



History of Agricultural Engineering

In October 1995, the research component of the Chief Directorate was transferred to the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) and became the ARC-Institute for Agricultural Engineering [ARC-IAE] with the aim to promote agricultural engineering technology in support of the agricultural sector as well as to provide technical support to the National and Provincial Departments of Agriculture.

Hardly any agricultural activity is undertaken without equipment, systems or facilities supported by engineering technology. The ARC-Institute for Agricultural Engineering is responsible for research, development and implementation of engineering technology, including the evaluation and testing of equipment and systems specifically for southern African conditions, as well as the transfer of this technology.

The Institute originated in 1961 as the Division for Agricultural Engineering within the Department of Agriculture and was originally responsible for the testing of mechanisation implements. These activities extended to include the testing of nearly all equipment used in agriculture, including irrigation equipment and eventually also included research and development of equipment, methodologies, processes and standards within all the facets of agricultural engineering. During the early 1980s it pioneered the development of sunflower oil as an alternative for diesel fuel.

The Organisation grew to the Chief Directorate: Agricultural Engineering and Water Supply within the Department of Agriculture. It was responsible for research and technical services to the agricultural sector, including soil conservation, drilling services, agricultural mechanisation, farm buildings, animal housing and handling facilities, grain silos and irrigation.

The compilation of feasibility studies, the planning, design and the approval of loans and subsidies for irrigation works became a major activity.