

# SASRI'S RD&E INITIATIVE GOES TO THE NORTH

Michelle Binedell

Each year SASRI holds a Research, Development and Extension (RD&E) Workshop. The purpose of the workshop is to provide an opportunity for the discussion of ideas and sharing of knowledge and experiences on regional issues affecting the cultivation of sugarcane agriculture. The workshop involves extensive input from growers, extension and SASRI Specialists. This March, a group of SASRI scientists and managers ventured to the Lowveld to host a two-day RD&E workshop and grower day for the Irrigated Region.



Close to forty issues were raised, discussed and captured at the workshop. These will form the basis of extensive discussions with SASRI researchers – the outcomes of which guide SASRI's communication strategy and the annual research and technology development programme for 2019/2020.

The format of the workshop creates an excellent platform to facilitate useful exchange of information between extension, researchers and growers. This allows for a more thorough ground-truthing of issues in the area resulting in purpose-driven research for SASRI specialists.

The grower day, which was hosted on the SASRI Komati Research Farm took place on the day prior to the RD&E workshop. Specialists who provided informative presentations included Peter Tweddle (Controlled Traffic and new ways of harvesting); Louis Titshall (Nitrogen nutrition); Neil Miles (Crop nutrition, getting it right!); and Sharon McFarlane, Karlien Trumpelmann and Marius Adendorff on latest trends in pest and diseases.

A visit was also made to the trial site for the new mechanised harvesting and RSD trial as well as the Variety Evaluation and Plant Breeding fields on the Research farm. Growers in the area can look forward to even more area-specific testing of varieties and new recommendations for mechanical harvesting based on outcomes of these trials.

SASRI is greatly appreciative of the useful inputs and frank discussions that took place during our two days and look forward to future work with the Lowveld growers.

*Michelle Binedell is SASRI's Knowledge Manager*

*Top right: (From left to right) SASRI specialists enjoying the braai and refreshments are Drs Sanesh Ramburan (Variety Scientist), Peter Tweddle (Agricultural Engineer), Marvellous Zhou (Plant Breeder), Neil Miles (Soil Scientist), Rian van Antwerpen (Soil Scientist) and Derek Watt (Research Manager).*

*Second right: SASRI produces a number of technical publications which were made available to all growers along with information from the Fertiliser Advisory Service (FAS), who co-sponsored the event.*

*Third right: SASRI Plant Pathologist, Sharon McFarlane addressing the growers at her trial site on the Komati Research Farm.*

*Bottom right: (From left to right) Ndivhuwo Makhavhu (SASRI Technical Team Supervisor), Fortunate Ngwamba (RCL Malelane, Agronomy Department), Walter Sibiyi (RCL Farm Manager, Roosmaryn Farm) and Petrus Silinda (RCL Farm Manager, Mghubo Farm) enjoying the refreshments after the formal presentations and demonstrations.*

