

## A SUCCESSFUL METHODOLOGY FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EXTENSION PROGRAMME IN A SMALL GROWER AREA

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### Abstract

The objective of this programme was to create awareness of the value of improved land use management practices to minimise threats to production, via technical and practical mentorship and to highlight the economic implications of non-sustainable production. The insect pest *Eldana saccharina* was used as the vehicle to raise awareness of the cost to the community of not applying good land use practices. The step-wise methodology implemented was highly successful in that it (i) raised awareness as to the value of interaction between extension and growers in the design and development of a programme, (ii) made highly technical research results relevant and better understood by extension staff and the growers, (iii) emphasised a business approach to small growers, and (iv) established the value of a programme of work with defined goals and time lines.

*Keywords:* *Eldana saccharina*, small-scale extension, mentorship, improved management

### Introduction

The objective was to create awareness of the value of improved land use management practices to minimise threats to production in two small grower pilot areas. The selected pilot areas have the potential to vastly increase production, both spatially and economically. For this reason, a methodology was introduced that would ensure success if the growers could be convinced to adopt the approach. The pilot areas were Noodsberg, Midlands and Sezela, South Coast, both subject to the threat of *E. saccharina* infestation. These areas were selected to demonstrate the control of the pest where it already exists, and prevention of the pest in the area not yet heavily colonised. Small-scale growers are more vulnerable to risk due to the small size of plots, lack of resources and minimal control over important management issues, such as time and efficiency of harvesting. Small-scale initiatives are often found to be non-sustainable and collapse over time.

### Methodology

The step-wise approach included:

- Step 1: Adopt a 'whole farm' approach with emphasis on profitability.
- Step 2: Contact roleplayers.
- Step 3: Develop logical objectives.
- Step 4: Prepare a written extension message.

- Step 5: Compile a sound technical message specific to this initiative (Eldana).
- Step 6: Deliver the extension message.
- Step 7: Implement the programme of work (production calendar, Pike *et al*, 2001).
- Step 8: Evaluate regularly.

The success of this particular awareness and mentorship project has been due to an extension methodology described by Bembridge (1987, 1997), which requires regular contact with the growers, a sound technical message and support from other roleplayers.

### **Results and discussion**

Regular meetings and attendance registers provided an indication of the success of the approach. Improved levels of interest, recognition of the value of an extension service and a clear understanding of the programme of work were indicated by attendance and verbal interaction. The measurement of actual impact on income generation (future yield) is outside the scope of this project. The growers recognised an improved standard of living due to improved capacity to become more effective managers and more self-sufficient (as opposed to remaining non-sustainable), if the approach was followed. Success is also reflected in further requests for the programme to be implemented in new areas (horizontal expansion), as well as continued support in existing project areas (vertical expansion).

### **Conclusions**

The methodology formulated in this project is easy to repeat and allows for adaptation under varying resource conditions. The methodology is effective because it is easily understood and implemented, and additional technical topics are easily added and addressed within the programme.

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