

# SEEDCANE AND THE 2023 INDUSTRY DEADLINE

Rowan Stranack

Appreciating the risk of spreading pests and diseases in seedcane some time ago, the industry included two clauses in the Sugar Industry Agreement (SIA) which require growers to have seedcane approved by their Local Pest Disease and Variety Control Committee (LPD&VCC), prior to use or sale or movement.

The purpose of these two clauses was to ensure that growers either establish their own seedcane nurseries, OR that they arrange to purchase their seedcane from a LPD&VCC registered co-operator by the year 2023.

Nurseries that produce seedcane should be managed well so as to create the most favourable conditions for optimum growth. In turn, good management will result in healthy seedcane that will be used to establish a healthy commercial crop.

Apart from the contribution to biosecurity, planting good quality, clean seedcane from a properly regulated seedcane nursery makes sound agronomic and economic sense. Benefits include varietal purity, good germination and a healthy, vigorous crop which is likely to be productive for many ratoons. Planting clean seedcane also ensures that the industry is protected from the financial losses caused by pest and disease incursions.

## CLAUSES



**72.** No grower shall sell or otherwise dispose of any seedcane without the prior approval of the Local Pest, Disease and Variety Control Committee having jurisdiction over the land on which the cane is grown.

**73.** A Local Pest, Disease and Variety Control Committee may require a grower within its jurisdiction who intends to use his or her own cane for seedcane on his or her own land to obtain the Committee's prior approval therefor.

## The process of producing certified and approved seedcane

Planning seedcane production needs to start at least two years before the seedcane is actually required for planting into commercial fields. Seedcane can take one of three forms: whole-stick seedcane, transplants or NovaCane®.

The choice of which form of seedcane to use is generally based on availability, ease of handling, labour requirements, quantities required and the intended purpose of the seedcane.

The process starts with Certified Seedcane. This is the nucleus seedcane material from which Approved Seedcane Nurseries (previously either second stage or farm nurseries) are established. These in turn produce the seedcane to plant commercial fields of sugarcane.

In some areas of the industry, Certified Seedcane is produced by individual co-operators or in a dedicated central nursery facility such as the Sezela Transplant

Nursery, or in large seedcane mother blocks such as in the Lowveld or the Maidstone Seedcane Scheme.

Individual growers may establish their own Certified Nurseries on their farms if they have their own heat-treatment tanks, or access to one nearby. In most instances however, growers tend to leave the production of Certified Seedcane to co-operators or other centralised operations and prefer to purchase Certified Seedcane to plant their Approved Nurseries.

The establishment of a nursery needs to start with the identification of a potential nursery site, at least one year in advance. This is a vital requirement since all Certified and Approved nurseries need to be registered with the Local Pest Disease and Variety Control Committee and fallow period inspections carried out. Once planted nurseries are subject to a number of inspections to ensure that all off-types and diseased stools are eradicated.

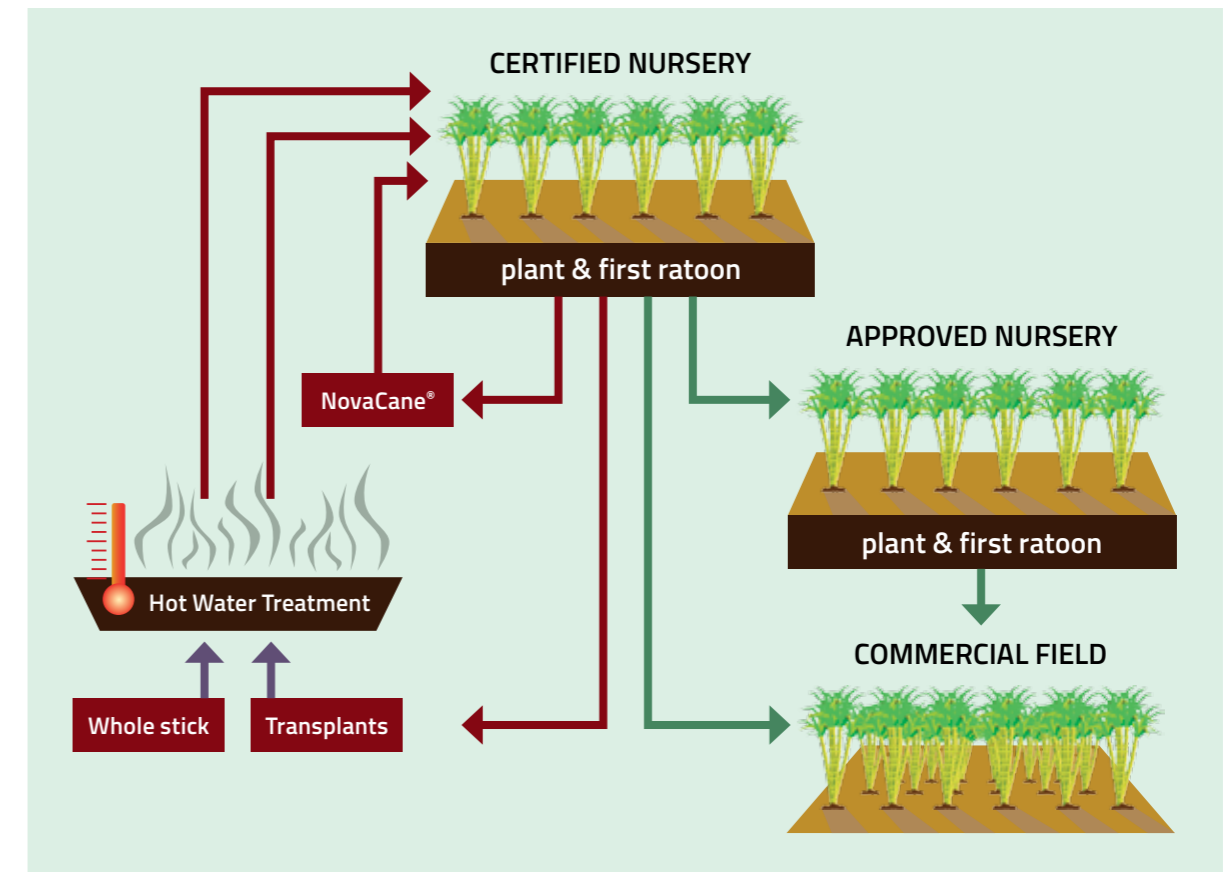


Figure 1: The production of certified and approved seedcane



Left: NovaCane® plantlets produced by tissue culture laboratories. Right: Seedcane undergoing hot water treatment.

# RURAL GYMS CREATING CULTURE OF KEEPING FIT

Priya Seetal

Over the past two years, the sugar industry has installed eight (8) outdoor gyms for rural communities in the sugarbelt regions (located in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga) of South Africa.

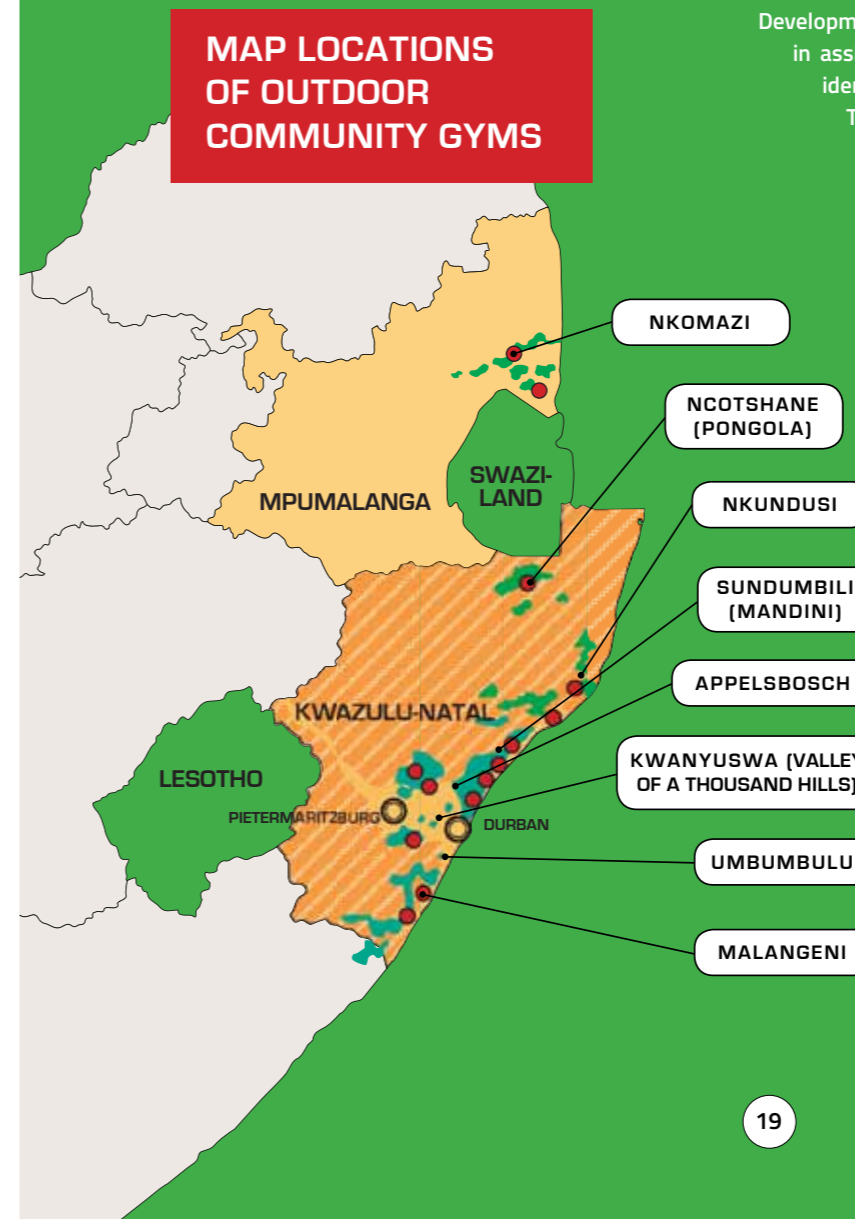
The outdoor gyms have contributed immensely to the creation of a culture of exercising and keeping fit among young and old people in these communities. This is in keeping with the sugar industry's longstanding commitment to promote exercising and healthy lifestyles. Physical activity is crucial to maintain good health and these gyms provide a conducive environment to do so in rural areas where access to exercise equipment is scarce and not freely available. Physical activity has many benefits – it prevents weight gain by burning of the extra calories that our bodies do not need and would have turned into fat. It also controls blood sugar and blood pressure and has been known to relieve stress.

Millers (South African Sugar Millers' Association) and growers (South African Cane Growers' Association and South African Farmers Development Association) were helpful and instrumental in assisting the South African Sugar Association (SASA) identify sites where the outdoor gyms are erected. The feedback from beneficiaries, government councillors, health officials and other stakeholders has been nothing short of phenomenal.

KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, has made SASA's outdoor gym initiative an integral part of his department's health programme. The gyms have been hailed as something of a game-changer in terms of inculcating the culture of keeping fit. Promotion of physical activity is part of government's strategy to prevent and control obesity. The partnership between SASA and the provincial Department of Health with regards to outdoor gyms is one of the highly regarded areas of cooperation for the benefit of the citizens in the province. In light of the current hypersensitivity on the role of sugar in obesity and non-communicable diseases (NCDs), the sponsorship of outdoor gyms has proven to be irrefutable proof of the industry's commitment to the prevention and management of obesity and NCDs.

Priya Seetal is Nutrition Manager at SASA

## MAP LOCATIONS OF OUTDOOR COMMUNITY GYMS



### CAUTIONARY NOTE!

It is very important to remember that all movement of seedcane in the industry must be approved by the LPD&VCC within the local control area relative to where the requestor's (grower's) farm is situated.

Furthermore, if seedcane is to be moved between LPD&VCC control areas, this must be with the approval of BOTH sending and receiving LPD&VCCs.

### Where to from here?

Over the next four years, growers will have to decide which of the following three options they will use to ensure they get the seedcane they require:

- **Option 1** - Produce Certified and Approved Seedcane themselves.
- **Option 2** - Source their Certified Seedcane from a local LPD&VCC registered co-operator, or from a seedcane facility such as a transplant nursery for planting an Approved Nursery on their farm; or
- **Option 3** - Source their Approved Seedcane for planting commercial fields from a fellow grower.

For more detailed information on seedcane production, consult the Seedcane Production bulletin published by SASRI.

Also see *The Link* (January 2019) special edition magazine focussing solely on the 2023 seedcane regulation.

Rowan Stranack is Extension and Biosecurity Manager at SASRI

