

SANSOR LEAVES FOOTPRINT AT ITS 22nd ANNUAL CONGRESS

May 2011

During the week of 3 to 5 May 2011 SANSOR (South African National Seed Organisation) held its 22nd Annual Congress at the Arabella Western Cape Hotel & Spa. SANSOR, which represents the seed industry in South Africa, organises an Annual Congress not only for its members, but also for the larger seed community. The Congress was attended by more than 100 leaders in the seed industry and its associated members.

The theme for this year's Congress was WATER and during the divisional and open sessions, specialists in their various fields presented topics related to the seed industry at large. The presentations were as follow:

The effect of drought/changing climate on mixture and management of pastures

Dr Philip Botha, Specialist Scientist of the Institute for Plant Production, Western Cape Department of Agriculture;

Effective fertigation in S.A. on crops with changing water quality

Mr Chris Barnard, Fertigation Academy, Rustenburg;

The changing climate and risk management in agriculture with special reference to insurance/crop security

Mr Johan van den Berg, SANTAM Agriculture; and

Some challenges and solutions for future Water Management in Agriculture

Ms Carin Bosman, CBSS (Carin Bosman Sustainable Solutions).

During this year's Congress SANSOR initiated a process to leave a footprint in the community where the Congresses are held. According to Mr Gerrie Reitsma, General Manager of SANSOR, the Congresses are always well attended by members of the seed industry and important decisions are made during these meetings, but the impact of the visit was almost never felt by the local communities. "In this new step forward SANSOR would like to leave a positive impact on the social and natural environment where we have our Annual Congresses". He further said that many of its members have their own activities and this decision does not in any way impede on any individual members' actions in their local or regional communities, but is rather a step forward to add more value to it. It also creates opportunities for members to take part and become part of such activities.

The plan is to have similar projects at future SANSOR Congresses and individual companies will play an active part in it. At this Congress two projects were identified whereby SANSOR and its membership could give something back to the community:

1. SIYABULELA PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL IN KLEINMOND – 3 MAY 2011

The school, situated in Kleinmond and registered with Child Welfare SA, caters for 96 children between the ages of 3 and 6 years old from the local community and specialises in the preparation of the children for Primary Schools in the area.

During SANSOR's initial visit to the school, a need for a gas stove was identified as they were preparing meals for the kids using only a two-plate electric stove. SANSOR also arranged with a registered service provider in the area, Mr Guy Roberts from The Gas Guy, for the installation of the stove according to industry/certified standards. He responded by also contributing his time free of charge and only charged for the cost of the gas stove.

During an informal ceremony held at the school, ownership of the installation was handed over to Dr Carl-Heinz Duisberg, Patron of the school and Ms Maretha Müller, Administrative Assistant from the school. The children, with some of them singing to the visitors, also shared in the festivities by each receiving a sweet hamper and fruit juice.

Together with other donations that the school subsequently received, they are now busy with final upgrades to the kitchen that will enable them to offer two full meals at the school for the kids. This will create on-going saving for the school and these savings can be used to better serve the children and the community. Also discussed during the handover was the possibility to use the new kitchen as a hub for other projects in the Kleinmond area, like the crèche nearby where they cater for almost 40 babies and young kids. This would not have been possible without this initiative from SANSOR.

On 5 May 2011 Dr Duisberg, Ms Müller and Mr Roberts also visited the SANSOR Congress where Dr Duisberg conveyed their appreciation directly to the members followed by Mr Gerrie Reitsma who thanked Mr Roberts for his personal contribution.

2. TREE PLANTING AT ARABELLA ESTATE – 3 MAY 2011

As part of the idea of leaving a footprint at our future Congresses, SANSOR had earlier also discussed the possibility of planting trees on the Arabella Estate with the Hotel & Spa Management, as well as the Arabella Country Estate Management.

The excitement was contagious and the support from all the parties overwhelmingly positive. Trees were selected by Mr Alf Scullard from the Estate after earlier inputs from SANBI at Kirstenbosch. With the majority of the financial contribution towards the initiative from SANSOR, the Arabella Estate purchased 57 indigenous trees to be planted on the Estate in an area that in future will be known as “THE SANSOR FOREST”.

The Rand value of the SANSOR contribution was calculated using a Carbon Calculator to offset the carbon footprint by the participants flying to the Congress. However, due to lower prices negotiated by the Estate for the trees, a total of 147 passengers’ return flights from Johannesburg or Durban to Cape Town, were compensated for. This is more than the total number of participants at the Congress this year. According to Mr Reitsma this is typically what SANSOR would like to achieve. “We are not only paying for the footprint created by this Congress, but also in a small way for future activities by SANSOR and its membership”.

According to Mr Terry Keller, Arabella Estate Manager, such actions tie in with the Estate’s SHE-Policy and the Management team’s commitment in protecting and where possible improving natural features, systems and wildlife on the Estate. It also ensures that development is done in an environmentally sensitive and sustainable way.

Trees were planted by Honorary Members of SANSOR, current and past chairmen of the SANSOR BOARD and employees of SANSOR, the Arabella Estate Management and staff from the Arabella Hotel. According to Ms Birgitta Weaving, Banqueting Coordinator, this was a first for a Congress at Arabella – “We are so proud to be custodians of the SANSOR Forest and look forward to following in your footsteps in this initiative”. Informally there are already talk to require future Congresses to add to “THE SANSOR FOREST” and continue the impact made by this initiative.

“Both these ideas have been a great experience for SANSOR and its members – we have not just left two small footprints in the area but also created opportunities for others to add to and let the footprint grow – either at the school or at the Arabella Estate”, said Mr Reitsma.

For further details on the activities of SANSOR, please contact the SANSOR office in Pretoria at 012 349 1438 or genman@sansor.co.za.