

MAKING A DIFFERENCE in the oilseeds industry

By Gerhard Keun

The Oil and Protein Seeds Development Trust (OPDT) and Oilseeds Advisory Committee (OAC) were established in 1997. The main objectives of the OPDT are the promotion and development of the oilseeds industry in South Africa through:

- Financing for research projects pertaining to the improvement, production, storage, processing and marketing of oilseeds.
- Financing for the provision of information and advisory services to the oilseeds industry pertaining to the production of oilseeds and marketing conditions.
- Financing of market access or of any further conduct which is in the interest of the oilseeds industry.

Transformation was always a part of the OPDT/OAC research budget. Since inception, training of emerging farmers was done via NOPO and then through Grain SA. The OPDT/OAC realised that community upliftment had to be addressed and could be done by way of the production of soya beans and the inclusion of soya as a protein source in the diets of communities.

During the 2010/11 financial year, the Eden Social Development Foundation registered a project called 'The development and training of entry-level soy consumers with further progression to soy-preneurs level', with the OPDT/OAC. The main aim was soya awareness, small-scale soya bean production and the development of small enterprises. The project was later supported by various other projects and actions, all financially supported by the OPDT.

A business plan for upliftment

During 2015, Dr Marinda Visser of Grain SA introduced the Department of Science and

Technology (DST) to the OPDT/OAC and a business plan was submitted, including all upliftment and soya food projects in the Soybean Food and Nutrition Development Programme.

During the 2016/17 financial year, the DST allocated funding for the first time and the following projects were included in the programme:

- Development and training of entry-level soy consumers with further progression to soy-preneurs level.
- Addressing food insecurity by supporting economic growth for emerging farmers.
- Promoting household production and processing of soya beans as a major source of quality protein.
- Farmer development by Grain SA.

We built on the success of the 2016/17 financial year and the DST via the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), which kept its commitment and approved funding for the 2017/18 and 2018/19 financial years. The additional funding resulted in more projects and more collaborators, such as the Vaal University of Technology (VUT), the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), the University of Pretoria (UP), and the Grain Farmers Development Association (GFADA), as well as the expansion of the programme to other provinces. To date, the DST/TIA has contributed R3,5 million towards the programme, which has been matched on a rand-to-rand basis by the OPDT/OAC.

As mentioned, the additional funding allows for expansion of the programme and the following projects have been included in the application for programme continuation in the 2019/20 financial year, which has already been submitted to TIA for consideration:

- The development and training of entry-level soy bean consumers with further progression to soy-preneurs level, Eden Social Development Foundation.
- Addressing food insecurity by supporting economic growth for emerging farmers, VUT.
- Promoting household production and processing of soya beans as major source of quality protein (Limpopo), VUT.
- Promotion of soya beans and groundnuts in a crop rotation system, ARC.
- Farmer Development: Training, Grain SA.
- Reviewing soya in the school feeding programme, UP.

Although not directly related to the programme, the following projects are also supported:

- *Pula/Imvula*, Grain SA.
- *Oilseeds Focus*, Protein Research Foundation/OAC and OPDT.
- Transformation Project, GFADA.

Touching lives

The Soybean Food and Nutrition Development Programme has touched the lives of many people. During the 2017/18 financial year, group training led to the training of 359 women and 78 men; farmer training accounted for 66 farmers trained and 65ha of soya beans planted. Three black commercial farmers planted 64ha of soya beans.

A Women's Day workshop, held in Okhahlamba, was attended by approximately 200 women, and the training of 170 additional farmers in collaboration with VUT, GFADA and Grain SA was carried out. A soya bean awareness DVD was also produced in co-operation with Grain SA and translated into isiXhosa and isiZulu.

There is still a lot to do, but by joining forces with other industry role-players, much more can be achieved. The past three years have demonstrated the benefits of collaboration and co-operation. 🌱