

PRESS RELEASE

SA an importer of grain this year, GOSA symposium hears

The agricultural sector is obliged to promote food safety and security and we should take a stand regarding events that can affect these negatively, for example indiscriminate land reform and the use of arable agricultural land for mining activities.

In the meantime the extreme drought conditions that were common in summer grain areas over the past weeks have caused the current maize crop to be possibly even smaller than the estimated 9,6 million tons.

“There has not been a drought like the one this year for the past 20 years since 1994. We in agriculture should ensure that the government receives the right guidance in this regard through the example we as an agricultural institution set,” said Ms Annatjie Loio, president of the Grain Handling Organisation of Southern Africa (GOSA), at the opening of their 2015 symposium in Boksburg on 18 and 19 March.

“In view of the domestic consumption of approximately 9 million tons, transfer stock of 1,5 million tons and a shrinking maize crop due to the drought, South Africa will no doubt be an importer of grain this year,” Loio said. The first shipment of yellow maize is expected in the Cape Town harbour soon, while yellow-maize imports via the Port Elizabeth and Durban harbours have already been scheduled.

“The market will only know after the harvest is in what the real impact of the drought is,” she said, and added that, in addition to the drought, people involved in and with the grain industry are nervous about politics and the economy. The speakers at the symposium were carefully selected against this background to ensure that the content of the programme was relevant.

A complete political, economic and media perspective of global and local conditions in particular was presented by the various speakers. They were of the opinion that the lack of strong political leadership, the ANC’s ideological confusion and shaky policy, and the chaos in government-controlled organisations like Eskom do not point to South Africa being a failed state, but a structure that is starting to burn. In a political climate that was described as volatile, uncertain, contradicting and ambiguous, the speakers unanimously expressed their positive belief in the country and the potential of the agricultural sector. Despite the uncertainty regarding land reform and the current drought, they pleaded for continued discussions and interaction with the government.

The speakers were Dawie Roodt (Efficient Group), Theo Vorster (Galileo Capital), Tim du Plessis (former newspaper editor and head of kykNet news) and Theo Venter (NWU Business School). On a technical note Mr Palle Dybdal of Cimbria Unigrain in Denmark provided information on new-generation, environment-friendly grain dryers, while Mrs Alta Swanepoel, a legal expert, shed light on new road traffic legislation on the overloading of

vehicles. Mr Jaco Minnaar, a producer and executive member of Grain SA, placed the contribution by this organisation to the sustainable socio-economic production of grains in perspective. One of South Africa's top adventurers and inspiring speakers, Mr Peter van Kets, challenged congress attendees to set personal objectives, persevere and leave a legacy behind.

The symposium was attended by almost 200 delegates from grain handlers like Afgri, BKB, Kaap Agri, NTK, NWK, Overberg Agri, OVK, Senwes and Suidwes, as well as the processing and distribution industries, financiers, input providers and statutory role players. Loio said that the good annual attendance figures and rising membership of the organisation were a sign of the need in the grain industry for an independent organisation like GOSA, which facilitates the communication of industry-specific information.

At the annual general meeting GOSA's council was unanimously re-elected and Mr Gideon Ralepeli of Senwes Grainlink was elected as an additional member. In addition to Mr Ralepeli, the council comprises Annatjie Loio of Unitrade (president), Esli Rall of RMB (vice president), Awie Kriel of Kaap Agri, Pieter Malan of Senwes Grainlink, Ferdinand Meyer of Ronin GMS, Marco Pretorius of Afgri, Hein Rehr of National Fumigants and Lukas Swarts of Ensign Shipping.

Photo caption (GOSA 1):

According to Annatjie Loio, president of GOSA (second from the left), the speakers at the 2015 symposium succeeded in addressing exactly the right points. With her are some of the speakers (from the left): Messrs Dawie Roodt (Efficient Group), Theo Vorster (Galileo Capital) and Theo Venter (NWU Business School).

Photo caption (GOSA 2):

The most recent addition to the GOSA council is Mr Gideon Ralepeli of Senwes Grainlink.

ENDS.

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