SA soya bean harvest reaches one-million-ton mark

South Africa’s soya bean harvest for 2014/2015 is estimated at more than one million tons, despite the drought in the summer-grain production regions. This is the first time that the one-million-ton mark has been exceeded by the crop, and it bodes well for the soya bean industry, according to Andries Theron, vice-president at Grain SA.

Speaking at a recent soya bean symposium in Bothaville, Theron said the number of hectares planted to soya had risen from 134 000ha in the 2000/2001 production season to 687 300ha in the 2014/2015 season.

“The increased number of hectares planted to soya means that we, for the first time in 40 years, are producing more of the crop locally than we needed to import,” he said.

The SA Protein Research Foundation’s goal to double the 2014/2015 production by 2020 was doable, given the sharp increase in hectares planted, according to him. The expansion needed to be supported by producer training and development, as well as cultivar development supported by producer participation in trials and research.

“Although our local soya bean industry is a small player globally, we engage the world’s leading producers and experts to ensure long-term sustainability and profitability,” he said.

According to the Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy Baseline, local soya bean oilcake consumption was 1.2 million tons. Imports were just over one million tons during the 2014/2015 season.

Only 2% of the 1 005 548t processed during the 2014/2015 season was for human consumption. The demand for full-fat soya increased by 11.6% and by 37% for oilcake, compared with the previous season.

— Annelie Coleman

Source: SA Soya Bean Quality Report 2013/2014

Three weed species resistant to glyphosate in South Africa

Worldwide, 32 weed species have developed resistance to the herbicide glyphosate, 20 of which occur in South Africa. Locally, three weed species have become glyphosate-resistant. These are: Eleusine (Eleusine indica), common pigweed (Amaranthus hybridus) and Johnson grass (Sorghum halepense).

South Africa could learn from the US’s current situation of growing glyphosate resistance and not become overly dependent on the chemical, he said. Dependence or excessive use of a single herbicide was conducive to resistance development. Local producers used a variety of application action, which vastly reduced the opportunity for resistance development. There are 24 herbicides registered in South Africa for use on soya beans.

Eleven are registered for use on grasses, five on broadleaf weeds and eight on both grasses and broadleaf weeds.

“Producers are well advised to stay away from unregistered herbicide products or mixtures of herbicides,” Reinhardt said.

— Annelie Coleman

Glyphosate resistance in the US

Resistance to the herbicide glyphosate has had a marked impact on soya bean production in the US, and the number of hectares planted to Roundup Ready (RR) soya bean cultivars had begun to drop. A total of 41% of cropland in the US was planted to soya beans, Prof Stevan Knezevic, weed scientist at the University of Nebraska said, speaking at the soya bean symposium in Bothaville. Some 97% of soya land had been planted to RR cultivars up to 2013. “The number of hectares planted to RR cultivars declined markedly over the last three to five years because of an explosion of glyphosate resistance in the US,” he said.

Growing resistance could be ascribed to years of continuous use of a very limited list of herbicides, based mainly on glyphosate, according to him. Producers were moving toward conventional cultivars in combination with soil-applied herbicides. Some 120 million acres (49 million ha) in the US were sprayed with glyphosate up to three times a year.

Glyphosate is a non-selective systemic herbicide that is applied directly to plant foliage.

— Annelie Coleman

Glyphosate is one of the least toxic pesticides

None occurred in the summer-grain production region and occurred mainly in the southern parts of the country, according to Dr Charlie Reinhardt, extraordinary professor of weed science, at the University of Pretoria.

Speaking at the soya bean symposium in Bothaville, Reinhardt said that glyphosate was one of the least toxic pesticides used in agriculture.

— Annelie Coleman