Canola plantings decline by 20%

This year, the area planted to canola is expected to decline by almost 20% from that of 2014. The total area planted was estimated at 77 000 ha, which is 17 000 ha less than last year. Martin Heydrorn, a farmer from Beddasloarp, said that the decrease was due to difficult planting conditions at the start of the season.

“A lot of seed ordered for planting was not planted because of the late rains in the Swartland and Western Cape,” he said.

Farmers, however, indicated in April that they would plant only 88 000 ha, which was already 10% lower than the previous year.

Franco le Roux, agronomist for the canola processing company SOILL, said this was the market correcting itself.

“The industry produced a lot of canola in 2014, which in combination with yields adversely affected by warm climatic conditions, had a negative impact on price margins. Other crops, as a result, also realised better returns,” he said.

Although Protein and Albertina in the Southern Cape have the potential for high yield, the canola is still too immature in other areas for accurate predictions, said Le Roux.

Because of the late rains, farmers in the Swartland planted in dry soils and these seeds had germinated only with the rain of late May or early June. In the Southern Cape, late rains had resulted in a mix of canola with some water in the root very immature.

The rain would be the greatest determining factor of yield over the next two months, said Le Roux.

Meanwhile, no problems have emerged with the Beet western yellows virus that made its first appearance on some farms last year. The disease caused losses of up to 40%. Heydrorn said he hoped it was a once-off occurrence as there was little control over the disease. It was spread by aphids, a severe problem due to a wet summer that had led to a weed infestation alongside plantations. Only one cultivar, Zircon, had been affected, which made it difficult to determine whether it was the only cultivar susceptible to the disease. - Giems Kriel

Eskom employee receives Endangered Wildlife Trust award

The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) recently bestowed its prestigious Cheetah Award on Rudi Kruger, a corporate specialist in environmental management within Eskom’s sustainability division.

Kruger received the award for going beyond the call of duty in helping the EWT achieve its mission of conserving endangered species and ecosystems in South Africa.

“Regarded by many as the father of the Eskom/EWT partnership, Rudi has worked relentlessly to address the issues around the impact of electrical infrastructure on South African wildlife,” EWT said in a statement.

The statement also said that one of Kruger’s greatest accomplishments was to introduce a biodiversity standard in Eskom. This had led the national power utility to using bird-friendly structures when constructing new powerlines or upgrading existing powerlines across the country.

“Rudi has left a lasting legacy and we hope that this will continue for many years to come,” EWT’s wildlife and energy programme manager, Constant Hoogstad, added in the statement.

Staff reporter