



**SASIAA**  
SOUTH AFRICAN SUGAR INDUSTRY  
AGRONOMISTS' ASSOCIATION

# 2023 Annual General Meeting

31 October 2023

*KwaShukela Auditorium, Mount Edgecombe, Durban*

# AGENDA

- **Attendance Register & Apologies**
- **Co-ordinator's report for 2023**
  - Field day (Eshowe)
  - Membership numbers
  - Management committee (until October 2026)
- **Proposal for consideration by members**
- **General**

# FIELD DAY



**FIELD DAY – WEDNESDAY, 10 MAY 2023**  
**THEME: SEEDCANE – FROM LABORATORY TO FIELD**  
**ZULULAND NURSERIES (GARETH CHITTENDEN) AND SUNSET FARM (COLIN HOHLS) IN ESHOWE**

This year we hosted a field day in Eshowe with a focus on NovaCane®. NovaCane® plantlets are multiplied through tissue culture protocols in a laboratory, thereby enabling propagation of many true-to-type, disease-free plants in a relatively short period using a minimum quantity of starting material.

During the field day association members were taken on a journey from NovaCane® production in the laboratory, the growing and hardening-off of NovaCane® plantlets in a well-managed commercial nursery, and ultimately establishment of a certified seedcane scheme. Members also saw how Zululand Nurseries caters for the diversified farming needs of growers, by being a supplier of seedlings of many other crops.

On Sunset Farm the establishment and bulking up of seedcane from NovaCane® source was showcased. We witnessed the growth of NovaCane® plants of a new SASRI variety in the field and learned more about research into the agronomic management of NovaCane® plants.

The take-home messages from the field day were that there are tried-and-tested protocols and processes in place allowing the production of high quality certified seedcane, and that this planting material is the cornerstone of attaining the yield potential of sugarcane crops.

**Attended by 76 members**

Lunch kindly sponsored by...



# FIELD DAY



**NovoCane<sup>®</sup>: The pain free seedcane!**

**Disease indexing**

- ✓ **Control** - Certified seedcane MAY 2015 - 2016. All cane originating from approved sources.
- ✓ **Visual** - Visual inspection of cane for symptoms.
- ✓ **Small** (1-2 mm) - Necessary to ensure accurate identification.
- ✓ **Control** - Control measures to prevent spread of disease.
- ✓ **at source** - Identification.

**Disease control**

- ✓ **IPM** - IPM for 25 min including a fungicide spray to primary root system exclusion.
- ✓ **Molecular testing** - Molecular testing.

**Fingerprinting**

- ✓ **1** - 10 minutes.
- ✓ **2** - At the end of the day, the sample is placed in the lab.
- ✓ **3** - In the evening, the results are available in the system.

**SASRI**  
SUGARCANE SECTOR SUPPORT  
RESEARCH INSTITUTION

**SASRI Reference Fingerprinting Database (SRFD)**

**PCR identification** → **Genetic Analysis** → **SASRI Reference Fingerprinting Database (SRFD)** → **Fingerprinted sample** → **SRFD**

# FIELD DAY — Printed Media Exposure

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## Seedcane - from laboratory to field

Kalisha Naicker (Publications Officer)

A field day organised by the South African Sugar Industry Agronomists' Association (SASIAA), themed "Seedcane - from laboratory to field," provided a remarkable opportunity for attendees to witness the NovaCane® tissue culture process. This experience provided attendees with an exceptional opportunity to gain a comprehensive understanding of the seedcane journey, its challenges, and the innovative techniques employed along the way.



SASRI's Principal Biotechnologist, Dr Sandy Snyman, outlined the NovaCane® process which utilises tissue-culture techniques in a laboratory to reproduce disease-free, true-to-type sugarcane plants. The process begins with the careful selection of healthy donor plants, ensuring their suitability for tissue culture. Small sections of the donor plant, known as explants, are carefully excised and decontaminated to eliminate any potential microbial contaminants.



Once decontaminated, the explants are placed onto a nutrient-rich growth medium containing essential minerals, vitamins, and plant growth regulators. The medium is optimised to provide the necessary components shoot multiplication. After a series of subculturing steps, root development is stimulated. Once the shoots have well-formed roots, they are ready for acclimation to real world/ ex-vitro conditions. This involves gradually exposing the plantlets to the external environment, starting with greenhouse conditions and eventually transitioning to the open-field conditions.

Gareth Chittenden, owner of Zululand Nurseries, then described the cultivation and hardening-off techniques employed for NovaCane® plantlets in their well-managed commercial nursery. This provided attendees with a deeper understanding of the procedures necessary to ensure the successful growth and adaptation of NovaCane® plantlets.



Rowan Stranack, SASRI's Extension and Biorisk Manager, shed light on the legal aspects associated with seedcane production. This comprehensive overview equipped attendees with a thorough understanding of the regulatory framework surrounding the NovaCane® tissue culture process.



SUGARCANEMATTERS

## Seedcane FROM LABORATORY TO FIELD

A recent field day organised by the South African Sugar Industry Agronomists' Association (SASIAA) centered around the theme of "Seedcane - from laboratory to field." Attendees embarked on a captivating journey, witnessing the entire process firsthand.

The event commenced with a warm welcome from SASIAA co-ordinator Riekerk van Heerden, setting the stage for the enlightening experiences to come.

Providing an introduction to the farming landscape in Eshowe, SASRI Extension Specialist Ruth Rhodes offered valuable insights.

Next, SASRI's Principal Biotechnologist, Sandy Snyman, engaged the audience with an informative "show and tell" session, highlighting the novel NovaCane® tissue culture process whereby disease-free sugarcane plants are reproduced by means of tissue-culture techniques in a laboratory.

Gareth Chittenden, representing Zululand Nurseries, then took the stage to discuss the meticulous cultivation and hardening-off techniques employed for NovaCane® plantlets in their well-managed commercial nursery.

SASRI's Extension and Biorisk Manager, Rowan Stranack, explained the legal aspects of seedcane production, providing attendees with a comprehensive understanding of the process after which guests were treated to a tour and the history of Colin Hohl's Sunset Farm by farm manager Hercules Maritz.

Thereafter SASRI's Agricultural Engineer Peter Twedde took us to a plot of N78 NovaCane® and provided an overview of the new SASRI project focused on the agronomic management of NovaCane® plantlets.

The event culminated with lunch at the picturesque Sunset Farm dam, allowing participants to reflect on the enriching experiences of the day.

Kalisha Naicker  
SASRI Publications Officer



Information provided by the  
South African Sugarcane Research Institute

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Address: 170 Manders Drive, Mount Edgecombe, Durban, 4300

# FIELD DAY — Social Media Exposure



**South African Sugarcane Research Institute**

24 May · 🌐

Seedcane - from laboratory to field

A recent field day organised by the South African Sugar Industry Agronomists' Association (SASIAA) centered around the theme of "Seedcane - from laboratory to field."

Read full article below....

#seedcane #sugarcane #research #agronomist

**SUGARCANE MATTERS**

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Kelisha Molekwa  
SASRI Publications Officer



**South African Sugarcane Research Institute (SASRI)**

5,100 followers

5mo · 🌐

Seedcane - from laboratory to field

A recent field day organised by the South African Sugar Industry Agronomists' Association (SASIAA) centered around the theme of "Seedcane - from laboratory to field." ...see more

**SUGARCANE MATTERS**

## Seedcane

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Kelisha Molekwa  
SASRI Publications Officer

# MEMBERSHIP

- **Membership numbers:**

- Oct 2019 - **137**
- Oct 2020 - **140**
- Oct 2021 - **143**
- Oct 2022 - **150**
- Oct 2023 - **155**

- **Membership sub-committee:** Don McCulloch, Kevin Drew & Rian van Antwerpen

- **Captain of “Admin Ship”:** Vasie Naidoo

# MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

## SASIAA Management Committee (Oct 2022 – Oct 2026)



Terry Stanger  
(SASRI Director)



Rowan Stranack



Michelle Binedell



Riekert van Heerden  
(Coordinator)



Rian van Antwerpen



Kevin Drew



Don McCulloch



# PROPOSAL FOR CONSIDERATION

- We have never hosted a SASIAA field day in the irrigated-north (IN) region.
- Only 10% of members reside in the IN.
- Long-distance travel, and low membership numbers, make it difficult to get the “ball rolling” in the IN.
- The management committee proposes that the 2024 SASIAA field day takes place in the IN (Komatipoort or Malelane).
- All SASIAA members will be invited should they wish to make the trip there.
- Selected non-members from the Irrigated region (e.g., growers, consultants, service providers, agricultural advisors) will be invited.
- Afterwards, these regional non-members may apply for SASIAA membership. As always, membership criteria will be followed.
- It is hoped that this approach will generate interest in SASIAA in the IN and membership growth.
- If successful, we further propose that the annual field days be rotated in the following manner: 2024 (IN), 2025 (Rainfed), 2026 (IN), 2027 (Rainfed), and so forth.



**GENERAL**

# THANK YOU

- Big thank you to our fantastic presenters at both the field day and symposium this year.
- Michelle Binedell and Vasie Naidoo for all the arrangements.
- For any enquiries / suggestions: E-mail us

Email: [agronassoc@sugar.org.za](mailto:agronassoc@sugar.org.za)

Website: [sasri.org.za/sasiaa/](http://sasri.org.za/sasiaa/)

- Thank you for attending!



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