

Welcome

Good morning
Dumela
Goeie more

Honourable Minister van Rensburg
Distinguish guests and colleagues

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this 44th SASAE Annual Conference held here in Langebaan, Western Cape. I am particularly pleased that we meet again in the Western Cape, for it was here 11 years ago in 2000 that SASAE last hosted the 34th SASAE Conference with the theme: “*Extension for the new millennium: The challenge of sustainability*”. I therefore take this opportunity, honourable Minister, on behalf of SASAE and its members to express my deepest gratitude to host us in your lovely province.

Amongst the 220 delegates that are attending this SASAE Conference there are various professionals and extensionists from abroad. A special SA welcome to our colleagues from United Kingdom, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Botswana, Nigeria, Mozambique, Swaziland, Mauritius and Lesotho. But also to our SASAE members from all over SA, a hearty welcome. I am indeed grateful for the many local delegates from the Western Cape that attends this event.

Hon Minister and distinguished guests, for us as the SASAE family, the Annual Conference is a very important occasion on the calendar. This is where local and international extensionists share knowledge and experiences. A conference of this nature is an ideal event to put our minds to work collectively on most severe challenges that face extension delivery in southern Africa and elsewhere.

The theme of the 44th SASAE Conference is “**The impact of climate change on extension delivery in South Africa**” What an appropriate theme at this point in time keeping in mind the challenges that agriculture faced during 2009/2010 due the food and energy crisis around the globe. We know how the monetary crisis also spilled over onto our shores and impacted on our economy. The food crisis has hit developing countries very hard, and has severely impact on any hope for Africa to meet the UN target of reducing the number of people suffering from hunger by half by 2015. The FAO estimate that an additional 100 million people in the world have been deprived access to adequate food in the past year, as a result of the food crisis, and the number of people estimated to be undernourished is over 1 billion. Very startling statistics indeed! In SA 14 million households are vulnerable to food insecurity and 2.5 million already are suffering from it.

Another factor that greatly affects the context and room to manoeuvre to deal with food and energy issues is **climate change**. This key international issue was placed at the top of the global development agenda and during the recent summit held in Copenhagen during December 2009, where G8 and G20 governments agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Agriculture is also held responsible for about a quarter of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions mainly from three sources: clearing of natural vegetation (carbon dioxide (CO₂)) in preparing for agriculture, nitrogen fertilizer use (nitrous oxide (N₂O)) and livestock production (methane (CH₄)).

Not coincidentally is the fact that this event is hosted in the Western Cape where the weather pattern has already become unpredictable, and increased intensity of drought and flood was recorded during these last couple of years. Our new farmers that enter agriculture are extremely vulnerable. Not only do they often not have enough information about climate change but also lack the necessary means (skills and investment capital) required to equip them for any future scenario.

In my view the successful management of change is primarily depending on a proper definition of what must change and a clear understanding thereof by those involved. During the following four days shining examples and experiences of change management will be shared and debated.

Honourable Minister Gerrit van Rensburg, Minister of the Department of Agriculture Western Cape, will inaugurate the Conference. This will be followed by a host of experts speakers from the University of Cape Town, financial institutions like ABSA, commodity organizations (like NWGA, Vinpro), private companies like Woolworths and Optimal Agricultural Business Systems and NGOs like Environmental Management Group who will share their expert knowledge and experience in this field. I am sure that we will benefit wisely from their presentations and my sincere gratitude, to our guest speakers for their willingness to make time available to address us during this Conference.

Tomorrow we will start with our thematic papers until 10h00, when we will break for an excursion to four development projects namely:

- Sand Project also known as SAND, which is a valuable source of knowledge for the potato industry in the Sandveld. Mr Human Kotze , Manager of this project will facilitate our visit.
- Welbeloon Boerdery Trust, Piketberg: this is an example of a LRAD project, which was initiated in 2002. (850 ha, Enterprises: sheep. cattle and irrigated lucerne.) Our host here will be Mr Willem Klaase, chairperson of the Trust.
- Gert Booysen Trust, Hopefield: 2.5 ha land reform project that was initiated in 2006. (Enterprises: pigs, vegetables and poultry.)
- Vredenburg Emerging Farmer project: Leasing 190 ha from Saladanah municipality. (Enterprises: sheep, cattle, poultry, goats, pigs)

Thursday is scheduled for the rest of the 26 thematic and non-thematic papers. According to our Programme Committee, for the first times in many years the number of thematic papers this year outscored the number of non-thematic papers. This is another clear indication of the appropriateness of the Conference theme.

Lastly, you will see that a poster session is scheduled for Thursday afternoon. This is a new endeavour that SASAE started during 2009, and this year 8 posters will be displayed. Please use this time effectively to visit these posters and engage with the authors. I also want to encourage our members, especially our new members and those hesitant to present papers, to make use of this opportunity on the Conference agenda. Currently 650 registered SASAE members belong to the Society; use this opportunity to share your experiences and research in the field with your fellow extensionists. A Training Manual (Booklet 7) on the planning and presentation of posters compiled by a team from SASAE under the auspices of Central Branch was distributed during 2009 to help you in this regard.

With these few words WELCOME and may every one of you enjoy the Conference as well as the friendliness and hospitality of SASAE.

Dr Joe Stevens
SASAE President