



Crop forecasts

**Get it right in 2006-
everyone stands to gain**



From 2 to 17 February 2006, field workers representing the Crop Estimates Committee will visit more than 2 000 farmers in the Gauteng, Free State, Mpumalanga and the North West Provinces. They will obtain information about the number of hectares planted to summer grains and the expected crop yields.

Why are crop forecasts done?

The objective of crop forecasts is to provide an early indication of the expected yields of specific crops. This information is of critical importance to farmers and other role-players in the grain industry in order to plan for the trading, transport, storage and marketing of the crop. The Crop Estimates Committee is a neutral source that tries to provide accurate and timely information to the benefit of all role-players. A reliable crop estimate ensures that buyers and sellers have equal bargaining powers and eliminates any unfair advantage.

How are crop forecasts done?

The latest technology used in South Africa's crop forecasts measures up to the best in the world. In addition to information from farmers, the committee also uses geographic information systems, global positioning systems, satellite imagery and internet databases. Even microlight aircraft are involved in some areas. Information from other organisations, such as the nine provincial agricultural departments, the Chamber of Milling and grain silo owners, contributes to the final crop estimates.

Who does crop forecasting?

Several organisations supply information to the Crop Estimates Committee on a monthly basis. A consortium, led by the Agricultural Research Council, is responsible for the project. Role-players such as Grain SA, the Chamber of Milling and several producer organisations, support the project.

Most of the fieldworkers are themselves actively involved in farming. They are well trained and will be clearly identifiable by a blue and brown cap bearing the words "crop forecasting". They will also carry an identity card with their photo and the registration number of their vehicle.

Who will be visited?

The 2 250 farmers who will be visited in the four provinces constitute a sample that has been selected randomly. All information is treated as 100% confidential and will only be used for the purpose of crop estimates.

Without accurate and reliable information from farmers, crop forecasts cannot be done! The crop estimates project has been in operation for the past five years and enjoys the collaboration and support of 96% of South Africa's farmers.
Thank you very much!

Where can I obtain further information?

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