



LOWER SOUTH COAST EXTENSION NEWS



Variety N59

N59 has become increasingly popular among growers in recent years, primarily due to its high cane and RV yields. In our region, N59 is largely grown in both the coastal areas (Umzumbe, North Bank, Izotsha and Southbroom) and hinterland areas (Murchison, Oribi and Paddock). However, N59 is prone to lodging and if it is kept beyond its normal cutting cycle, it tends to experience severe lodging. One of its best features is its resistance to eldana and certain other diseases. N59 is suited to average to high potential soils.

Although N59 has recorded very little smut yet on the South Coast, there have been reports of susceptibility to the disease on the North Coast and in Zululand. Growers must only plant Certified or Approved Seedcane and scout N59 fields for smut and rogue out any infected stools.

The Sezela Nursery currently has many N59 seedlings that will be ready for planting in Spring. Please contact the Extension Office should you wish to place an order.



Eldana levels

Over the past few seasons, we have observed a decline in eldana levels across the region, largely due to the outstanding eldana spray program implemented here. However, the latest eldana surveys have revealed an increase in eldana levels specifically in N52 fields located in the hinterland areas.

We strongly urge growers to conduct surveys on their N52 fields and, if high levels are detected, include those fields in their spray programs. The same advice applies to other eldana susceptible varieties such as N37, N48 and N67.

For growers in coastal areas, it is advisable to avoid carrying over N41 to the following season, as it has exhibited high eldana levels in carry-over fields. The eldana control spray program will commence once again in August. We highly encourage growers to adhere to a comprehensive program, as it has consistently yielded the best results in previous seasons.

Weed Control

Timing in weed control is crucial and the most effective approach is to target weeds during their early stages or before they emerge. It is crucial to ensure that all equipment is properly calibrated, and staff members are adequately trained to achieve optimal results.

In the past, SASRI used to issue a Herbicide Guide (booklet) for growers, which contained information on suitable herbicides for different weed species. However, we have now introduced a digital Herbicide Selector - an MS Excel-based tool which allows for treatments to be selected according to selected criteria. These include the growth stage of the weeds (such as pre-emergence or post-emergence), the weed type (such as broadleaf or watergrass), and even include additional factors like clay percentage and plant or ratoon crop. The selector will then generate a list of active ingredients, which can be clicked to access a comprehensive list of trade names. The Herbicide Selector is also available for download in PDF format.

Both versions can be accessed from the SASRI website (www.sasri.org.za/weed-control).

Occasionally, the security system on your computer may block the Herbicide Guide from working. If you encounter this issue, please follow the steps below:

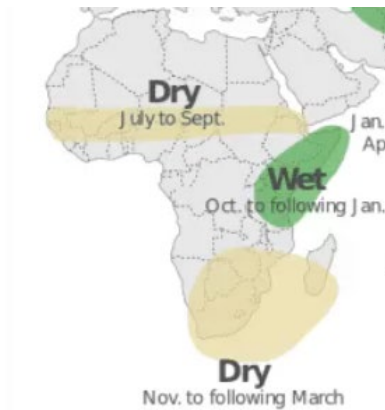
1. Go to the folder where you saved the file on your computer.
2. Right-click the file name and choose Properties from the context menu.
3. At the bottom of the General tab, select the Unblock checkbox and select OK.

A few paper copies of the 2023 Herbicide Selector are available from the Extension Office.



Flowering

The SASRI automatic weather station at Seafields has predicted a higher occurrence of flowering in the upcoming season compared to the 2022 season. The flowering index is 0.39 and this means that all varieties with a high propensity to flower are expected to do so this year. It is advisable to regularly monitor varieties such as N12, N27, N36, N39, N42, N58, N76 and N77 in coastal areas.



Rainfall Predications

A strong El Niño is likely (almost certain now) in the coming summer, although it is still too early to determine the exact impact it will have on summer rainfall. However, based on current indications, if a strong El Niño does indeed materialise, below-normal summer rains are highly likely. However, bear in mind that not all strong El Niños result in dry conditions.

The developing El Niño scenario will have no significant bearing on late winter to early spring rainfall, therefore normal rainfall can be anticipated for July August September (the SAWS predicts slightly above normal). Minimum temperatures are expected to remain largely mild (above normal) during the same period.

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