



## DOUBLED EFFORTS DURING 2011

The New Year has started with a series of visits to the Provinces, heavy rains throughout the country as well as an exciting new look for our newsletter. Whilst last year was spent on the final implementation of Extension Suite Online in all provinces, our activities during 2011 will be focussed on increased user involvement, enhancing the user experience and to make sure that access to the system is improved and simplified. Our efforts in the provinces will be doubled to advise and assist with the registration and training of users and our Information Centre has been revamped over the Christmas holidays to accommodate queries and to provide assistance of a technical production related nature to the ever growing number of ESO users.

*Dr Roelof de Villiers*

### QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"It is not enough to take steps which may some day lead to a goal; each step must be itself a goal and a step likewise."  
*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*



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## BEHIND REGIONAL DATA

### THE REGIONAL DATA SECTION

The Regional Data section in ESO provides the user with information regarding infrastructure and the natural environment for a specific locality. Infrastructure information (cooperatives, silos, abattoirs etc.) is provided for a local municipal area or within a radius of a farm or GPS location. There are however some exceptions where the national list of information is provided (although a radius is specified) – these include Breeder's Societies, Fresh Produce Markets, Financial Institutions, Educational Institutions and Organised Agriculture. Environmental (soil potential, vegetation type, climate and water) information is however only provided for a specific farm or GPS location. The environmental data gives the user an indication of the agricultural potential of a specific area. It is however crucial to keep in mind that this information can only serve as an indicator of agricultural potential and farm recommendations/planning must be supported with on-farm surveys.

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

In order for the infrastructure and environmental data to be selected for a specific local municipality, farm or GPS location it must form part of a Geographic Information System (GIS) database and is therefore geo-referenced. It is very important for all infrastructure data to include very accurate location (latitude and longitude) information. This information is not only important for searching within a local municipality, farm or GPS point but also when a person wants to navigate (using a GPS) to the specific infrastructure feature – here a few hundred meters can make a big difference. Although the user can not see the GIS process in action the computer generates the selected infrastructure points and the

environmental maps in space and when the user clicks the search button extracts the information for the selected area. It might be that some users ignore the option to include a radius in the search – this is very important when searching for infrastructure – if the radius is too small the user may end up with no infrastructure information.

### INFRASTRUCTURE DATA AND REQUIREMENTS

Access to infrastructure data must be one of the most relevant functions within ESO. As stated in the previous section the information that is captured in the infrastructure database will determine how useful the extracted information would be to the user. As in the case of location data the contact details and addresses are just as important. Imagine the frustration if a veterinarian is displayed without any contact details or address information (for those without a GPS). The requirements for infrastructure data to be included in ESO can be obtained from the support team.

### FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Due to the dynamic nature of ESO the infrastructure and environmental data will be updated on a regular basis. Administrative boundaries have already been updated and the farm database (parent farms) has been replaced with the latest farm subdivision database. Databases to be upgraded in the near future include vegetation (VegMap2006), soil (Land capability), water (ground water harvest potential and quality) and climate (rainfall – monthly long-term average).

*Dirk Pretorius*

### 3G Connectivity

To be able to log on to Extension Suite Online, you will require access to the internet. There are multiple means of obtaining access to the internet, hence access to ESO. One of the fastest growing means to internet access is through 3G technology. 3G technology allows anybody with a 3G enabled device to access the internet from almost anywhere in South Africa. 3G technology has been improved



immensely over the last couple of years, but there are still a lot of unknown factors affecting its market spread. 3G coverage is one of those unknowns. When using 3G, the speed provided by the device is relative to the strength of the signal received. That means, the weaker your 3G signal, the slower your download speed will be and the stronger the 3G signal, the faster. Accessing ESO through 3G could be a pleasurable experience, depending on your location.

## TOP EXTENSION SUITE ONLINE USER FOR DECEMBER 2010

By monitoring daily utilisation of all users in the nine provinces it is possible to select the country's top user monthly and ultimately the national winner (for the Grand Prize!) on an annual basis.

**Congratulations!!!** [Vukile Samuel Gqodwana \(Eastern Cape\)](#), you are South Africa's top ESO user for December 2010. Well done. Runner up: [Lesego Phakedi \(Gauteng\)](#)



Vukile Gqodwana

**What do you use ESO for the most?**

To get necessary information that will help me advise my farmers according to their needs.

**How does ESO influence your relationship with farmers or clients?**

Extension Suite Online has enhanced my relationship with farmers immensely, due to the load of information that is available.

**What section or module in ESO do you use the most?**

I mostly make use of the Animal Production module to view the management of livestock.

**What have you learned from ESO?**

Searching through Extension Suite Online is a quick process and the information provided is relevant and useful.

**Do you have any tips to other users regarding Extension Suite Online?**

Although I am a new user to Extension Suite Online, I would advise all of my colleagues to familiarise themselves with Extension Suite Online by making use of it every day.

**How would you describe Extension Suite Online as an Extension tool?**

Extension Suite Online is a brilliant source of information to an extension officer.

**Does ESO really make the execution of your duties easier?**

My duties have become easier in the sense that I have relevant information immediately at hand, with which to assist and advise a farmer.

During January, we had the opportunity to ask Vukile Samuel Gqodwana a few questions on why and how he uses Extension Suite Online.

**What is your responsibility at the department?**

I train emerging farmers and supply an extension advisory service to these farmers.

**How long have you been working for the department?**

I have been at the department for 3 years, and before starting at the department I was part of a service provider for training farmers.

**How often do you make use of ESO?**

I use Extension Suite Online every day, especially while I am at the office to do research on information so that I can advise a farmer accordingly.

## Utilisation Reports

Despite December being the festive and holiday month throughout the world, the December provincial utilisation of ESO was brisk. It should be taken into account that the chain reaction that starts with farmers and most of their farming activities slowing down continues upward to those who serve them.

As far as 2011 is concerned, focus will continue on the challenges we face, and all the provincial departments involved, together with Manstrat Agricultural Intelligence Solutions, will endeavour to eventuate the full utilisation of the best available Extension Tool in Africa through:

- The provision of computer and communication hardware;
- The provision of proper official e-mail addresses to all public Extensionists; and
- Ensuring that officers activate their accounts and use the system.

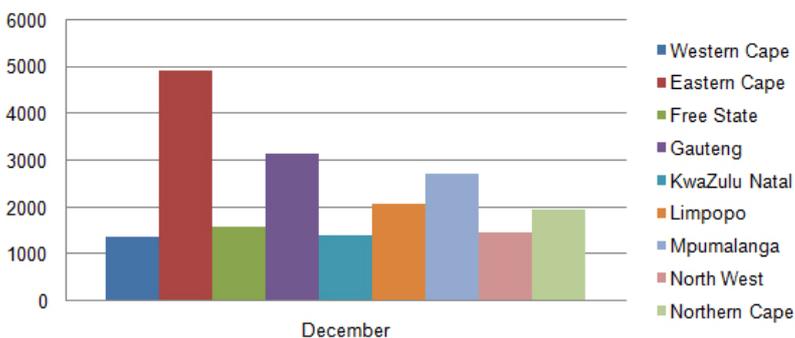
*Piet van Zyl*

## Manstrat

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### PROVINCIAL TOP USAGE



PROVINCE	TOP USER IN PROVINCE
Eastern Cape	Vukile Samuel Gqodwana
Gauteng	Lesego Phakedi
Mpumalanga	Anonymous user
Limpopo	Jabu Petunia Baloyi
Northern Cape	George du Preez
Free State	Irene Moilola
KwaZulu Natal	Buyisile Zungu
North West	Andrew Moletsane
Western Cape	Dudley Adolph