

Some of the delegates that attended the cultivar evaluation meeting, are: In front: Gerhard Engelbrecht (K2 Agri); Renier Boshoff (K2 Agri); Petru Fourie (Grain SA); Lebogang Jack (Dept Agriculture: North West); Eddie Goldschagg (SANSOR); Dr Toi Tsilo (ARC-Small Grain); and Wandile Ngcamphlala (Grain SA).

In the back: Prof Willem Boshoff (UFS); Cornel Bender (UFS); Dr Willem Otto (Sensako); Willem Botes (US); Stephan de Groot (Sensako); Gawie Kotzé (SAB Miller); Willem Kilian (ARC-Small Grain); and Dr Francois Koekemoer (Sensako)



Industry experts evaluate new cultivars

At the end of every season, everyone involved in the wheat industry meet to discuss cultivar data of the previous season. Newly released cultivars, of which at least two years of trial data are available and which would be commercially available to producers during 2018, are discussed.

Dr. Annelie Barnard

ARC-SMALL GRAIN, BETHLEHEM

Wheat production, especially under dryland production conditions in the Free State, has been under tremendous pressure over the past few years. However, wheat can still be a profitable crop if managed correctly. The correct cultivar choice remains one of the most important production decisions for any wheat producer.

There is currently a huge variety of cultivars, which all have excellent characteristics. Fortunately, it is not necessary for producers to do their own trials to get the required information. ARC-Small Grain is responsible for the planting of various cultivar evaluation trials in all the wheat production regions. This is done in order to objectively and scientifically evaluate all the recommended cultivars of all three wheat breeding companies with regard to yield potential, quality and adaptability. This programme, the only one of its kind in South Africa, is known as the National Cultivar Evaluation Program (NCEP). Three separate evaluation programmes exist, which individually evaluate specific cultivars in the three production regions.

Although ARC-Small Grain has the mandate to conduct the NCEP in South Africa, the inputs and co-operation of other institutions and role-players are of critical importance to successfully conduct this research. In this national endeavour the Department of Agriculture: Western Cape is tasked with the planting, maintenance and harvesting of certain trials in the Western Cape. Other institutions, such as the University of the Free State, Stellenbosch University and SA Barley Breeding Institute, also plays an important role in the gathering and presentation of additional information to the small grain industry.

At the end of every season, everyone involved in the wheat industry in South Africa, meet to discuss the data of the previous season. This group of expertise consist of representatives of all the seed companies, Grain SA, the universities of the

Free State and Stellenbosch, SANSOR, SAB Miller, the respective departments of agriculture and others. The aim of this meeting is to ensure that the trials were conducted on a scientific basis and that the results are presented in an accurate and objective way.

The latest cultivar evaluation meeting was held on 7 February 2018 at the premises of ARC-Small Grain, outside Bethlehem in the Free State. At this meeting newly released cultivars, of which at least two years of trial data are available and which would be commercially available to producers during 2018, were discussed and will be included in the annual Production Guidelines. Apart from cultivar recommendations, these guidelines also consist of information with regard to general agronomical practices, soil cultivation guidelines, plant nutrition, as well as the latest information on weed, insect and disease control.

Through funding by the Winter Cereal Trust the guidelines are made available free of charge to all wheat producers in South Africa. Production practices and cultivar recommendations vary from region to region and therefore two separate guidelines, one for the summer rainfall area, where both dryland and irrigation areas are discussed, as well as a separate guideline for the winter rainfall region, are published. The guidelines are available in Afrikaans and English. User friendly guidelines, which present the data in a practical way for new emerging commercial farmers, are available in English, Sotho and Xhosa.

The guidelines will be available from the second week in March. Please contact ARC-Small Grain at 058 3073400 to get hold of the guidelines or visit the webpage (www.arc.agric.za/arc-sgi) for the electronic edition.

All the information with regard to the performance of cultivars during the 2018 wheat season will be made available to wheat producers through various popular publications. ↓