

Can Africa **feed** itself in **ten** years?

Africa's agricultural imports of USD35 billion per annum is considerably higher than their exports. Africa needs to produce not only more basic agricultural commodities, but move into the realm of further processing. Moving up the value chain will result in higher revenue, and assist in creating key agribusiness employment.

The high technology and manufacturing sector has been slow and is likely to continue to develop slowly in the African scenario, hence the importance of agribusiness manufacturing. Funding of farming operations is critical to growth – the lack of funding and access to funds can probably be highlighted as one of the major hurdles holding back expansion of agribusiness.

South African success

There are many hurdles, but the high unemployment is leading to unrest. To assist in stability, agribusiness may be an excellent solution. Numerous new African governments exist with exciting new ideas, and they should be encouraged to do everything possible to support agribusiness in Africa.

South Africa has reduced hectares of maize produced from 3,6 million to 2,6 million over the last 20 years, while at the same time increasing production from 7,7 million to 16 million tons, mainly through a drive for efficiency.

This drive for efficiency has been forced by global volatility in pricing, including all-time lows in pricing due to oversupply. The adoption of technology has played a critical role to remain internationally competitive and for the farming community to survive.

Value of technology

The oilseed industry has accomplished improvement from 125 000 hectares of soya bean 20 years ago to 574 000 hectares. At the same time production increasing from 197 000 tons to 1 340 000 tons is an illustration of not only growth in the industry, but also the value of technology.

In 2017, South Africa exported USD9,2 billion of agricultural products while importing USD7 billion, indicating a successful industry which needs to be nurtured and grown.

The target of the Protein Research Foundation to produce 2,5 million tons of soya beans by the year 2020 on the road to self-sufficiency, is a steep challenge. Yet this will be achieved if we can increase hectares mainly through crop rotation; achieve major increases in yield by continuously upgrading to the latest genetics; continued improvement in technology and favourable weather conditions.

Dr Erhard Briedenhann

Send us your contributions and suggestions to make *Oilseeds Focus* an enjoyable and valuable publication for the oilseeds industry. Contact Dr Briedenhann at erhardb@netactive.co.za for more information.

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217 Clifton Ave, Lyttelton, Centurion, RSA
Private Bag X2010, Lyttelton, 0140, RSA
Tel: +27 12 664 4793 • www.veeplaas.co.za

Chief editor: Lynette Louw
+27 84 580 5120 • lynette@veeplaas.co.za

Sub-editor: Chris Jooste
+27 12 664 4793 • chris@veeplaas.co.za

Design & layout: Annemie Visser
+27 12 664 4793 • annemie@veeplaas.co.za

Advertising
Monique van der Walt
+27 71 893 3731 • monique@veeplaas.co.za

Karin Changuion-Duffy
+27 82 376 6396 • karin@veeplaas.co.za

Susan Steyn
+27 82 657 1262 • susan@veeplaas.co.za

Esmarie Moodie
+27 76 330 0745 • esmarie@veeplaas.co.za

Accounts: Marné Anderson
+27 72 639 1805 • accounts@veeplaas.co.za

Subscriptions: Rochelle Mabebe
+27 74 153 8380 • rochelle@veeplaas.co.za

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+27 11 402 0571

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Published on behalf of:
Protein Research Foundation
PO Box 1564, Rivonia, 2128
Tel: 011 803 2579 • Fax 011 803 2287 / 086 634 8067
Enquiries: gkeun@proteinresearch.net