

Setting the stage for agricultural transformation

By Gerhard Keun, CEO, Oil and Protein Seeds Development Trust and Oilseeds Advisory Committee

During a national address to all South Africans that took place on 21 April last year, president Cyril Ramaphosa highlighted the topic of transformation, particularly agricultural transformation.

According to the president, transformation within the agricultural sector is necessary as it will be of benefit in the following ways:

- It will bring about a much-needed boost for South Africa's economy, with a specific focus on the country's rural areas.
- Previously disadvantaged South Africans will be uplifted by taking up roles as inclusive partners in the food supply chain.
- It will set the stage for an improved balance in the ownership and management aspect of the food supply chain.
- It will make a valuable contribution to the creation of job opportunities, which will subsequently lead to the much-needed growth of the economy.
- There will be an improvement in food security, especially for those who reside in vulnerable communities.

The various structures in the oilseeds industry have agreed that transformation in agriculture in South Africa is imperative for the future and growth of the agricultural industry. Supporting transformation is therefore just as important for the oilseeds industry.

Improved co-ordination is needed

There are quite a number of transformation initiatives that have been launched by associations, foundations, organisations, companies, and the

government in South Africa over the years. Unfortunately, none of these initiatives are as well co-ordinated as they should be, and although oilseeds form part of some of these projects, there is no specific emphasis on oilseeds such as sunflower, soya beans, groundnuts, and canola.

For several years, structures within the oilseeds industry have played a significant role in agricultural transformation by means of the provision of their respective constitutions and trust deeds. Since their inception in 1997, the Sunflower, Soybean and Soybean Food Forum, Groundnut Forum, Oilseeds Advisory Committee (OAC), and the Oil and Protein Seeds Development Trust (OPDT) have come to the agreement that transformation is vital.

Taking the lead

The challenge with co-ordinating initiatives, combined with the challenges the Grain Farmer Development Association (GFADA) experienced, gave the OAC the perfect opportunity to develop a transformation programme. Here, sunflower, soya bean, groundnuts, and canola take on the lead role.

In order to assist with the scope, focus, and envisaged outcomes of the programme, Optimal Agricultural Business Systems (OABS) was commissioned to conduct a study titled "Analysis to determine the scope of transformation projects funded in South Africa with respect to the production and processing of oilseeds". (Read more about OABS and their role in this issue of *Oilseeds Focus*.)

The oilseeds transformation programme will set the stage for improved co-ordination between existing projects, to initiate new projects, collaborate with other role-players and projects, and to improve the

effectiveness and efficiency of agricultural transformation efforts in South Africa.

Addressing the challenges

Training, provision of information, technology transfer, the funding of insurance, soil correction and seed, mentorship, upliftment, and socio-economic as well as enterprise development will be at the centre of the programme.

The five pillars of the transformation guidelines of the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC), namely ownership, enterprise and supplier development, skills development, management control, and socio-economic development will be addressed in the programme.

The focal point cannot simply be the commercialisation of producers alone. It needs to be much wider in order for upliftment, poverty, nutrition, and food security to be addressed. 🌱



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