

SEEDCANE DEMO PLOTS – A BOOST FOR SMALL-SCALE GROWERS

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The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture extended the Seedcane and Demonstration Plots Implementation Agency Agreement with the South African Sugar Association (SASA) to 31 March 2021.

The seedcane demonstration plots aim to stimulate development and create a sustainable small-scale grower community. A training plan to link soil to crop potential is being done through dedicated field days linked to the agronomic cycle to enable training and skills transfer to the small-scale growers.

The South African Sugarcane Research Institute (SASRI) extension officers, under the leadership of the Extension Manager for Small-Scale and Land Reform Growers, have taken up the challenge to facilitate the finalisation of the planting plan in consultation with local stakeholders (Millers, the South African Farmers Development Association, the South African Cane Growers' Association, and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development). SASA is administrating the procurement and payment process, providing oversight, consolidating all the efforts and submitting reports required by the department.

Agreements have been signed between SASA/SASRI and 11 co-operators across mill areas, aiming to plant a total of 15 hectares of the latest most suitable varieties in accordance with soil tests conducted across all identified plots. The SASRI Local Pest Disease and Variety Control Committee Team has inspected all the identified areas and approved them for use to develop seedcane beds as they met minimum requirements such as fallow land without sugarcane crop planted for a minimum of one year, accessibility of new seedcane variety in relation to grower geographical area coverage/spread. Many of the co-operators will only require assistance with land preparation from contractors, but will be doing their fertiliser application, planting, herbicide application and hand weeding which will result in real empowerment.

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