**Soya Beans**

**Soya bean yield down 28% due to drought**

The devastating drought in the central and western parts of South Africa, which had a severe impact on the maize harvest this year, with an expected 30% decline in production, was also causing serious damage to the soya bean crop. Roughly 40% of SA’s soya beans are grown in the western Free State and North West, areas hardest hit by the drought, according to Wessel Lemmer, an economist at Grain SA.

While the total impact of the drought on the soya bean crop had not yet been established, it was already clear that the yield for the season would be much lower than originally expected, he said.

According to the Crop Estimates Committee’s first production forecast of summer crops for 2015, the total harvest was expected to be only about 1% lower than the 2014 crop.

However, this figure did not reflect the decline in yield per hectare as a result of the drought.

Soya bean plantings increased by about 37%, from 502 900ha planted in 2014 to 687 300ha in 2015. Despite this significant increase in area planted, the total soya bean crop was expected to decline by almost 10 000t to 938 350t, according to the committee.

This meant that the soya bean yield per hectare had declined by 28% or 0,54t/ha from 1,97t/ha in 2014 to 1,36t/ha in 2014.

In the world market, the prices for soya beans were likely to remain under pressure due to good stock levels, according to a Grain SA market report.

At the beginning of this month the futures contract prices for soya beans delivered in Randfontein were between R5 000/t and R5 100/t. Prices were down roughly R400/t to R600/t from June 2014. The price for the crop for delivery in May had dropped from R5 900/t in mid-December last year to around R5 000/t at the beginning of this month.

- Denene Erasmus

**WATER**

**Still no sewage works for North West township after five years**

Despite being occupied since 2010, about 750 houses in a North West low-cost housing development did not have a functional wastewater treatment works.

Over the years a variety of problems has stalled the construction of the treatment works for the Reboile Township, situated close to the government-listed water resource, the Groot Marico river.

The situation had raised concerns among residents in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality that untreated sewage and other wastewater from Reboile could contaminate the Groot Marico river.

Vacuum tanker trucks had continued to collect Reboile’s wastewater and then deliver it to Zeerust’s treatment works about 45km away, according to the district municipality.

In July last year, Farmer’s Weekly reported that this service cost about R400 000 a month at the time, and that alleged corruption and maladministration in the district municipality had played a significant role in preventing the construction of a treatment works for Reboile.

Despite the mid-2014 intervention by North West’s Department of Local Government and Human Settlements in the district municipality’s operations, and the resultant appointment of an administrator to turn the district municipality’s fallings around, the construction of a treatment works had not begun.

A recent report from the district municipality stated that it was still in the process of finalising the procurement of the farm where treatment works would be situated, and that the project was due to begin in the 2015/2016 financial year.

The district municipality “are in such a deep financial crisis they do not have the money for anything”, a credible source close to the matter, but who is not authorised to speak to the media, said in early February.

“The top/senior management is at loggerheads with one another. Sadly, these people are indifferent to the environment and the plight of the people they are meant to serve,” the source said.

The district municipality told Farmer’s Weekly that Reboile’s wastewater management and removal was being “carried out efficiently”. Should the tanker service be hampered while the permanent infrastructure was not in place, the risk of groundwater and of the Groot Marico catchment being polluted was “very rare”, Leholomohlo March, a spokesperson for the district municipality, said.

Andreas Bohnack, resident in the area, said that he and other interested and affected parties had been notified that authorisation for the works’ construction had been granted. “The problem now seems that the municipality does not have the funds to execute the project,” he said.

The district municipality did not give any indication of further potential hurdles to the construction of the treatment works.

- Lloyd Phillips

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