

IT COSTS YOU LESS WITH FAS!

Kerisha Raghunandan and Dr Louis Titshall

The FAS Agricultural Laboratory is an ISO 9001 accredited facility offering a dynamic analytical service that tests leaf, soil, fertiliser and irrigation water sample thresholds. These tests are necessary to ensure that our clients are reaching optimum target yields through applying the correct type and amount of nutrient, evaluating the nutritional health of their soil/crop or checking if fertiliser amendments and water quality are acceptable. These analyses are available for a range of commodities including sugarcane, macadamia, vegetables, turf grass, fruit, maize, tea tree and other crops.

Your one stop shop for every agricultural crop

FAS realises the value in creating a service that accommodates a diverse range of grower needs as many growers are not just in the business of sugarcane. By offering a 'one-stop-shop', FAS aims to make it easier for growers to test soil and leaf samples for a variety of crops under one roof, saving the logistical nightmare and cost of submitting samples to several laboratories. In addition, a grower can receive all requested results at the same time for all farms and in a uniform easy-to-understand format, simplifying the record keeping process.

Manage what you measure

For growers in the sugar industry, uniquely tailored sugarcane fertiliser recommendations are included with your FAS package. Growers sampling other crops are encouraged to request fertiliser recommendations should they require these. Since the laboratory does not sell nor have any business interests in fertiliser sales, and is solely interested in providing the best advice to the grower, the recommendations are unbiased and take into consideration only what the crop requires. This avoids unnecessary over-application of fertilisers, saving you money. One such example is our routine soil Reserve Potassium test. This analysis considers the level of slowly released potassium that the soil can supply the crop and is offered in the routine soils package at no additional cost. Results from this test can amount in savings of up to 30% of your potassium fertiliser requirement!



Don't guess, soil test

The value in soil sampling is immeasurable. Not only does correct fertiliser application, save you money and ensure optimal yields, it promotes environmentally sound fertilisation practices. The dangers of over-fertilising include:

- Unnecessary expenditure on fertiliser that does not translate into higher crop production,
- Eutrophication (the leaching of phosphates and nitrates into ponds, dams, rivers and oceans; most widely known as one of the great destroyers of the Great Barrier Reef),
- Excessive soil acidification by using too much ammonium fertiliser (this destroys the beneficial microbial ecosystem in soil and changes the chemistry of soil), and
- High nitrogen losses as the crop cannot take it all up (known to cause air, water and ground pollution resulting in human health risks).

On the other end, under-application can lead to a poorer performing crop and lost yield income, while leading to a decline in your overall soil fertility status that will need to be addressed further down the line. For more information on this service, contact your closest SASRI Extension Specialist or email fas@sugar.org.za.

So choose the best, choose FAS!

Kerisha Raghunandan (SASRI Publication Officer) and Dr Louis Titshall (SASRI Senior Soil Scientist)

