



Research Snippets

Quarterly updates from SASRI Research Manager, Dr Riekert van Heerden

January – March 2025



RD&E Workshops



During February–March 2025, six regional Research, Development and Extension (RD&E) workshops were convened for Mpumalanga, Pongola, Midlands, South Coast, North Coast and Zululand & Umfolozi growers and other participants. The purpose of these workshops was to engage with both small- and large-scale growers, including miller-cum-planters, on their technical needs and priorities, around which the SASRI Programme of Work for 2026/2027 will be structured. These workshops were attended by 163 participants who noted 81 RD&E topics for consideration by SASRI. Internal discussion sessions are currently taking place at SASRI to engage with the 81 RD&E topics to decide on an action plan for each.

Applications Update

SASRI has developed several new applications (apps) using the Survey 123 software platform. The **Yellow Sugarcane Aphid (YSA) app** is to be used primarily by growers for recording sightings of YSA infestations and damage, while the **Geoshape app** is to be used primarily by biosecurity and Small-scale Grower (SSG) Extension Specialists to map SSG fields, and the **Biosecurity Observations app** is used to capture biosecurity issues observed in the field.

Research Projects

On 31 March 2025, eleven SASRI projects closed out. Key outcomes from these projects will be communicated to industry. On 1 April 2025, thirteen new SASRI projects started together with the ongoing portfolio of 46 projects.

Orange Rust Update

Orange rust was first observed in the SA industry in 2022. Since then, preliminary orange rust resistance ratings have been assigned to all commercial varieties. These ratings will be refined continuously. The only chemical currently registered for use against orange rust in South Africa is due to be removed from the market. A new chemical (already registered for brown and tawny rust) is being tested against orange rust at SASRI.



Plant Breeding

A total of 74 crosses were imported from Barbados to increase the genetic diversity within the SASRI breeding population. These crosses were planted in the nurseries at the Pongola and Gingindlovu Research Stations in February – March 2025.

