



SOUTH AFRICAN SUGAR TECHNOLOGISTS' ASSOCIATION

CELEBRATING A CENTURY OF SCIENTIFIC EXCHANGE

1926 – 2026



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PURPOSE

SASTA's Constitution amply articulates its purpose and indicates that the organisation:

promotes the interchange of scientific knowledge of, and the discussion and investigation of technical problems related to, the production and processing of sugarcane products;

promotes the improvement in the accuracy and rational standardisation of methods of factory chemical control and cane testing (including publishing the SASA Council-approved Official Methods);

encourages and assists in the improvement of the technical knowledge of persons engaged in the South African sugar industry;

stores a vast, accessible repository of literature including Congress proceedings;

encourages research into all aspects of sugarcane agriculture and sugar milling practice, and in such ancillary fields as the SASTA Council may consider fit;

aligns all the afore-mentioned activities as far as is reasonably practicable with the governance standards specified in the King V Report on Corporate Governance 2025, or any update thereof, and achieving clean audit reports.

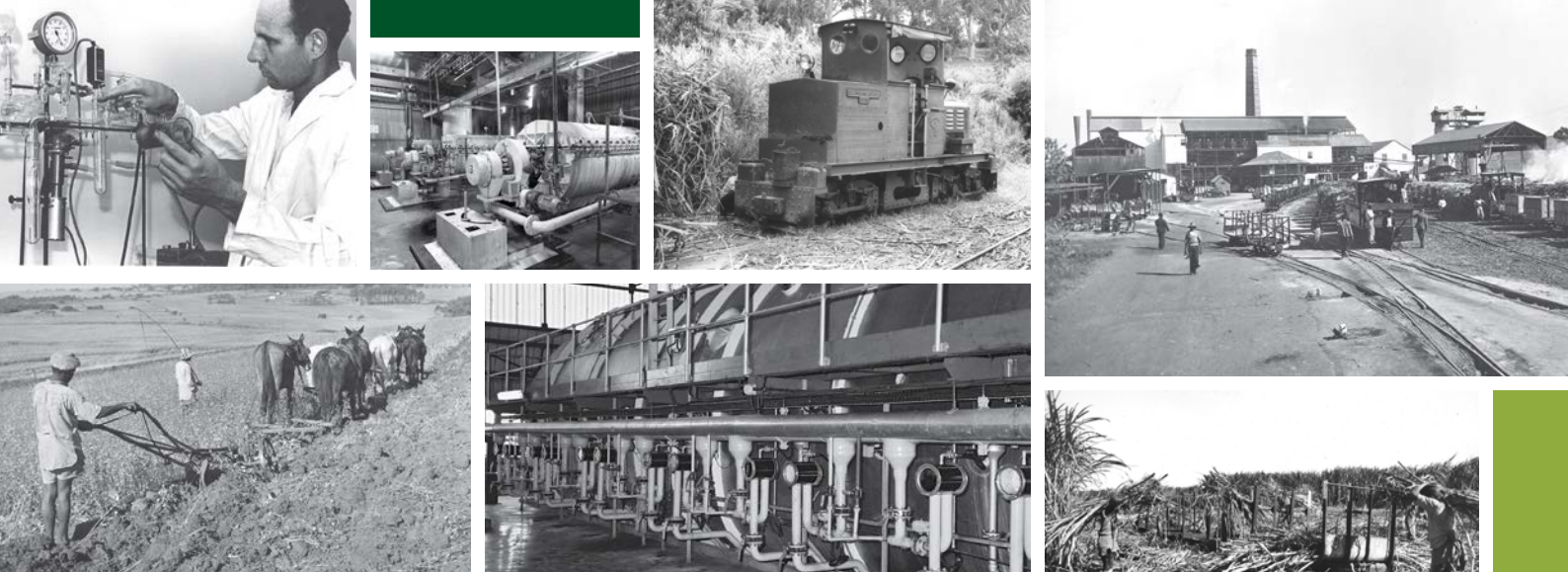


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THE ORIGINS OF SASTA

Following the establishment of the first extensive sugarcane plantations on the north coast of what is now known as KwaZulu-Natal in the mid-1800s, and the subsequent growth of the sugar industry in South Africa, various structures were established to manage and co-ordinate industry activities.

THE ORIGINS OF SASTA

Following the establishment of the first extensive sugarcane plantations on the north coast of what is now known as KwaZulu-Natal in the mid-1800s, and the subsequent growth of the sugar industry in South Africa, various structures were established to manage and co-ordinate industry activities.

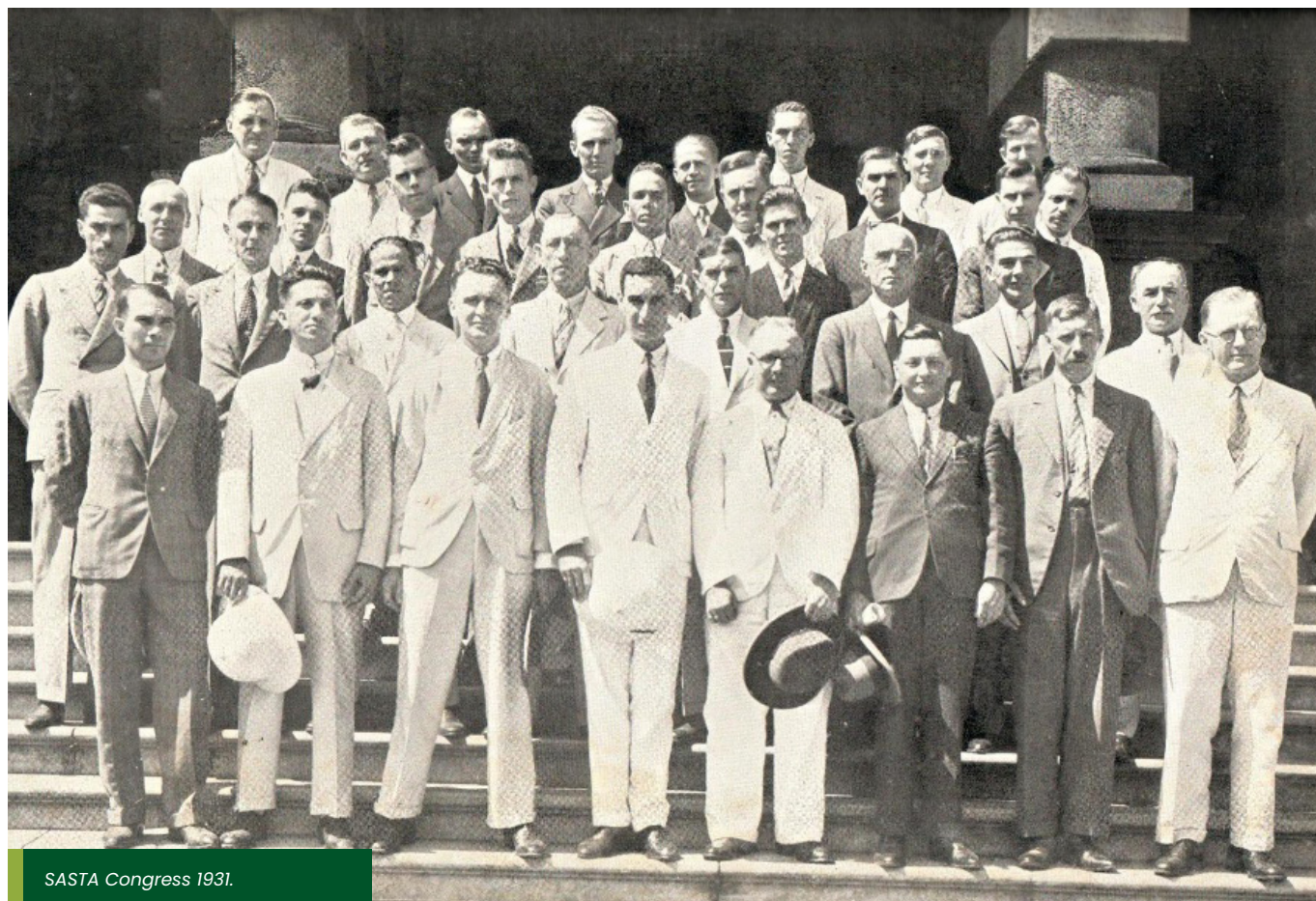
PRE-SASTA CONGRESSES

In 1923, a combined sugar industry Congress and Agricultural and Engineering Suppliers Exhibition, known as 'Sugar Week', was held under the auspices of the South African Sugar Association (SASA). It was the first event of its kind, attended by growers, mill owners and chemists.

The original motivation for having such a congress was to expose the broader public to the valuable work being done by SASA in addressing sugar industry issues. It was, however, overshadowed by the constant tensions between millers and growers which detracted from the overall purpose of SASA. Rather, the congress should have provided a forum for discussing ways to improve methods and practices in the field and the mill, aimed towards making the sugar industry more profitable for all stakeholders and enhancing co-operation between the millers and growers.

Seventeen papers were presented at this first congress with most being of an agricultural nature with topics related to pests and diseases, agronomic practices including fertilisation and irrigation, and cane transportation to the mills.

THE ORIGINS OF SASTA



SASTA Congress 1931.

In 1924, due to the success of the first 1923 Congress, a decision was made that it would become a permanent annual event. The paper topics presented at the 1924 Congress were more diverse and represented all sectors of the industry.

In 1925, during the third Annual Congress of SASTA, Mr DL Patrick, in response to the guest address by Mr H. Wallace Souter (Chairman of Natal Estates, Ltd), made a suggestion that there should be a technical body of some kind composed of engineers, factory staff, chemists, etc. who would be able to discuss problems, share information and assist each other, as well as look towards developing more uniform methods so as to reduce costs.

Subsequently, the Natal Sugar Technologists' Association was formed as a sub-committee of SASTA. This sub-committee presented three papers at the fourth Annual Congress of the SA Sugar Association in 1926. All were 'factory' topics. The initial focus of this sub-committee was to collect and collate information regarding existing practices in various factories with

a view to compiling standard methods that would be adopted across all factories. Hence the primary objective of this sugar technologists' collective was to deal with the science of the manufacturing part of the industry.

The Natal Sugar Technologists' Association was the precursor to the South African Sugar Technologists' Association (SASTA).

A small group aspired to emulate the Sugar Technologists' Association in Hawaii (the best-known sugar association at the time) that aimed to improve the interchange of opinions and information regarding the technical practices and results in sugar manufacturing with favourable consequences to all concerned. The principal function of SASTA was to collect and publish information to demonstrate methodological achievements and highlight areas for improvement, both in the field and the factory, and to devise and recommend ways of avoiding waste and loss in the industry.

FIRST SASTA CONGRESS

In 1927, two congresses were held. The first Congress of the South African Sugar Technologists' Association (SASTA) was held on 8 and 9 March and the fifth Annual Congress of the SA Sugar Association from 17–20 May. Seven papers were presented at the SASTA Congress and included topics focused on the standardisation of chemical control and factory operations such as boiler house efficiency and clarification. At the SASTA Congress on the other hand, papers only dealt with agricultural topics. During the SASTA Congress, a Mr Schwikkard noted that perhaps SASTA (the sub-committee) should extend its scope to take on the more 'field-based' topics (not just manufacturing which was the current focus) and include items such as fertilisers. While the existing SASTA membership was mostly made up of chemists and engineers, it was agreed that the membership be extended to planters who were interested in the work being done by SASTA.

The second SASTA Congress in 1928 still focused on manufacturing-themed papers only, but the third congress in 1929 saw both Agriculture and Factory papers being combined for the first time and SASTA Congresses were replaced by the SASTA Congress from then onwards.

STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS

SASTA was initially made up of 10 technical subcommittees, each dealing with a specific topic/area. Each sub-committee would prepare one or more papers on their work done over the past year; these included standardisation of chemical control; steam balance and boiler house efficiency; handling of cane from field to mill-yard; clarification and filtration; manufacturing machinery; utilisation and disposal of waste and by-products of sugar factories;

determination of fibre in cane; irrigation and drainage; training of apprentices for sugar houses; and labour-saving devices – both agricultural and manufacturing.

In 1929 the registration and record of sugar chemists within the association was proposed. The idea was to have a standard of reference for all chemists providing advice to the sugar industry. Registration was obtained either through a recognised degree or diploma or long-service in the sugar industry.

INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING

SASTA was first represented at the congress of the International Society of Sugar Cane Technologists (ISSCT) in 1932, held at San Juan, Puerto Rico. Personal contacts were established with sugar personalities from all over the world.

With the original mandate of SASTA to gradually build up a research consciousness in both miller and planter, and to ensure the future development of the sugar industry, it has provided the platform from its inception for the interchange of scientific knowledge of sugar and sugarcane production in South Africa, uniting research to improve technologies and processes.



Since its inception, SASTA has provided the platform for the interchange of scientific knowledge of sugar and sugarcane production in South Africa, uniting research to improve technologies and processes.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF SASTA

For a century, SASTA has stood as a beacon of knowledge and progress, serving as a platform for sharing science, research and technology with the South African sugar industry. As we mark this remarkable milestone, we celebrate not only the technologies that have shaped our sugarcane industry, but also the people whose passion, dedication, and vision have carried SASTA through generations.



Dr Muhammad Kadwa.

Established in 1926, SASTA operates as a non-profit technical society under the aegis of the South African Sugar Association. SASTA's Council and its committees are fully comprised of dedicated members that voluntarily sacrifice their time and expertise in managing the association's affairs.

SASTA's affiliation with the International Society of Sugar Cane Technologists (ISSCT) provided South African technologists with a global platform for sharing their significant contributions to sugar industry progress, and fostered relationships with technologists across the world. Founded in 1924, the ISSCT is the premier global organisation for sugarcane scientists, technicians, and industry professionals, and boasts membership from over 50 countries. Over the years, SASTA members have won multiple ISSCT Congress awards, and many South African contributors have been conferred with Honorary ISSCT membership for their contributions to worldclass and pioneering research and technology.

Over the past 100 years, SASTA has grown from its early beginnings into a respected and enduring association, in both the domestic and international arenas reporting on innovations in crop and factory modelling, breakthroughs in biotechnology, as well as advanced engineering methods, amongst many others. This, despite the fact that the South African sugar industry contributes less than 1% to global sugar production. Within the changing landscape of the industry and the evolution of technologies, the organisation has remained steadfast in its purpose: to inspire curiosity, foster collaboration, and create opportunities for learning and growth. Each decade has added a new chapter to this story — one defined by innovation, resilience, and a collective belief in the power of networking through science, engineering, economics, research and education, all of which have contributed towards shaping the industry.

This centenary is more than a celebration of longevity and technology. It is a tribute to the members, leaders, volunteers and communities who have contributed to SASTA's journey. It is through their efforts that SASTA has built an enduring legacy of impact that will continue to influence our industry in years to come.

As we look back with pride, we also look ahead with purpose. The future of SASTA is rooted in the same values that inspired its founding: a dedication to knowledge, discovery, and meaningful contribution to the South African sugar industry. SASTA's relevance remains as strong as ever, notwithstanding the well-established, and the many new and significant challenges that grip the local industry. The association will continue to create the space for open and honest conversations and press for enhanced alignment across industry sectors.

We begin our next chapter with optimism, ambition, and a renewed commitment to excellence.

We look forward to the next century that will bring new opportunities to expand our reach, embrace innovation, and continue to support those who are passionate about science, engineering, and technological advancement. Key topics that are likely

to dominate the next century include sugarcane product diversification, sustainability, digital agriculture and Industry 4.0 smart dashboards, AI-driven process optimisation, as well as the move towards enhanced integrated biorefineries.

This brochure captures a glimpse of SASTA's remarkable journey — honouring the past, celebrating the present, and embracing the future. It provides fascinating insights into the significant innovations that have shaped our industry in both field and factory.

Together, we commemorate 100 years of achievement and begin the next chapter with optimism, ambition, and a renewed commitment to excellence. Here's to a century of impact — and to the many more milestones still to come.





SASTA CONGRESSES 1927–2026

From its inception, SASTA was identified as the organ for exchange of technological advances for the sugar industry, and the most effective and constructive way to achieve this was through an annual congress. The platform encouraged discussion amongst growers and millers and promoted dialogue on sugar industry affairs. It also enabled, since the first congress, collation of all technical papers and presentations into annual proceedings, providing an enduring record of all SASTA congresses which are now available on the website.

THE EARLY YEARS

Following SASTA's founding in 1926, the first congress was held in 1927 in the SASA Boardroom (in Nicol's Court, Durban). Since then, the congress has evolved into the remarkable event that it has become today. Gradually it expanded and, in 1940, the opening ceremony of the SASTA Congress was held at the Kenilworth Cinema Lounge in Durban. Thereafter the event was hosted for many years at the industry's agricultural research facility, the South African Sugar Experiment Station (SASEX) in Mount Edgecombe.

Over the following decades there was a recurring pattern: congress was held in two venues over three days (Table 1); the opening of congress and day one in a larger venue, and days two and three at a second venue more suited to audio-visual presentations and technological exchanges.

In days gone by, the congress was a formal affair. Gentlemen dressed in suits and ties and ladies (accompanying spouses) in formal dresses. In those early days, there was an authors' lunch for presenters (all of whom were male) and a ladies'

lunch for accompanying spouses. Protocols only changed in the late 1980s when, after her inaugural presentation, an irate female SASRI scientist firmly explained that she was indeed an author upon being

stopped at the door of the authors' lunch venue and redirected to the ladies' lunch. Since those early days, SASTA's delegates and authors have become equally represented by both men and women.

BIGGER AND BETTER

After the Durban International Convention Centre (ICC) opened its doors in 1997, SASTA hosted its 72nd Congress there in 1998: this venue enabled consideration of hosting a sugar technology exhibition, and the first one held in 2007 was the beginning of a tradition that has become an integral part of congress. The exhibitions have enabled SASTA to manage delegate registration costs and, at the same time, facilitate exchange amongst exhibitors, sponsors, technologists and stakeholders operating within the South African and international sugar industries.

It was the organisation and planning for hosting the XXVI congress for the International Society of Sugar Cane Technologists (ISSCT) in 2007 that prompted the engagement of a professional conference organising (PCO) company. Held in place of the annual SASTA congress, it marked the second time that South Africa had hosted this international body, the first being in 1974. To date, SASTA has worked with two conference organisers, Conference Company (2005–2014) and Turners Conferences (2015–present).

Although the SASTA Congress is a local conference aimed primarily at role players in the South African sugar industry, it has attracted a growing number of

international delegates. Over the last few years, there has been representation from at least 20 countries at SASTA Congresses. Eswatini and Zimbabwe, due to their proximity to South Africa, have supported congress with the largest contingent of delegates and, in 2025, 50 delegates from Eswatini were in attendance.

Attendance at the SASTA Congress has grown steadily over the past 25 years and, while there have been ups and downs, it reached a high of 667 delegates in 2024. Consistently held every year with the exception of 2007, due to SASTA's involvement in the ISSCT, and 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic when government regulations prohibited the in-person gathering of large crowds of people, the association has sustained its presence – even hosting its first virtual congress in 2021 with 428 registered delegates, and 346 delegates attending online over the three days. It is notable that SASTA Congresses were even held during the second world war (1939–1945)!

The feat of hosting 98 congresses since 1927 is testament to the commitment of past and present members of SASTA Council, Congress Organising Committees and the South African sugar industry. This centenary year of SASTA (the organisation) would also have showcased the 100th Congress, were it not for the two missed congresses (in 2007 and 2020).



SASTA CONGRESSES 1927–2026

A HISTORY OF SASTA CONGRESSES

Congress Number	Year	Date	Venue
1	1927	March 8–9	SASA Boardroom, Nicol's Court, Durban
2	1928	March 20–21	King's Hall, Aliwal Street, Durban
3	1929	March 26–27	Chamber of Commerce, Salisbury House, Smith Street, Durban
4	1930	April 15–17	
5	1931	March 24–26	
6	1932	March 22–24	
7	1933	March 28–30	
8	1934	March 20–23	Kenilworth Tea Rooms, Ocean Beach, Durban
9	1935	April 9–12	
10	1936	March 24–27	
11	1937	April 6–9	
12	1938	April 4–7	
13	1939	April 11–14	Kenilworth Cinema Lounge, Ocean Beach, Durban & SASEX
14	1940	April 2–4	
15	1941	April 8–10	
16	1942	April 21–23	SASA Boardroom, Stability Buildings, Smith Street, Durban
17	1943	April 20–21	
18	1944	April 25–26	Chamber of Commerce, South British Buildings, Field Street, Durban
19	1945	April 17–19	Chamber of Commerce, South British Buildings, Field Street, Durban & South African Sugar Experiment Station (SASEX), Mount Edgecombe
20	1946	April 30–May 2	
21	1947	April 15–18	Shakespeare Club (Kenilworth Tea Rooms) & SASEX
22	1948	April 13–17	
23	1949	April 5–8	
24	1950	April 3–6	
25	1951	April 10–13	Memorable Order of Tin Hats (MOTH) Centre, Old Fort Road, Durban & SASEX
26	1952	Feb 19–22	
27	1953	March 17–20	
28	1954	Mar 29–Apr 2	
29	1955	Mar 28–Apr 1	
30	1956	April 9–13	
31	1957	March 25–29	MOTH Centre, Old Fort Road, Durban & Hotel Edward
32	1958	April 14–18	
33	1959	March 17–20	MOTH Centre, Old Fort Road, Durban & Shell House, Durban Esplanade
34	1960	Mar 28–Apr 1	
35	1961	April 17–21	MOTH Centre, Shell Cinema & SASEX
36	1962	April 9–13	SASEX
37	1963	April 1–5	
38	1964	April 13–17	
39	1965	March 8–12	
40	1966	March 21–25	
41	1967	April 10–14	

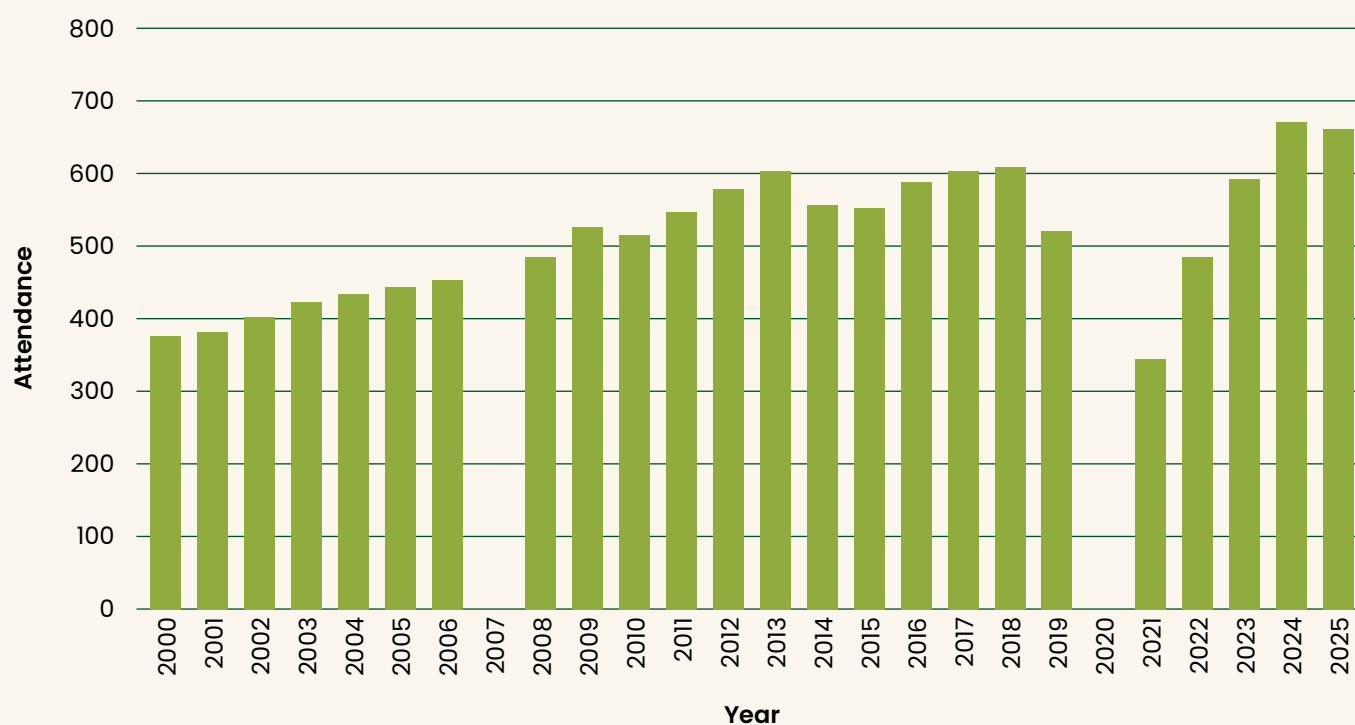
SASTA CONGRESSES 1927–2026

Congress Number	Year	Date	Venue
42	1968	April 22–26	SASEX
43	1969	June 2–6	
44	1970	June 15–19	
45	1971	June 7–11	
46	1972	June 5–9	
47	1973	June 4–8	
48	1974	April 1–3	Elangeni Hotel, Marine Parade, Durban & SASEX
49	1975	Jun 30–Jul 4	Hulett's Country Club & SASEX
50	1976	June 14–18	SASTA GOLDEN JUBILEE. Elangeni Hotel, Marine Parade, Durban
51	1977	June 13–17	SASEX
52	1978	June 5–9	
53	1979	June 4–8	Royal Hotel, Smith Street, Durban & SASEX
54	1980	June 9–13	
55	1981	June 8–12	
56	1982	June 7–11	
57	1983	June 6–9	
58	1984	June 25–28	
59	1985	June 17–21	
60	1986	June 16–19	
61	1987	June 22–25	
62	1988	June 6–9	
63	1989	June 5–8	
64	1990	June 11–14	
65	1991	June 10–12	Marine Parade Holiday Inn, Durban & SASEX
66	1992	June 8–11	Durban & SASEX
67	1993	June 7–10	
68	1994	June 6–9	
69	1995	June 5–8	Royal Hotel & Mount Edgecombe Country Club & SASEX
70	1996	June 3–6	
71	1997	June 2–4	Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, Mount Edgecombe Country Club & SASEX
72	1998	June 1–3	International Convention Centre (ICC), Ordnance Road, Durban
73	1999	Aug 2–4	University of Natal, Durban
74	2000	Aug 1–3	
75	2001	Jul 31–Aug 3	
76	2002	Jul 30–Aug 2	Kwa-Shukela, Mount Edgecombe
77	2003	Aug 19–22	Elangeni Hotel, Marine Parade, Durban & Kwa-Shukela
78	2004	July 27–30	Elangeni Hotel & Oyster Box & Kwa-Shukela
79	2005	July 19–22	Hellenic Convention Centre & Mount Edgecombe Country Club & Kwa-Shukela
80	2006	July 18–20	ICC, Ordnance Road, Durban
–	2007	–	No SASTA Congress convened due to South Africa hosting XXVI ISSCT

SASTA CONGRESSES 1927–2026

Congress Number	Year	Date	Venue
81	2008	July 29–31	ICC, Stalwart Simelane Road, Durban
82	2009	Aug 26–28	
83	2010	Aug 25–27	
84	2011	Aug 17–19	
85	2012	Aug 15–17	
86	2013	Aug 6–8	
87	2014	Aug 20–22	Royal Agricultural Showgrounds, Pietermaritzburg
88	2015	Aug 18–20	ICC, Stalwart Simelane Street, Durban
89	2016	Aug 16–18	
90	2017	Aug 15–17	
91	2018	Aug 14–16	
92	2019	Aug 20–22	
-	2020	-	SASTA Congress cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic
93	2021	Aug 17–19	Virtual SASTA Congress held due to COVID-19 pandemic
94	2022	Aug 16–18	ICC, Stalwart Simelane Street, Durban
95	2023	Aug 15–17	
96	2024	Aug 13–15	
97	2025	Aug 12–14	
98	2026	Aug 18–20	Olive Convention Centre, Somtseu Road, Durban

SASTA CONGRESS ATTENDANCE FROM 2000 TO 2025



AGRICULTURE HIGHLIGHTS



It is fascinating to see that some of the key issues presented in the first few congresses in the early 1920s are still highly topical and relevant today. For example, soil health and nutrient management, sugarcane pests and diseases, irrigation, mechanisation, and varieties are still at the forefront of discussions. Significant research and technology developments reported on at SASTA congresses for the benefit of all industry stakeholders have included the following:

ENTOMOLOGY

From locusts in the 1930s, green leaf sucker in the 1960s, through to the emergence of thrips, yellow sugarcane aphid and longhorn beetle this century, their incidence and research findings have been reported at SASTA. Investigations into eldana have prevailed as a major topic since 1945, and included its biology, the insecticides to control the pest, biological control, resistance screening, sterile insect technique, genetic modification (GM) of the sugarcane plant, interactions with *Fusarium spp.* and integrated pest management strategies.



NUTRITION AND SOIL HEALTH

Early SASTA papers highlighted the pioneering trials with nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, and other nutrients, establishing systematic nutrient management beyond reliance on organic manures. In the 1960s, the Fertiliser Advisory Service at SASRI advanced soil analysis linked to practical fertiliser recommendations. Since then, SASTA members have regularly reviewed soil nutrient status across southern African sugar industries, improving regional benchmarking. Advances in laboratory methods enhanced accurate nutrient measurement. Congress proceedings emphasised green manuring for soil fertility, later broadening to integrated soil health, including biology and related factors. Recent focus has included green cane harvesting benefits and management of soil acidity, compaction, and salt-affected soils.

MECHANISATION

South Africa's mechanisation revolution over the past century has transformed sugarcane farming from animal power to precision technologies. SASTA papers document progress in areas such as standardised offloading systems, tools to improve cane cutter productivity, transitions to diesel tractors, innovations in loading equipment, and transport evolution from wagons to advanced heavy vehicles. Recent focus has included optimising mechanisation at farm and mill-area scales, with advances in controlled traffic, soil health, transport scheduling, and complex systems modelling to enhance efficiency and profitability.





CROP MODELLING

Crop modelling was first presented in the late 1970s. This area of research supported an improved understanding of many aspects of crop development and growth, including sugarcane water relations, genotypic and environmental control of biomass growth and sucrose accumulation, and climate change impacts on the crop. The Canegro sugarcane model, a world-first, was reported in 1993.

IRRIGATION

Rapid technological advances in the 2000s in computing, telecommunication, automated weather and soil water monitoring stimulated the development of various irrigation scheduling tools, including the award-winning MyCanesim® real-time irrigation scheduling service developed for small-scale growers.



DISEASE

Mosaic and sugarcane streak were reported at the first two sugar industry congresses during 'Sugar Week' in 1923 and 1924 (prior to the founding of SASTA) and which ultimately prompted the establishment of the South African Sugar Experiment Station (SASEX) in 1925. Since then, research on diseases, including pathogen epidemiology, improved diagnostics and variety screening, have contributed to the development of integrated management strategies for the most important diseases. Improvements to quarantine procedures particularly the introduction of molecular diagnostic methods and tissue culture for the import of foreign germplasm that have improved biosecurity, continue to feature at SASTA. The establishment of the Local Pest and Disease Control Committees (later to include varieties) was first reported in 1983. The value of this system in monitoring and managing pests and diseases in the SA industry was highlighted in 2021.

NEMATODES

Nematodes were first reported to be an important factor in sugarcane production in 1961 and became a regular topic from the 1970s.

Significant research and technology developments reported on at SASTA congresses have benefitted all industry stakeholders.

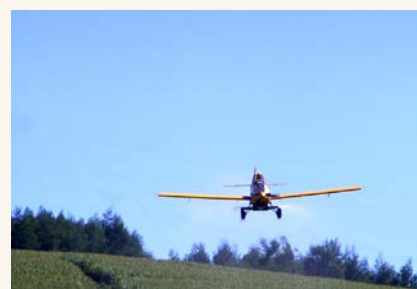


BREEDING AND VARIETY EVALUATION

The performance of SASRI 'N' varieties in different environments was frequently discussed as well as improved methods for breeding and selection. Since SASRI started its breeding programme, 26 N varieties have been released for the irrigated regions, 45 for the coastal areas and 16 for the midlands area. N varieties have a high ratooning ability with an average of 10 crops per planting cycle being common. Consistently high yields from more than 30 crops have been recorded in Eswatini, Malawi and Zimbabwe.

CANE QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Cane quality management using chemical ripeners was first reported in 1978. This topic gained further impetus during the 2000s following the introduction of the Recoverable Value (RV) cane payment system, which placed a greater emphasis on high cane quality. SASTA provided the ideal platform to introduce the PurEst® mobile application and expound on its value as a useful tool to guide ripening subsidy decisions in certain mill supply areas.



BIOTECHNOLOGY

Biotechnology advances for crop improvement and disease diagnostics featured from the early 1990s, including the first report of herbicide tolerant genetically modified (GM) sugarcane in South Africa; regular updates on the road to commercialisation of a lepidopteran resistant sugarcane event; micropropagation via NovaCane®; fingerprinting for variety identification; and most recently, mutation breeding for improving important traits.

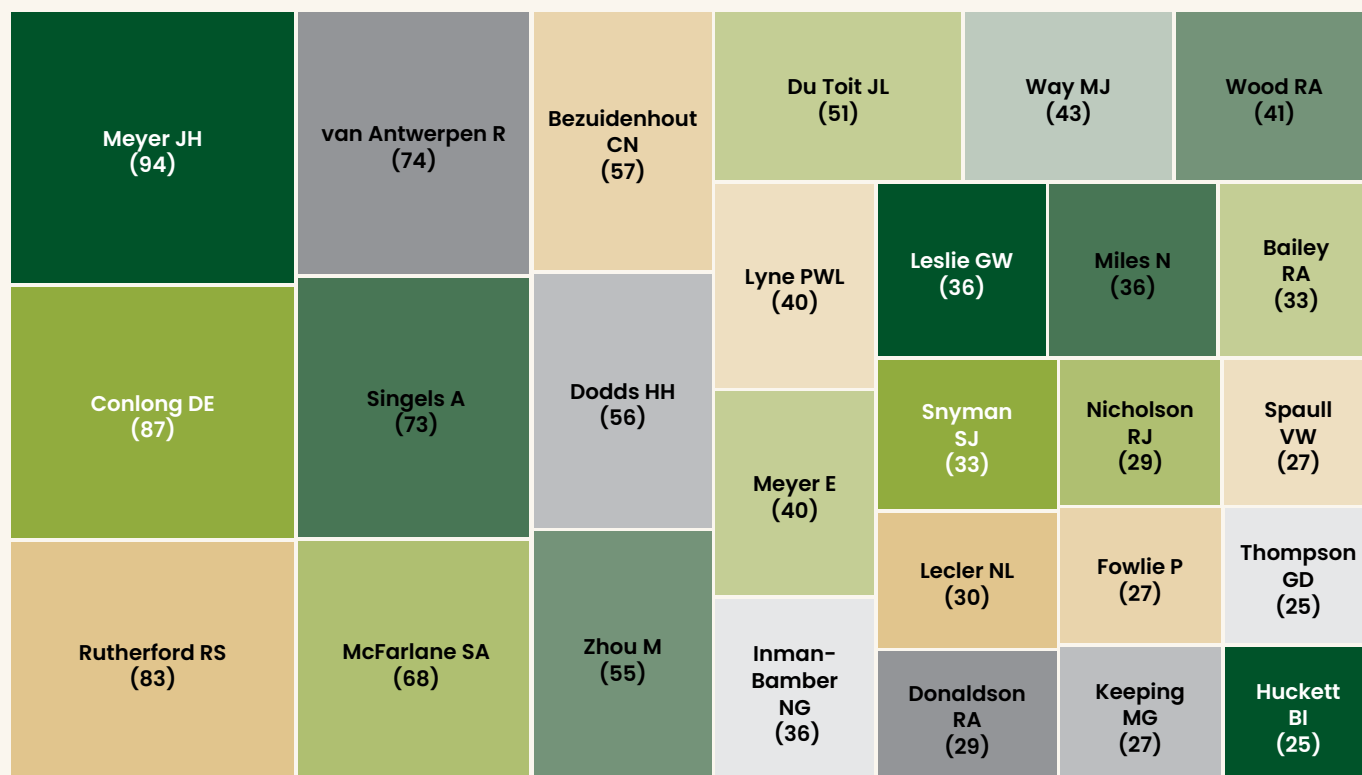
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS)

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) using advanced geospatial technologies to drive data-informed decisions to improve the efficiency and sustainability of agricultural practices also became a regular SASTA feature from the 1990s, with the most recent being the adoption of mobile applications for capturing biosecurity data in the field. Interestingly, a paper on satellite imagery was presented as early as 1979 and in the last decade, digital agriculture has become a more regular topic including the value of drone-based multispectral imaging and high-throughput phenotyping in screening sugarcane fields for yield and pests and diseases.

Over the years, contributions from international scientists have enriched SASTA congresses, benefitted local knowledge and enhanced the progress toward more resilient and sustainable sugarcane production.

weather ripeners farming-systems
 varieties biotechnology mechanisation
 breeding pests & diseases eldana
 modelling soil-health quarantine
 digital-agriculture insects
 nutrients fertilisers water-management
 agrochemicals sustainability irrigation

A word cloud highlighting topics presented at SASTA congresses over the last 100 years.



Tree map depicting the most prolific authors in the agricultural section over the last 100 years with number of contributions in brackets below.

TOP THREE AUTHORS – AGRICULTURE

The top three authors focussing on agricultural innovations and technologies were based at the South African Sugarcane Research Institute (SASRI) which enabled their comprehensive understanding of the research and technology required for the South African industry and recognition of the importance of sharing research findings for the improvement of the industry.



JAN MEYER

A highly distinguished South African agricultural scientist who dedicated over three decades of his career to SASRI, Jan Meyer served as the Head of the Crop Nutrition and Soils Department, and was a leading authority on soil fertility, plant nutrition, and soil chemistry within the sugar industry. He is particularly recognised for his pioneering application of Near Infrared Reflectance Spectroscopy (NIRS), a technique he used to rapidly classify soils based on their nitrogen-mineralising potential to optimise fertiliser efficiency. His extensive body of work, comprising over 100 scientific publications, has addressed critical agricultural challenges including nitrogen use efficiency, the role of silicon nutrition in defending crops against the *Eldana saccharina* stalk borer, and the management of soil acidity and salinity in irrigated regions. Even after his formal tenure at SASRI, Meyer has remained an influential figure in the field, contributing his vast expertise to the broader agricultural sector as a private consultant.



DR DES CONLONG

While at SASRI, Des was a Senior Entomologist and held Honorary Professor and senior lecturer posts in the Department of Conservation Ecology and Entomology at Stellenbosch University and the School of Life Sciences at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) respectively, and was a National Research Foundation (NRF) rated scientist. His primary research focus was based on Integrated Pest Management (IPM), covering conservation biological control, habitat management, plant and arthropod ecological and biological studies and sterile insect and insect rearing technology to minimise pest (both insect and plant) incursions. He is the author/co-author of more than 80 SASTA papers and 60 peer reviewed international journal publications. In addition, he has contributed chapters to five internationally reviewed books and has supervised 14 MSc and eight PhD graduates.



DR STUART RUTHERFORD

Stuart is a retired former Principal Scientist (Integrated Pest & Disease Management) and leader of the Crop Protection Programme at SASRI. His expertise in the fields of plant pathology, entomology, soil science, physiology, biochemistry and molecular biology is widely recognised. He was awarded a special medal of recognition by the International Society of Sugar Cane Technologists for his significant contribution to the area of *Eldana saccharina* IPM in 2025. He has published 33 international papers and supervised 23 post-graduate students and seven post-doctoral associates. He is also a NRF-rated scientist and holds an honorary research position at the UKZN.

FACTORY HIGHLIGHTS



Similar to the agricultural contributions, key factory issues have persisted throughout the years. This is borne out by the fact that several of the factory paper titles that were presented in the first ten years of congresses (including some preceding the founding of SASTA), could be replicated and used today. For example:

1923

Humidity in relation to packing and storage of sugar

1923

Deterioration of cut cane

1926

The use of bagasse as a raw material for manufactured goods

1927

Certain by-products from the sugar industry: Their production and use in SA

1928

Boiler efficiency and heat balance in a cane sugar factory

1928

Disposal of waste waters

1929

On the effect of fibre percentage on extraction

1931

Enquiry on the presence and control of sulphur dioxide in Natal raw sugars for export

1931

The by-products of the sugar industry – a neglected source of revenue

1932

Experiments on the testing of bagasse

To date, topics receiving the greatest attention as far as presentations are concerned, with over 50 each, include Extraction – milling & diffusion; Clarification; Evaporation; Pan floor; Sugar refining; Measurement and control; Boilers; and By-products.



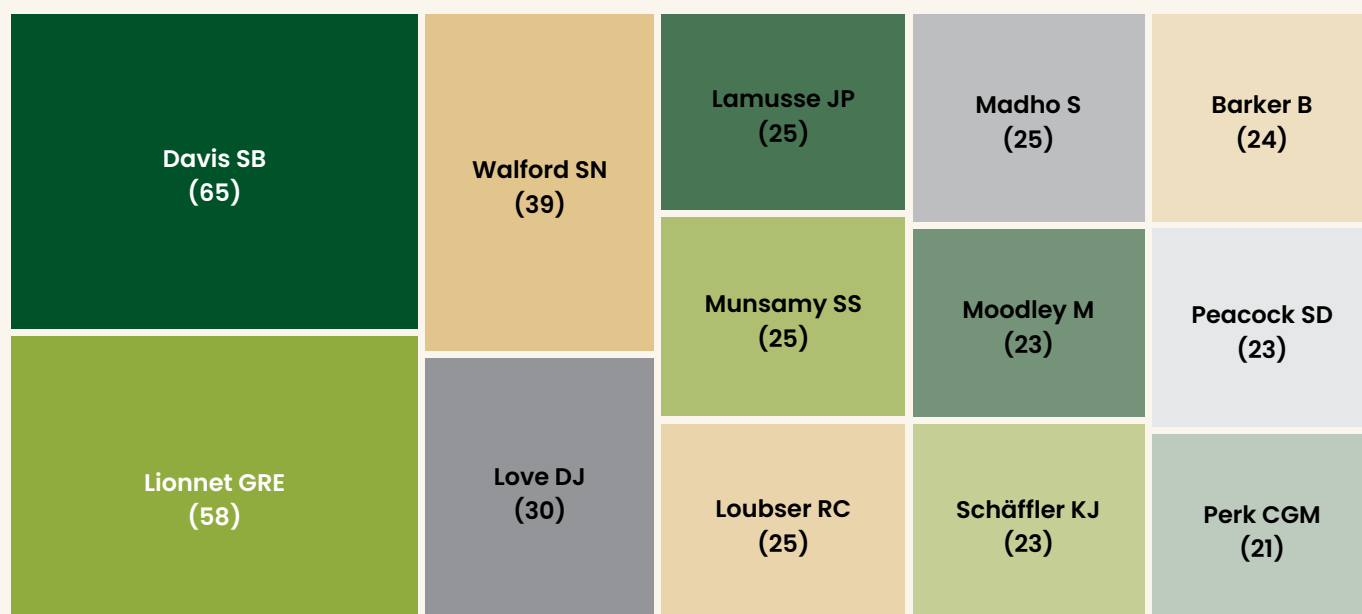
The value of the factory papers presented at SASTA over the past 100 years lies not only in their quality, but also in the diverse nature of the work presented, such as:

- Considerations of the theories and principles of sugar technology by researchers.
- Results of development and testing of innovative engineering and processing technologies, both in laboratories and in factories. Several technologies currently in standard use in our sugar factories were first presented and discussed at SASTA congress, where their merits were often hotly debated. This is evidenced by the ‘question time’ discussions following presentation of the papers, all of which were transcribed verbatim and published in the early SASTA proceedings. These make interesting and sometimes entertaining reading, especially when heavyweights of the industry with opposing views traded opinions.
- Reviews of the state-of-the-art of particular unit operations (as listed above), which have provided new entrants to the industry with a ready reference to these unit operations, based on expert knowledge. Many of these reviews are listed on the SASTA website on the “Essential Reading page”. Occasionally, these reviews were accompanied by workshops, such as the well-received diffuser workshop held in 2022.
- Papers on practical experiences at factories provided valuable insights into tackling and solving factory problems. In these, the realities of the operational environment (that are somewhat removed from the ideal view of how a sugar factory should run) are revealed, together with the ingenuity of the process and engineering staff in implementing cost-effective workable solutions.
- More recently, in conjunction with the growing number of trade exhibitors at congress, so-called “commercial papers” have been presented. These allow suppliers of equipment and instruments to the industry to share their latest developments to inform factory personnel about their state-of-the-art equipment and instruments.
- Posters were a relatively recent addition to SASTA congresses and have proven popular for publication of early-stage work or short, focused investigations. In many instances, insights into the topics presented have led to the presentation of more detailed papers at subsequent congresses.
- As mentioned earlier, even from the first days of SASTA, there was always interest in the possibilities associated with manufacturing products other than sugar and molasses, either by adding value through chemical transformation of sugars or by deriving higher value products from the fibre in cane. Recently, this has received greater attention, with a Biorefinery Workshop being held in 2011 and a diversification workshop (“So much more than sugar”) in 2024. Papers on the topic of diversification have included the results of techno-economic modelling on potential added-value products, undertaken by Biorefining research chairs at local universities.



SASTA CONGRESSES 1927–2026

A feature of each congress has been the Factory Annual Review which will be presented for the 100th time in 2026. These reviews are authored by some of the more prolific factory authors, including Steve Davis, Raoul Lionnet and Stephen Walford. In total, 13 factory authors have presented more than 20 papers at congress (either as the main or co-author), while 12 authors have presented 15 or more as a main author.



Tree map depicting the most prolific authors in the factory section over the past 100 years with number of contributions in brackets below.

From a factory perspective, SASTA congresses remain a very important and highly valued means of exchanging knowledge and information on current sugar technology trends and practices, and are at least partly responsible for the relatively high level of technology practised in South African factories.



TOP THREE AUTHORS – FACTORY

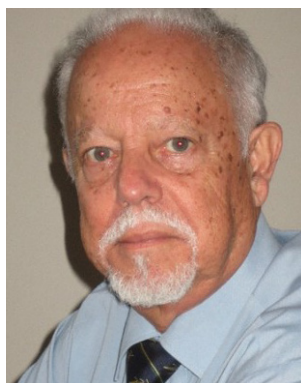
As may be expected, the top three authors from the factory section of SASTA all represented the research and development aspect of the industry, with two having spent most of their careers at the Sugar Milling Research Institute (SMRI), and the third having split his time between the SMRI and Tongaat Hulett Research and Development.



STEVE DAVIS

Steve, a Professional Engineer with a Masters in Chemical Engineering, started his career in the sugar industry as a Senior Research Officer in the Processing Division of the SMRI in 1994. He was appointed as Research and Development Manager in 2012 and Head: Sugar Technology in 2024.

He has presented 15 SASTA papers, including the Annual Review of the Milling Season in Southern Africa (10 times), and has co-authored a further 50 SASTA papers and posters. He has been awarded four Talbot-Crosbie prizes for best factory paper and received three highly commended awards in this category. Steve served on SASTA Council from 2002 to 2007, and again from 2024 to the present day. He has also served on and chaired the SASTA Factory Control Advisory Committee and has served on the SASTA Congress Organising Committee.



DR RAOUL LIONNET

Raoul started his career in the South African sugar industry at Tongaat Hulett before moving to the SMRI in 1980. A sugar technologist with an MSc in chemistry, he worked in the Processing Division until his promotion to Head of the Division in 1990. In 1999, he was appointed as one of two Assistant Directors. Raoul moved to Australia in 2013, where he continues his sugar technology consulting and training.

Raoul presented 44 SASTA papers, including the Annual Review of the Milling Season 12 times, co-authoring a further 12 papers. He was twice awarded the Talbot-Crosbie Prize for best Factory paper and served on SASTA Council for many years. He also served on and chaired the SASTA Factory Control Advisory Committee and, in 2010, he was awarded a SASTA Gold Medal for his services to the industry.



STEPHEN WALFORD

Stephen joined the SMRI in 1983 as a research chemist. He is an expert in carbohydrate chemistry and instrumental methods of chemical analysis, specialising in chromatographic and chemometric methods. He was appointed Head of the Chemistry Division from 2006–2012 and Head of the Analytical Quality and Method Development Division until his retirement in 2024. He managed the development and roll-out of the SMRI Near Infrared Spectroscopy (NIRS) analysis technology, now routinely used in all South African and many southern African factory laboratories.

Stephen has presented 20 papers and posters at SASTA, co-authoring a further nineteen. He received five awards for Best Factory Poster and has served on and chaired the SASTA Factory Control Advisory Committee.



FIELD & FACTORY VISITS

A CENTURY OF SHARED LEARNING

For the past 100 years, factory and field visits have played a central role in SASTA's enduring commitment to promoting the exchange of scientific knowledge related to sugarcane agriculture and milling.

At their heart, SASTA visits are about learning from people – those who are applying their knowledge with skill, innovation, and integrity. Factory and field visits complement the annual SASTA congress – where knowledge is shared in a scientifically rigorous way – by stepping beyond the science, and into the practical arena of farms and factories.

Within-industry visits have included those to see green-cane harvesting operations in Zululand and the KZN midlands, chopper harvesters and mulch balers, and visits to sugarcane factories both large and small (including open-pan mills and jaggery production from organically-grown sugarcane). Through these visits, members have gained first-hand exposure

to ideas that cannot be fully captured in papers or presentations alone. These visits create opportunities to see systems in operation, ask practical questions, and engage directly with peers and experts in their field. Over the decades, these visits have served as a vital window into innovation.

Members have explored advances in agricultural practices, processing technologies, mechanisation, and management approaches. Exposure to large-scale or highly specialised operations, sometimes beyond the immediate sugar sector, has given members insight into possible improvements in their own operations, or new appreciation for sustainable and ethical practices. A couple of favourites have

included the visit to the Illovo Merebank ethanol distillery (where members were breathalysed on entry, but happily not on exit!) and to the Beacon Sweets factory.

In the past decade or so, diversification has become a strong theme of the SASTA visits, which have highlighted how sugarcane growers and processors can broaden their activities and build resilience. From alternative crops and value-added products to expansion of milling companies into other agricultural ventures, these experiences have encouraged members to think more broadly about sustainability and long-term viability. Some highlights within the diversification space have included visits to operations such as SOiL Organic Aromatherapy, a coffee farm in Assagay, the Donovale Farming Company, the Sugar Baron Craft Distillery, and the UCL avocado packhouse.

Importantly, SASTA has always looked beyond its own boundaries. Visits to organisations such as Bell Equipment, Foskor, Rossi South Africa and Sappi Saiccor have exposed members to world-class industrial operations, research environments, and technological capabilities outside the traditional sugar value chain. These experiences have enriched

Factory and field visits play a central role in SASTA's commitment to learning together.

the collective understanding of efficiency, safety, innovation, and collaboration.

A century of field and factory visits cannot be done justice in a short article, but every visit has been an opportunity for learning and networking, and every host's hospitality and willingness to share their story has been valued. Across a century, factory and field visits have strengthened professional networks, fostered mutual respect, and reinforced a culture of shared learning within SASTA. They remain a powerful reminder that progress in the sugar industry has always been driven not only by knowledge, but by the willingness to learn together — on the ground, in the field, and face to face.





INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS

Since SASTA's entry into the international arena in 1932, when it first became an Affiliated Member of the International Society of Sugar Cane Technologists (ISSCT), it has maintained its connection with the society. The ISSCT is an association of scientists, technologists, managers and institutions that are concerned with the technical advancement of sugar cane industries and their co-products.

A representative of each affiliated society (usually the President) becomes a member of the ISSCT Council and participates in the management of the ISSCT's affairs. In past years, a SASTA member served two terms in the Chair of this Council, while on a technical level, several SASTA members have, over the years, served as Commissioners on the Technical Programme Committee that includes the Agriculture Commission, Biology Commission, Co-products Commission, Factory Commission and Management Commission. Additionally, at least five workshops, organised by the various Commissions have been held in South Africa since 2000, including Agricultural Engineering in 2000, Plant Breeding in 2003, Management in 2007, Factory Engineering and Processing in 2014, and Agricultural Engineering and

Agronomy in 2015. All workshops bring together a diversity of sugar technologists to share knowledge and experience for the betterment of their individual sugar enterprises.

Over the years, five SASTA members have been invited to become honorary members of the ISSCT, namely HH Dodds in 1963; JL Du Toit in 1974; TG Cleasby in 1983; GD Thompson in 1992; and TJ Murray in 2019.

In its 100-year history, SASTA has hosted the ISSCT twice: in 1974 and 2007. Following its hosting of the 2007 ISSCT congress in South Africa, SASTA was fortunate enough to receive a donation from the Organising Committee of surplus funds for the express

purpose of enabling visits by international experts for the benefit of the South African sugar industry. This International Visitors' Grant system provides opportunities for hosting specialists that are deemed to add extraordinary expertise, not locally available

but of considerable value, to our sugar industry and to the work conducted by sugar technologists. Usually, visits have been co-ordinated to coincide with the annual SASTA congress – facilitating the possibility of them providing a keynote or plenary address.

In the past few years SASTA has benefitted from the expertise of varied scientists most notably:

DR JOHN PICKERING

Dr John Pickering in 2022, the Lead Behavioural Scientist at Evidn in Australia, an international company specialising in facilitating change within complex environments where alignment of parties with sometimes divergent goals may ultimately lead to the implementation of change processes for the common good. A workshop during congress to address ongoing challenges of cane deterioration in the industry was facilitated by Dr Pickering to uncover solutions to this complex problem in the industry;



PROFESSOR NARENDRA MOHAN

Professor Narendra Mohan in 2024, the retired director of the National Sugar Institute in India and a specialist in sugarcane diversification. At congress he gave not only a keynote address but also participated in a lively panel discussion regarding the progress and stumbling blocks associated with diversification in our industry.



PROFESSOR FREDY ALTPETER

Now in our centenary year SASTA will host Professor Fredy Altpeter from the University of Florida, USA, a specialist in modern biotechnology for sugarcane improvement. It is anticipated that he will bring valuable insights into the sugar industry's cultivar improvement and diversification initiatives and share his insights at congress in both a plenary presentation and a sustainability workshop.



International interactions provide the opportunity for diverse sugar technologists to share knowledge and experience for the betterment of their respective sugar enterprises.

SASTA COUNCIL AND COMMITTEES

SASTA's success can be attributed to the collective knowledge, expertise and dedication of the members of the SASTA Council and its five permanent committees.

COUNCIL

A Council of elected members manages the business affairs of SASTA. The council provides leadership with regards to the strategic direction and financial stability of the association. Council also provides oversight of all matters relating to governance, regulatory policies, procedures and obligations of the association.

SASTA Council is made up of a President, Vice-President, Congress Organising Committee Chairperson, Treasurer, and a further eight SASTA members. Additional members may be co-opted as decided by SASTA Council.

SASTA's success can be attributed to the collective knowledge, expertise and dedication of the members of the SASTA Council and its five permanent committees.

CONGRESS ORGANISING COMMITTEE

This dedicated committee has been responsible for planning, budgeting, and executing the technical and social programmes for SASTA's premier annual congresses.

Key responsibilities include the following:

- **Scientific Programme:** managing the editorial team, reviewing paper abstracts, and coordinating guest speakers and agricultural/factory presentations;
- **Trade Exhibition:** managing the layout and operations of the exhibition hall for industry service providers;
- **Social Programmes:** arranging authors' dinner, gala dinner, congress tours;
- **Sponsorships:** obtaining and managing sponsorships;
- **Budget Management:** organising the congress finances and managing expenditure within the bounds determined by the SASTA Council.
- **Golf Day:** coordinating a networking golf event where delegates and exhibitors connect in a relaxed, competitive environment.

Spearheaded by industry experts, the committee works in conjunction with a professional conference organising company to deliver a world-class event every year.



FACTORY CONTROL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (FCAC)

Initially established as the 'Committee for Standardisation of Chemical Control' in 1962, the FCAC has the express purpose of standardising and improving chemical control in the factories affiliated to the council. Committee representatives are drawn from the sugarcane processing companies, the Sugar Milling Research Institute (SMRI), the South African Sugar Association Cane Testing Service, South African Canegrowers' Association and the South African Farmers' Development Association.

The committee is responsible for approving all analytical and calculation methods used for factory process control. The outputs from these factory figures, obtained through a uniform set of methods, are compiled into weekly, monthly and annual factory performance figure tables, which are highly valued by the milling industry for benchmarking purposes.

This committee is responsible for revising and updating the Laboratory Manual for South African Sugar Factories including the Official Methods. A flagship publication since 1962, the manual also includes the official methods for cane payment as referred to in the South African Sugar Industry Agreement. It is the intention of SASTA to keep the manual up to date, with new methods being uploaded as and when they are approved by the FCAC, thereby continuing to contribute towards maintaining high standards of chemical control and factory performance.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Chaired by the SASTA Treasurer, this committee manages the fiduciary aspects of SASTA and oversees the annual financial audit.

SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

First convened in 2024, this committee's focus is on how SASTA can promote environmental stewardship, economic stability and social equity in the local sugar industry by encompassing topical aspects such as climate change, net zero and a circular economy.

PUBLICITY COMMITTEE

In 2024, the SASTA Council, in consultation with the SASA Media and Communications Manager, developed a media and social media policy. The Publicity Committee ensures compliance with the media policy, and also endeavours to create awareness among SASTA members and the public of newsworthy SASTA developments.

LEADERSHIP & ACCOLADES



In its 100-year history, SASTA has been led by

37 Presidents & **43** Vice-Presidents

Presidents		Vice-Presidents	
1926-28	M McMaster	1926-27	LE Rouillard
1928-30	HH Dodds	1927-28	HH Dodds
1930-31	GS Moberly	1928-30	GS Moberly
1931-33	GC Dymond	1930-31	GC Dymond
1933-34	BED Pearce	1931-33	AC Watson
1934-35	E Camden-Smith	1933-34	GC Dymond & E Camden-Smith
1935-37	GC Wilson	1934-35	BED Pearce
1937-38	J Rault	1935-36	E Camden-Smith
1938-40	P Murray	1936-37	J Rault
1940-41	EP Hedley	1937-38	P Murray
1941-42	FW Hayes	1938-40	EP Hendley
1942-43	A McMartin	1940-41	FW Hayes
1943-44	G Booth	1941-42	A McMartin
1944-46	GS Moberly	1942-43	G Booth
1946-48	W Buchanan	1943-44	FB Macbeth
1948-49	JL Du Toit	1944-45	G Booth
1949-50	HH Dodds	1945-46	W Buchanan
1950-55	A McMartin	1946-49	GC Dymond
1955-56	JB Grant	1949-50	JL Du Toit
1957-60	JPN Bentley	1950-52	OWM Pearce
1960-63	JL Du Toit	1952-53	K Douwes-Dekker
1963-66	JR Gunn	1953-54	JB Grant
1966-68	LF Chiazzari	1954-55	K Douwes-Dekker
1968-72	TG Cleasby	1955-56	GC Dymond
1972-75	J Wilson	1956-57	WG Galbrath

Presidents		Vice-Presidents	
1975-77	JB Alexander	1957-60	JL Du Toit
1977-81	GD Thompson	1960-61	J Dick
1981-83	GW Shuker	1961-63	JPN Bentley
1983-87	AB Ravnö	1963-66	LF Chiazzari
1987-90	PK Moberly	1966-68	TG Cleasby
1990-94	PW Rein	1968-72	JB Alexander
1994-96	PH Hewitt	1972-75	M Matic
1996-98	GB O'Reilly	1975-81	GW Shuker
1998-2002	TJ Murray	1981-83	AB Ravnö
2002-04	MS Greenfield	1983-87	PK Moberly
2004-05	KM Hurly	1987-90	PW Rein
2005-06	SS Munsamy	1990-91	GW Shuker
2006-10	PM Schorn	1991-94	PH Hewitt
2010-20	GT Smith	1994-96	GB O'Reilly
2020-22	S Madho	1996-98	TJ Murray
2022-26	M Kadwa	1998-2001	BS Purchase
		2001-02	MS Greenfield
		2002-04	KM Hurly
		2004-05	SS Munsamy
		2005-06	RA Bailey
		2006-10	DL Sweby
		2010-11	BM Muir & KA Redshaw
		2011-15	KA Redshaw
		2015-21	CM Baker
		2021-26	SJ Snyman



CONGRESS AWARDS

SASTA recognises research excellence by awarding prizes annually for the best presentations in several categories in both the agriculture and factory sections of congress.

TALBOT-CROSBIE AWARD (FACTORY) KYNOC H AWARD (AGRICULTURE)

Outstanding factory and agricultural presentations.

ROBIN RENTON MEMORIAL AWARD

A young engineer (35 years old or younger), who shows leadership and management potential, and who delivers an outstanding technical paper at SASTA Congress.

CECIL RENAUD AWARD

Outstanding factory and agricultural papers delivered by authors who are not part of either a scientific or technological institute.

BEST POSTER AWARD

BEST STUDENT AWARD

JUBILEE AWARD

More recently (since 2000) and recognising the importance of international networking and exposure for sugar technologists, an award is made enabling attendance at the ISSCT congress. This Jubilee Award is presented for both Factory and Agriculture sections of congress for an exceptional paper at the three congresses preceding the forthcoming ISSCT Congress.

In past years awards for Innovation, Success stories and Student theses were also awarded.



GOLD MEDAL

In the late 1960s, consideration was given to presenting a Gold Medal award to a SASTA member for outstanding technological contribution to the sugar industry or for exceptional service to SASTA and/or the ISSCT. The first medal was awarded in 1968 and since then a total of 19 medals have been awarded.

Gold Medal Winners

1968	AE Rabe
1970	CGM Perk
1974	JL Du Toit
1977	PCG Brett
1981	JB Alexander
1988	IA Bell
1990	GD Thompson
1998	SW Upfold
2000	PW Rein
2002	AB Ravnö
2002	K Schöffler
2005	E Meyer
2005	JH Meyer
2005	PG Morel Du Boil
2008	KM Hurly
2009	TG Cleasby
2010	GRE Lionnet
2012	BS Purchase
2019	TJ Murray

INTO THE FUTURE



As SASTA celebrates a century of advancing science in support of the sugar industry, its future remains firmly rooted in innovation, collaboration, and knowledge sharing.

Building on its rich history, SASTA will continue to serve as a vital platform connecting researchers, industry professionals, and emerging scientists to address the challenges and opportunities facing the sector. Through shared wisdom, decades of experience and a solid source of invaluable information on all sugarcane technology matters, SASTA will strive to embrace future challenges and serve as a forward-thinking platform for the benefit of the sugar industry in the next century.

Much of its success can be attributed to the collective knowledge and expertise of the Council members who, over the years, have selflessly given their time and expertise to grow the association into what it is today – a world class organisation dedicated to the South African sugarcane industry. In the years ahead, the association will continue to play an important role in promoting sustainable production, embracing new technologies, and fostering the next generation

of scientific leaders who will assist in guiding the industry forward. The challenges that climate change brings together with the demands for certification, sustainability, consumer demands and diversification, to name just a few, are likely to become core considerations for all new technologies.

SASTA will continue to foster research and dialogue in areas such as climate-smart sugarcane production, improved pest and disease management strategies, and in the application of modern technologies both in field and factory as well as data-driven decision-making. Through congresses, workshops, knowledge exchange, and mentorship opportunities, SASTA will also nurture the next generation of scientists and industry leaders. By strengthening collaboration between researchers, industry stakeholders, and growers, SASTA will strive to remain a cornerstone of innovation, resilience, and sustainability for the sugar sector well into the future.



SOUTH AFRICAN SUGAR TECHNOLOGISTS' ASSOCIATION

CELEBRATING A CENTURY OF SCIENTIFIC EXCHANGE

1926 – 2026

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SASTA gratefully acknowledges the following organisations
for generously sponsoring this centenary publication:



Thank you for partnering with SASTA as we celebrate a century of science,
innovation and service to the South African sugar industry.





SASTA

SOUTH AFRICAN SUGAR
TECHNOLOGISTS' ASSOCIATION



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