural Resources DARD).

SASRI small-scale extension specialists, Sifiso Hlela and Patrick Ngcobo also won the "Best Delivered Poster for 2015" for their poster "The use of sugarcane ripeners within the small-scale grower sector in Pongola". The authors would like to acknowledge contributions from their colleagues at SASRI, Canegrowers and RCL Foods Sugar and Milling (Pty) Ltd.



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