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**...and more!**

# SOUTH AFRICAN SMALLHOLDER MAGAZINE

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# Tax to save the planet



**T**axation theory is a fascinating subject in the field of public finance. In simple terms, for example, you can use taxation to destroy an economy, as Harold Wilson did in the UK in the 1960s when he raised taxes on the super-wealthy to the extent that they deserted the country in their droves in an effort to protect and preserve their wealth. Or, you can use taxes to change behaviour, as South African consumers are seeing nowadays, the sugar tax making soft drinks considerably more expensive litre for litre. As it happens this has not really had the direct effect the government wanted, for rather than forcing manufacturers to reduce the amount of sugar in their beverages, they have simply reduced their can and bottle sizes where possible, resulting not in consumers imbibing less sugar in their drink, but simply imbibing less drink, and therefore less sugar: a roundabout way of achieving the desired result. The window of opportunity to limit global warming to the 1,5°C ceiling beyond which we leave a catastrophe for our children is ever closing ~ even by the day. So maybe now is the time when concerned governments need to apply taxation as a blunt instrument to force the pace of behavioural change. For us in SA, some suggestions: Renewable energy in the form of solar, wind and wave power is greatly preferable to non-renewables such as coal for

power generation, and oil and gas. Subsidise the adoption of the former by heavily taxing the latter.

Tax disposable, single-use and plastic items heavily and use the revenue generated to fund clean-ups of the current mess. Tax air travel to encourage the development of non-polluting or lower-polluting aircraft and fuels, and the development of more efficient surface transportation. Tax goods transportation by road and use the revenue to subsidise the redevelopment of the rail network. Raise a tax on businesses that manufacture or import goods that are unrepairable after use. Use part of the revenue generated in a public education campaign aimed at greatly increasing the desirability of buying repurposed, repaired and refurbished goods. Use the other part to subsidise businesses that repair or repurpose used goods.

You have probably read through this list giggling and thinking that I have lost my mind. Sure, most of these ideas are pie in the sky, certainly in the South African context where our efforts at saving ourselves from global catastrophe are about as close to non-existent as one can get. But if we don't do something, and something drastic at that, containing global warming to the ceiling of 1.5°C will be pie in the sky, too.

**Pete Bower**  
*Editor*

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## NEWS

# Govt opens second phase of Pesi grants

The second phase of the Presidential Employment Stimulus Initiative, or Pesi, is now available to subsistence farmers countrywide. No fewer than 50 000 subsistence producers are targeted for this second phase, this figure being in addition to the 88 251 subsistence producers being supported under the first Pesi intervention. Applicants for the second Pesi should be 18 years old or older; have a valid South African ID; must not be employed in the public service or by a state owned entity; must be currently actively involved in agricultural production and may not have received departmental support in the current financial year. Only one application per household will be permitted. Specific commodities for support include vegetables, grains (maize and soybean), sugarcane, cotton, poultry and livestock. The support targets vulnerable individuals and groups, and aims to support 50%



women, 40% youth and 6% people with disabilities. Child-headed households, farm dwellers, farmworkers and military veterans will also be prioritised. Group applicants should approach their local department offices for registration. The department says the type and quantity of support will be limited to the commodity applied for, and the size of the current operation physically verified on site. The amount of support will range between R1 000 and R12 000. Selected subsistence producers should submit applications through the USSD Code \*134\*4536# until 14 December. In this second phase, all subsistence producers that applied during the 2020 Pesi and Solidarity Fund support need not apply as they have been prioritised for this second phase support of Pesi. 🌸

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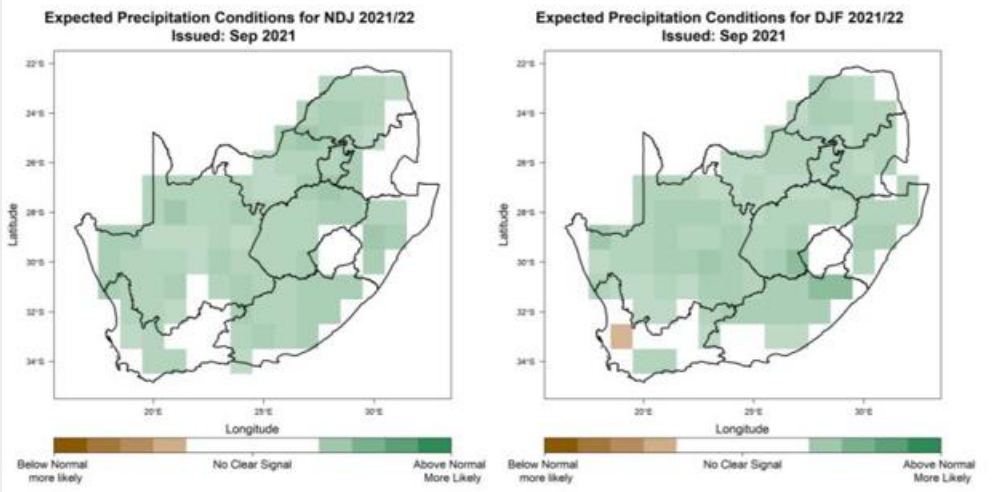


# La Niña to bring good rains this summer

With increased rainfall across most of the country in mid- to late-November, this is in keeping with the SA Weather Service (Saws) prediction that the country would enter into a mild La Niña cycle for the rest of this summer rainfall season. Predictions made at the end of September by Saws were confirmed with above-average rainfall in late November. Above-average rainfall continues to be expected for the remainder of this year for the north-eastern parts of the country. This goes



further into the mid-summer period (December, January and February) across the country's summer rainfall regions. However, Saws has issued warnings of La Niña-associated flash floods, and these are already in evidence across parts of the southern Cape, with residents in towns such as George suffering in late-November. Saws recommends those growing crops this summer take care to ensure their fields and crops have good drainage. Along with increased rainfall, La Niña is expected to bring with her increased temperatures for much of the country as we head into the peak growing season. ❀



Seasonal precipitation prediction. November-December-January 2021/22 (NDJ), December-January-February 2021/22 (DJF) . Image: Saws.

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## NEWS

# Charges against 'cabbage bandit' withdrawn

Joe Nkuna (pictured right), the Pretoria North resident who incurred the wrath of the Tshwane Council for growing cabbages and onions on the sidewalk outside his house, and earned himself the nickname of the [Cabbage Bandit](#), is off the hook. Slapped with two charges and a fine of R1 500 in September, Nkuna raised the matter on Facebook, and quickly garnered the support of the public. Nkuna and his lawyer Adv Puseletso Loselo, who offered his services pro bono, sent representations to the court arguing that the charges were illogical. As a result, before the case was heard



Nkuna was informed that the matter was *nolle prosequi*, (Latin for nothing to prosecute). "On 17 November, I received a letter from the acting director for Municipal Courts Prosecution notifying me about the withdrawal of the case, arguing there was no case against me and that I did not break any by-laws by planting cabbage and onions rather than grass and roses." Although the case has been withdrawn, Nkuna says the matter has traumatised him and his family. 🌸

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# AHS vaccine shortage could be dire for SA

**T**he ongoing management problems at Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP) have seen to it, yet again, that there is a shortage of African Horse Sickness vaccine in the country.

In response to the shortage the national Dept of Agriculture (Dalrrd) has issued a statement saying, "The department welcomes the assurance given by OBP that contingency plans are being implemented and closely monitored to ensure that production outputs meet the demand and the assurance to the equine industry that all efforts are being made to ensure that the vaccine is available early in December 2021."

## **Against Regulations**

Horse owners are complaining that, apart from the fact that the vaccine has been unavailable, the fact that OBP will make it available from December is far too late for it to be fully effective during the early part of the horse sickness season. Indeed, by the department's own regulations, the vaccine should be administered in full between 1 June and 31 October in areas where vaccination is either desired or mandatory. This is, effectively, most of the country except for some of the Western Cape.



In terms of the Animal Diseases Act, No 35 of 1984, for the purposes of horse sickness, South Africa is divided into four zones, namely a free zone, a surveillance zone, a protection zone and an infected zone.

The free zone, in which vaccination is not required, comprises the western part of metropolitan Cape Town, stretching from Milnerton to Wynberg and down the coast to Camps Bay.

The surveillance zone, in which vaccination will only be permitted in writing by the State Veterinarian of the Boland, comprises the rest of the Cape Peninsula, the Cape Flats and the West Coast up to Langebaan.

The protection zone, in which vaccination is required, encompasses the next swathe eastwards, from north of Clanwilliam down to Cape Agulhas and including eastwards to Swellendam.

Finally, vaccination is strongly advised in the rest of the country, designated the infected zone.

In contrast to the infected zone, in the three vaccine controlled areas, infection pressure is much lower, says



## NEWS

the department.

“However, *Culicoides* midges (which carry the virus) are still present in this area and midge transmission of the vaccine virus appears to be a greater risk during the period 1 November to 31 May than outbreaks of field virus.”

Vaccine virus transmission occurs when a midge bites a recently vaccinated horse and becomes infected by



*Culicoides* midge.

the virus present in the horse as a result of injection with the live vaccine, and before the horse has

had a chance to build up its own immunity against the virus.

Accordingly, the last date for vaccination with either of the two doses in the controlled areas for 2021

remained 31 October for all equines in the three vaccine controlled zones and it is an offence to vaccinate in the controlled area after 31 October, unless written exemption has been granted to do so by the national Director: Animal Health.

Individual written and motivated applications for permission to vaccinate outside of the legal window period, under appropriate and strict vector protected conditions may be considered, says the department. 🌸



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## NEWS

# Dicla splits divisions

To better focus on what are two distinct markets and improve customer service, Dicla Farm & Seeds of Muldersdrift has split into two companies: one concentrating on sales and servicing of agricultural and industrial machinery, and the other on the horticultural aspects of the business, including greenhouse manufacture and sales, irrigation, seeds & seedlings and vegetable-growing-related equipment. The machinery side of the business, headed by Dirk Jonkers, will henceforth be known as Dicla Agri Machinery, while the newly-formed horticulture company is headed by Dirk Tijssen and is named Dicla Horticulture.



Tijssen explains that it made sense to split the business as the client base of Dicla Farm & Seeds had effectively constituted two separate groupings anyway, with little common overlap. The new setup therefore affords the management teams the opportunity to concentrate their efforts more directly on the needs of their customers. While the two businesses will operate as separate entities, they will be situated on the same premises just off the R28 in Muldersdrift. For more information [click here](#). ❀



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## CLIMATE CHANGE

# COP26 talks in a nutshell

While Swedish teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg described most accurately last month's Glasgow climate gabfest, officially COP26, as a lot of “blah, blah, blah”, one has to ask: what else did she expect? For the thousands of delegates who descended on the Scottish city for the first fortnight of November it was always going to be a talk-shop and if climate activists were disappointed when they realised that talk would be the major outcome, they were even more disappointed when two of the world's major coal producers and users, China and India, insisted at the eleventh hour on watering down the meeting's carefully constructed pledge regarding phasing out of coal as an energy source, to a more subtle “phasing down.”

Nonetheless, proceedings at COP26 were, generally, tinged with a sense of focus and urgency, particularly regarding the now-pressing need to drastically reduce carbon emissions worldwide if global temperature increases are to be contained within the magical 1,5°C band by the end of the decade.

Raising the ambition of national emission reduction targets, called nationally determined contributions or



NDCs, was a critical task for COP26 and although more than 120 parties submitted new or updated NDCs, the new targets only narrow the gap to capping global warming at 1.5°C by 15 to 17 per cent, and are, if fully implemented (which is far from certain), projected to result in warming of 2.4°C by the turn of the century. For, if humanity is to limit warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, additional emissions reductions before 2030, over and above current NDC pledges, will need to equate to reducing emissions by the equivalent of two years' of current annual emissions. To keep warming to 2°C, the equivalent reductions would be needed of one year's total emissions.

### ***In South Africa***

For South Africa, currently the world's seventh largest coal producer (at much less than a tenth the annual production of the largest, China, and only half that of Australia, in fifth place) and also seventh largest coal consumer (at one twentieth of the consumption of China), the big



## CLIMATE CHANGE

takeaway from COP26 was the signing of a political declaration with the governments of France, Germany, the UK and the US, as well as the leadership of the European Union, to establish a partnership to mobilise an initial \$8.5-billion, or R131-billion, over the next three to five years to support the implementation of South Africa's revised Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) through a just transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy. The package will be made available through a range of instruments, including grants and concessional finance, rather than in cash. Observers have pointed out that this amount, large though it may

be, is nothing like enough to achieve complete South African carbon reduction. Post COP26 South Africa joined a group of nations which refused to sign a pledge to have the world's shipping industry reduce carbon emissions to zero by 2050. This is curious, since South Africa no longer has a merchant shipping fleet on its registry. A good summary of the outcomes of COP26 is the Chatham House report, available [here](#) on our website. Chatham House is the common name for the London-based Royal Institute of International Affairs, a research organisation and think-tank that assists governments and society. 🌸

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## NEWS

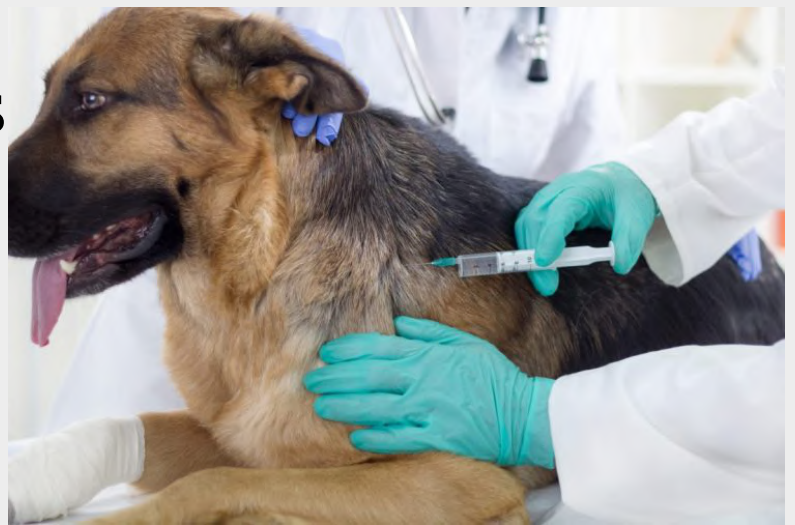
# Beware of rabies this summer season

If you are travelling through the country this holiday season, be aware of the threat of rabies in certain high-risk areas. That's the word from the national Dept of Agriculture (Dalrrd) which pointed out that the disease is particularly prevalent in Limpopo, Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape, as well as along the border between the Free State and Lesotho.

The department adds that the coastal areas of KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape are particularly high-risk areas for rabies.

The department warns members of the public not to approach or pick up stray dogs and cats from these areas for whatever reason, but rather to report such animals to the nearest welfare organisation, SPCA or police station.

Rabies is fatal to both animals and humans because the virus affects the brain and once clinical signs of the



disease become visible, there is no cure. The virus is transmitted through saliva of an infected animal when it bites, scratches or licks a person. Animals that are infected with rabies may show changes in behaviour, but these vary widely.

The infected animals may drool a lot, may not be able to swallow, may bark, whine or howl continually, and sometimes become aggressive or, on the contrary, they may just appear weak and unresponsive. If you suspect that you have been exposed to an animal that may have rabies it is important to wash the wound well with soap under running water and to immediately seek preventative treatment at your nearest hospital or clinic. ❀

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## SMART SMALLHOLDERS

### Mpumalanga woman finds success with poultry

**N**obody's a natural. You work hard to get good, and then work to get better. This is the philosophy that has kept Rozelle de Bruin (pictured right) going in her business Estancia Poultry Farm.

She lives on a smallholding just outside Middelburg, Mpumalanga and runs her business from there as well. The business has been going for just over two years.

"I started with some savings, but it wasn't a lot of capital. There was a building already on the property when I moved here and that's what I use."

De Bruin started by raising broilers. When it comes to breed, she has had success with Ross 308s and also Lohman Browns. She then also started raising Silver and Brown Hiline layers, which she sells at point of lay. She added cages as she could afford them. She also sells eggs. Once she had built up a good client



base and some more savings she invested in a 1 056-egg incubator, later adding a 1500-egg incubator.

This means that she is able to sell day old chicks. She sells 100 A-grade vaccinated chicks per box. The hatchery sells both broiler and layer chicks.

De Bruin is soon going to buy two more incubators.

Sometimes clients come to collect, but often she arranges for delivery, especially to rural areas where clients don't have their own transport.

"I have always had a passion for farming. But as I tell my clients, you are your best trainer. I have learnt



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## SMART SMALLHOLDERS

through experience. You make some mistakes but you also learn what works.”

Most of her marketing is done on social media and by word of mouth. Her greatest challenge has been scammers.

“There has been a shortage of broiler chicks recently. A major supplier had a terrible fire earlier in the year and then the looting in July also affected supply.

“So the demand has been high and criminals have taken advantage. People have used my name and the name of my company, getting customers to pay upfront and then disappearing.”

Trust is so important in business and De Bruin has worked hard to build up a good name amongst her clients. She does most of the work herself, but recently took on an administrative assistant.

She also acts as an agent for other producers. For example, on her Facebook page at the moment she is promoting some piglets on behalf of another farmer.

In addition to all this she is an agent for Afgri Feeds.

Earlier this year she came up with the idea of putting together a starter pack for anyone who wants to start their own business.

This consisted of 200 day old chicks, plus feed and the necessary equipment, all in one box.

Estancia does not always offer this though and clients should keep an eye on the [Facebook page](#) to see when this special is available again.

Her advice to others who want to farm: “Don't hold back on your dreams. Don't lose hope. Sometimes I have thought that I can't go on. Then I wake up in the morning ready to try again.”

You can contact Estancia Poultry Farm on 063 970 4224 or

[info@estanciapoultry.co.za](mailto:info@estanciapoultry.co.za). 🌸

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## POULTRY

# How to avoid scamsters in the poultry industry

**B**ecause poultry equipment such as drinkers, feeders, lights etc, and even boxes of chicks are small and easily-transported, any number of individuals and entities advertise themselves as dealers. In far too many cases, however, such “businesses” turn out to be untraceable scams, with the victims often losing thousands as a result.

Poultry production, whether it be in the form of layers or broilers, is a game of big numbers. For example, even if you are a small-scale producer you will have a hundred or more birds, at least, to hope to make any real money at all. But even for 100 birds you will require a number of drinkers, feeders, lights etc which individually may cost no more than a few rands and don't take up a lot of space, but which together amount to a consignment of some value.

Thus, a dealer in such equipment could quite easily set him or herself up in a spare room or double garage in a suburban house. There, the dealer may hold a small stock of items to sell out of hand, but most of the product offering will be supplied by wholesalers on a per-order basis: You (the buyer) order, the dealer places an identical order with the wholesaler, the wholesaler then deliv-



ers to the dealer when it receives payment, and the dealer then delivers to you, probably by third-party courier.

Next, website designers can be very creative in setting up an attractive site, complete with online shopping pages and payment options. A site, in fact, far more fantastic than the entity which it represents.

So, the first check to undertake when you see an unusually attractive offer, or a dealer's website you have never seen before, is to do a Google Maps search for the premises. Once Google Maps has located the premises, click on the layers icon in the bottom left corner of your screen.

This will bring up a satellite picture of the area, from which you can see the type of buildings of the area. Are they townhouses? Industrial warehouses? Suburban shops? Plots?

Try also to search for reviews of the business. Google offers its own reviews section. The website [hellopeter.com](http://hellopeter.com) remains a good option as well. Search for the business's name and see if anybody has posted glowing reviews, or rants, at the service they received.

Then ask about the company on related Facebook groups.



## POULTRY FRAUD

Has anybody else used the business?  
Is it legitimate, etc?

### ***Pick up the phone***

While e-commerce is thriving, unfortunately the prevalence of fraud in this industry sometimes means you must use alternative measures. As another check, rather than placing an order online, phone the business itself and gauge the level of professionalism and enthusiasm in the responses you receive from the personnel you speak to.

Finally, on a first purchase, ask if you can buy on a cash and collect basis, what the hours of business are, and whether the dealer has the stock you require. And be blunt in explaining that you want to build up a long-term relationship with your supplier and would like, initially at least, to meet face-to-face. It goes without saying that if there is any hesitancy at all on the part of the dealer, move on, because any reputable store owner, serious about his business, will never refuse to meet a customer, and will need to have a cast-iron excuse not to accept cash in payment.

### ***Buying from hatcheries***

Much the same pertains when buying day-olds. It is equally easy to set oneself up as a hatchery, buying in fertile eggs, incubating them in one's garage or shed, packaging the hatchlings into

cartons and selling them off. But there are added factors that make the business of hatching poultry much more fraught.

The first is the hatch rate. Out of, say 1 000 eggs in the incubator, only 50%, or 60% may actually hatch, the rate depending on the condition of the eggs to start with, and the consistency of the temperature and humidity in the incubator (a factor not helped by Eskom load-shedding).

Thus the hatchery takes a gamble at the beginning of the cycle: of its 1 000 eggs, in three and a half weeks' time it could have 500 chicks to sell, or 600. Or, if it is lucky, 800 or 900 and more.

And once they are hatched, in whatever numbers, the hatchery needs to get rid of them as fast as possible, because chicks will only survive a short while without starting to eat and drink.

Given this uncertainty about the numbers and the need for speed, hatcheries will usually ask for payment upfront. And it is easy to see that, if the enterprise is a scam, a fancy website with fulsome promises and a requirement to pay upfront for chicks which may or may not hatch, is fraught with possibilities for fraud.

Thus again, when buying from a hatchery for the first time, try to build up a personal relationship first, taking the time to discuss your concerns and



## POULTRY FRAUD

position with the owner/manager, and asking to collect the first box or two of chicks cash and collect. If the business is legitimate it will surely never refuse such terms, even if it may not be able to promise you what you require when you require it, should it be short of stock.

And, never buy chicks from a bakkie on the side of the road. Firstly, you have no actual idea how old they are, nor whether they have been vaccinated, nor indeed what breed they are. And even if you give them Stresspack as soon as you place them in the brooder house you can almost guarantee to spend a disheartening amount of time picking up little fluffy yellow corpses each morning, as your mortality rate will almost definitely be

high, to the point that the entire venture will be instantly unprofitable. In South Africa, the poultry industry is monitored by the SA Poultry Association (Sapa).

Manufacturers and suppliers the poultry industry can become members of the association. According to Sapa, there is an increase in the number of scam artists posing as suppliers to the industry and the fact that these websites are using the Sapa logo does not mean they are legitimate.

Should you wish to verify whether a company advertising on the internet is legitimate email the South African Poultry Association at [reception@sapoultry.co.za](mailto:reception@sapoultry.co.za) or alternatively you can call +27 11 795 9920. 🌸

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## PEST CONTROL

# How to stop birds eating your fruit

**R**ecently, a reader asked how to prevent birds from eating the fruit off his fruit trees. Like him, many smallholders experience a similar problem, which has grown in the last decade or so as fruit-eating species migrate to peri-urban areas as a result of habitat change. So how can one prevent them from devouring one's fruit? Here are some options, which will vary in their degrees of success and cost.

### **Bird net**

While this method can get costly, it is the most effective. Cover your trees in a light, fine mesh-netting. This will prevent access to the fruit while still allowing sunlight through to the foliage. You can cover your trees directly ~ ensuring the ripening fruit is tucked under the foliage and not touching the net itself, otherwise birds can still access the fruit. Or you can build a frame around your tree or orchard and then drape the net over it. This allows easier access to the tree for harvesting, spraying, watering etc.

A downmarket version of a net covering is to unfurl a reel of cotton over the tree. This requires two people, standing opposite each other near the tree. The first person ties the end



of the cotton to a branch, then hurls the reel over the tree to the other person who catches it, wraps the cotton around a thin branch and flings the reel back over the tree. Both then move a little in the same direction around the tree and repeat the process. As they move steadily around the tree the outermost leaves and shoots are covered in a fine loose net of cotton into which the birds will not wish to fly.

The advantage of this method is that the cotton can simply be cut away with the prunings at the end of the season when the tree is dormant.

### **Scarecrows**

Make a traditional scarecrow using a broomstick, old clothes and some form of stuffing. For this method to work, you must move your scarecrow periodically so that the birds do not get used to it. One with arms that move is even better ~ loose sleeves blowing in the wind. Or, if you have access to a car-dealership, ask if you can borrow their blow-up dancing man for the summer.



## PEST CONTROL

### **Balloons**

Tying blown-up balloons to your trees can help (with the exception of lemon trees, but then again, fruit eating birds will probably avoid lemons anyway). The balloons will blow in the wind, causing movement that might scare off birds. If they happen to pop every now and then, that will also act as a deterrent. Just take care to pick up any popped balloons, as latex or aluminium foil can be harmful to birds and animals if eaten.

### **Fake predator birds**

An ornamental owl or eagle can help. There are advanced versions that have flashing eyes and hoot to imitate the real thing.

### **Attracting predators**

Creating conditions to attract natural predators is an option. For example, installing an owl box near your orchard. Some large commercial operations hire companies that bring raptors to the farm to chase away fruit-eaters. For smallholders, this is

extreme but attracting an owl will bring other benefits too ~ rodent control being the most obvious.

### **Reflective items**

These come in a wide range of options starting with the cheap old CDs and pie tins trick ~ tying CDs and aluminum pie dishes to your branches so that the reflection throws the birds off. Fancier versions include a product which uses light beams reflected through direct sunlight. A reflective pyramid rotates, creating beams of light in a changing pattern. These light beams disorientate birds and prevent them from coming in to land near the pyramid. These systems are powered by a small solar-powered motor, battery-powered or more rudimentary wind-powered options which rotate as the wind blows. These retail from around R1 500 up to more than R6 000 for sophisticated options. According to some manufacturers, systems such as these should be used as infestation reduction and not as a catch-all solution. On average, they prevent the presence of about seven out of every ten garden birds. Any reflective system will not work for roosting or



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## PEST CONTROL

nesting birds, as their lack of flight means they will not see the beams of light. Additionally, experts recommend any reflective measures be put into place at least three weeks before your fruit start to ripen, as once the birds start feeding it is very difficult to chase them away.

### **Ultrasonic emitters**

There are devices that emit a very high-pitched sound undetectable by humans. These are also used in pest control for rats, mice and squirrels. Their effectiveness on birds is up for debate with some growers swearing by them.

However, the sound can also be detected by dogs and cats, so

smallholders with pets should use these with caution to prevent causing distress to your (or your neighbour's) pets.

### **Finding alternative food sources**

Some experts recommend creating an alternative food source, far away from your fruit trees. Setting up a bird feeder on the opposite end of your property will draw the birds away from your fruit.

However, this is only recommended in conjunction with a few other methods. A deterrent at the trees combined with an attraction elsewhere might fool the birds into thinking the feeding station is simply an easier and safer meal-ticket. 🌸

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## ALIEN SPECIES

# Pompom weed revisited

**S**emi-rural or rural residents in North West Province, Gauteng and Mpumalanga will be aware of the ongoing invasion of grasslands by Pompom weed (*Campuloclinium macrocephalum*).

Sadly, it has also been detected in KwaZulu Natal and the Free State. Pompom is a flowering perennial from South America that has spread eastwards through South Africa at an alarming rate. Plant experts estimate that it increased its range by up to 671% between 2006 and 2016. (B W van Wilgen et al, 2020)

It has a fluffy pink flower head, which appears in profusion in late spring and summer. Stems are green to purplish, up to 1,3m high, which die back each year, and the leaves are light green and serrated.

When it is found in dense patches, it makes a pretty sight. However, Pompom weed threatens grasslands, open savanna and wetlands by decreasing the carrying capacity of the land. The plant is unpalatable to wildlife and agricultural livestock and causes skin irritations in animals. It threatens biodiversity, conservation, agriculture and tourism.

According to the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act 2004 (Nemba) it is a



Category 1b weed. This means that it must be removed or destroyed. Any form of trade or planting is strictly prohibited.

Yet the *SA Smallholder* regularly receives comments from readers who are doing their best to eradicate the weed, but their neighbours are doing nothing. This means that their own land is regularly re-infested.

These plants are deemed to have such a high invasive potential that infestations can qualify to be placed under a government-sponsored invasive species management programme. The SA National Biodiversity Institute (Sanbi) urges people to report sightings of these plants to their Early Detection & Rapid Response team (EDRR).

The EDRR teams need to know the infestation's locality (the exact locality, by supplying landmarks or GPS information if possible).

This process, however, seems to be as effective as tilting at windmills. Efforts by the *SA Smallholder* to contact them proved fruitless. The Pretoria switchboard simply dropped the call without answering. And



## ALIEN SPECIES

nobody was available to take the call at the Cape Town number provided and a message left on voicemail has to date not received a response. Next the *Smallholder* called the hot-line for the Dept of Environment and held on for ten minutes for an agent to become available. The recorded message stated that one could email them on

[callcentre@environment.gov.za](mailto:callcentre@environment.gov.za). We have emailed them. Perhaps in future editions we will be able to report on the response. More locally we tried to get information from our metro environmental department, but were sent from one person to another and are still waiting to be told who we

should actually speak to. So much for the "Green Scorpions".

### What you can do

But back to the field: the weed is fiendish in its ability to endure and multiply.

Propagation is by thousands of tiny seeds that burst from the mature flower heads and are borne on even a slight breeze over a vast area. The plant can also reproduce vegetatively, ie a small piece of stem, if dropped on the ground can under the right conditions put out roots and begin life anew.

It survives fires and frost during the winter months because all of its living

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## ALIEN SPECIES

components are in a dormant state underground. Under drought conditions during summer it can revert to a dormant state by withdrawing its nutrients from the shoots back to the roots.

In general, physical methods of control, such as uprooting or hoeing, are ineffective and make the problem worse through disturbance.

Pompom weed expert Hildegard Klein of the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), stresses, "Do not burn the infestations, as this removes surrounding plants that might provide competition to the weed." She also advises protecting one's area against fire.

The best one can do according to

Klein is to remove the flowers before they mature, with as much of the stem as possible, putting them in a black bin bag, to contain the spread of the seed. Sealing the bag and leaving it in the sun for a few days will effectively "cook" the seedheads and kill the stems.

Cutting off the blooms without the stem will simply result in the plant putting out branches with new flow-



Cutting and removing pompom weed.

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## ALIEN SPECIES

ers, particularly early in the growing season.

It is vital that this be done again and again, as mowing will not cause the plant to die back, it will simply restrict further distribution of seeds. In the case of single or very few pompom plants in an area, each plant can be dug up, taking care to remove at least the root crown (the area where the stem is attached to



Pompom infestation. Image: ARC

the roots) from the soil.

Once the root crown has been removed,

the roots should not re-grow.

It is important to cause as little soil disturbance as possible, in order to prevent the mass-germination of seeds.

There are herbicides that are currently registered for use on pompom weed: Brush-Off, Access 240 and Climax.

Smallholders also need to be proactive in terms of maintaining the natural vegetation on our plots, keeping it in a healthy state.

Well-managed pastures are better able to resist invasion by pompom weed (and any weeds, for that matter) than overgrazed, frequently-burned out rangelands in poor condition. 🌸

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## ALIEN SPECIES

# ARC tackles pompom weed problem

**T**he Agricultural Research Council (ARC) has been working on the use of biocontrol agents against pompom weed for many years.

Biological weed control entails importing insects or pathogens (eg, fungi) from the weed's country of origin, testing them for host-specificity in quarantine, and then releasing those that damage the target weed but do not develop on any other plant species. (Klein, 2001) It is important to bear in mind that biocontrol agents rarely eradicate a weed altogether. Where they are successful, they reduce the weed to manageable levels.

In 2013 the ARC released the stem- and leaf-deforming thrips (*Liothrips tractabilis*) on pompom weed at Rietvlei Nature Reserve near Pretoria. According to Liame van der Westhuizen of the ARC Weeds Division, over a quarter of a million insects have been released since then, at over 150 sites throughout the invaded range. Most of the releases have been made in the densely infested Gauteng (65%) and North West provinces (24%), followed by Mpumalanga and Limpopo with less than 10% each.

Once established, the thrips can be found on 25-80% of pompom plants,



Pompom flower-feeding moth, *Cochylis campuloclinium*. Image: ARC

resulting in a significant reduction in plant height, the number of buds per inflorescence, the total number of buds per plant, as well as the number of seeds per bud.

Pompom infestations in KZN have also been flagged and although some municipalities have early detection and response protocols and budgets in place, many others do not.

Although initial dispersal of *L tractabilis* from a release site appears to be slow, covering distances of less than 15m per season, inter-site dispersal can increase in range by up to 9km when the thrips migrate between pompom populations. This was the case with sites monitored within Gauteng and Mpumalanga where long distance dispersal became apparent five to seven seasons post release.

The main drivers behind the dispersal of *L tractabilis* are still being investigated. It is well known that various stimuli, including variation in temperature, precipitation, resource abundance, population density and resource quality are associated with migration.



## ALIEN SPECIES

Both pompom thrips nymphs and adults feed on the stems and leaf tissue at the apical shoot tips of pompom weed. This causes deformities in plant growth, which reduces its height, biomass and flower production.



Reduced leaves early in the season because of the thrips feeding. Image: ARC

Although damage to the stem tips may encourage the plants to send out lateral branches in response, the rapid population increase of the agent ensures that the new shoot tips are also attacked, and these display

similar damage. The thrips has greatest impact on seedlings, or on new spring regrowth.

Dispersal of the thrips after release is slow but steady, with the impact on infected plants becoming more noticeable over a period from three to five seasons following the initial release.

In addition to the thrips there is a new development in the battle against the weed. A number of years ago the ARC evaluated and obtained permission for the release of a second insect agent, the flower-feeding moth *Cochylis campuloclinium*. After quite a long delay, a new culture of the flower-feeding moth was finally imported early in 2021 and is currently being reared in the ARC-PHP Roodeplaat quarantine facility. Van der Westhuizen told the SA *Smallholder* that they are using the



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## ALIEN SPECIES

material for research purposes. "We are developing release strategies, monitoring establishment etc. And because the females need fresh buds, we will only be releasing them once the pompom flowering is in full swing. It will be some time still before we can make them available to the general public."

The ARC tests have shown that the larvae can destroy up to 76% of the florets in the flower buds, as well as 54% of seeds in mature flowers. Areas that are deemed less suitable for *L. tractabilis*, as well as pompom infestations where biological control has not been mandated, will be selected for initial *C. campuloclinium* releases.

Research also shows that there appears to be no competitive interactions between the moths and the already established thrips, so it is hoped that the two insect agents will perform a complementary role of reducing flowering (*L. tractabilis*) and seed production (*C. campuloclinium*). Members of the public are encouraged to take part in this project. A database is kept with contact details of people wanting to release thrips and the ARC-PPRI supplies insects accordingly, when available. Landowners can email Ms v d Westhuizen on [vdwesthuizenl@arc.agric.za](mailto:vdwesthuizenl@arc.agric.za) if they want their names to be added to the list. 🌸



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## EDUCATION & TRAINING

# How to get trained in agriculture

There is a great variety of training and education courses available in the field of agriculture. Thus, students should be very clear about what they are looking for. At school level, if your child would like to pursue a career in farming, there are a number of high schools which specialise in agriculture. Some of them offer boarding facilities.

Along with the usual academic subjects, learners can study agricultural science, agricultural management and agricultural technology.

There are also practical classes in managing livestock and growing crops.

Many are single sex schools but there are some that have both female and male learners.

At tertiary education level there are a number of options to study farming in its various forms.

Some universities offer degrees that include subjects such as agronomy and crop science, agricultural business, animal sciences, agricultural economics, farm and ranch management, natural resources and conservation, forestry and sustainable agriculture.

These are usually four year BSc degrees.



Provincial agricultural colleges offer certificate courses which are a year or two long, and diploma courses, which are usually three years of study.

There are a surprising number of qualifications in different aspects of agriculture, as well as agricultural processing.

These courses have been accredited by AgriSETA. (This is the Agricultural Sector Education & Training Authority.)

These courses are also offered by private colleges. Generally blended learning is offered, where some of the theory can be covered through distance or online learning, but then the practical skills will be achieved through face-to-face training.

Learners are encouraged to do their practical work on farms near to where they live, particularly on larger commercial farms, where they gain wider experience.

The course facilitator will visit them on their farms, in order to sign off on the written evidence of their work. Short skills courses are also available. They last three to five days and tend to be practical.



## EDUCATION & TRAINING

Other training is offered by an array of private bodies, such as the beekeepers' associations or Grain SA. These are not formal education but are very useful study groups or workshops for anyone starting out in an agricultural endeavour.

There are also a number of community-based NGOs that equip local people with skills and knowledge of how to keep livestock and how to grow crops and vegetables.

Agro-processing is one of the topics that the Agricultural Research Council offers through short learning programmes.

At a household level (but with skills that will be useful should one wish to

upscale to making for a profit) you can learn about cheese making and other dairy processes through ARC workshops, but there are also private cheese academies offering tuition. Meat processing or charcuterie courses can be found in most major centres throughout the country, along with bread, jam/marmalade, herbal creams and lotion making workshops, as well as fermenting (eg kombucha) and pickling.

Such courses are particularly useful for smallholders seeking to develop new hobbies or learn new skills with an aim towards becoming self-sufficient or to make extra income. 🌸

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## BUSINESS

# How to form an agricultural co-op

**B**y coming together with your neighbouring landowners and growers in your area you can enjoy the advantages of improved bargaining power when buying equipment and inputs, and thus reduced purchasing prices, better market access or a broadening market, and improvement of product quality and volume through shared expertise and advice.

The best way to achieve these aims is to form an agricultural co-operative, where a group of people work together with common purpose. The Dept of Agriculture (Dalrrd) encourages the establishment of co-operatives as a way of addressing rural poverty and unemployment, especially among the youth. However the processes that need to



be completed can be quite daunting where people are given little administrative help.

Co-operative membership is voluntary. A co-op is a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise. Profits, known as surpluses in a co-operative, are divided among members in relation to the amount of the business each member did through the co-operative.

To establish a co-operative the first thing that needs to be done is to hold a formation meeting with everyone that is interested in establishing the entity. A chairperson is elected for the meeting and the group needs to discuss and set down what they want to achieve. Those who are interested in joining should complete an application form for membership.



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## BUSINESS

The members then elect a board of directors, who will be the management committee. The members decide on a name for the co-op. They will discuss what equipment, premises and other materials will be needed by the enterprise and how funding is going to be found. A business plan should be drawn up.

A co-operative must have a constitution ~ a formal document that states the policies, management details and rules of the enterprise. There are examples of constitutions that members can adapt to suit their circumstances. [Click here](#) to find one. All the members need to understand the rules and agree to them before they sign the constitution.

In a co-op each member has one vote. Once the interim board of directors is elected, they will elect the chairperson, secretary and treasurer. Members usually contribute equally in the form of monthly fees and in the form of their labour.

The simplest form of co-op is a primary co-op, which must have a mini-

mum of five members.

The co-op then needs to register as a customer on the [website](#) of the Companies & Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC). Go to *Online Transacting*, then select *New eservices*, log in using your email address as a username and your password. Under *Services*, start by reserving the name and then move to *Co-operative registration*.

It is compulsory to reserve a name and obtain approval for the name before registering a co-operative at a fee of R50. Once you have registered you will be prompted to reserve a name by completing a CoR9.1 form on the CIPC website, but indicating under Comments on the form "Co-operative". This is an interim arrangement as the CIPC website is not yet ready to do the applicable Co-operatives Reservation of Name form. The name must indicate that it is an agricultural co-operative.

The CO-OP1 registration fee is R125. If you lack reliable internet access or experience problems with the CIPC website you should be able to get help with all the paperwork at your local office of the Dept of Agriculture. 🌸



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## GIFT IDEAS

# The ultimate gift wishlist for smallholders

**W**ith money tight after nearly two years of Covid-related lockdowns and restrictions, many smallholders will be looking to give each other smaller, but practical, presents this Christmas, rather than spending on frivolities.

What, therefore, can one give a handy man who lives on a smallholding, and who probably has a good selection of tools already with which he does the DIY tasks around his plot?

Fortunately, technology and innovation have come to the rescue. On the one hand, the number of options in the field of cordless, rechargeable power tools, and their efficiency, has increased almost logarithmically over recent years.

New ranges from new manufacturers, and new models from established names, are available and these will surely find good use in a handyman's toolkit as he (or she) looks to move away from the inconvenience of old-fashioned corded tools.

But, on the other hand, new tools and accessories are being designed and brought to market that will also find plenty of use among handymen who may not yet have been exposed to such innovations.



And the kids are catered for, too, both with practical stuff such as branded satchels, lunchboxes and pencil cases, to all manner of apparel, as well as, of course, selections of very authentic looking toy tools to fire up the kids' imaginations and give them hours of outdoor fun doing “real work” alongside their dads.

Here is a selection.

### ***Drilling, tapping & countersinking in one***

If you work with metal the new Alpen PLWM combination bits will be a welcome filler in your Christmas stocking. Available in sizes from M3 to M10 with a 1/4" hexagonal shank, the bits combine a drill, a tap and a countersinker in one, making accuracy and speed of work much easier when preparing holes for screws and bolts in metal, as the three processes are combined. The Austrian-





## GIFT IDEAS

available at leading hardware stores, or through their South African distributor, [Vermont Sales](#).

### **Outdoor knives and multi-tools**

A range of eight multi-tools, foldable knives and survival knives from Tork Craft will hit the spot with hunters and outdoorsy types, as well as anglers, wood workers and gardeners. They are available from leading specialist stores, or through Tork Craft's South African distributors, [Vermont Sales](#).

### **Drill bit sharpeners**

Choose from two models of drill bit sharpener from Drill Doctor to suit the needs of the DIY enthusiast or the professional workshop foreman.



The two models are mains-powered, unlike many DIY bit sharpeners, which require an electric drill itself to be attached.

Both models from the smaller DDXP-1 to the DD500XI (pictured above) can sharpen all types of bit from 2.5mm to 13mm dia, with the 500X series able to sharpen bits at 118 deg and 135 deg angles depending on type.

The sharpeners are available from leading hardware dealers or from Drill Doctor's South African distributors, [Vermont Sales](#).

### **Mobile power bank**

For tradesmen out on site who still need to communicate, Festool's new 18V cellphone charger turns every Festool 18V battery charger into a power bank. And, smartphones can be charged both wirelessly or conventionally via a USB cable on the new PHC 18 station.

The charging station is available from leading specialist outlets or through Festool's South African distributor, [Vermont Sales](#).

### **Specialist gloves**

If you do just about anything with your hands a range of gloves from Tork Craft, each designed with a specific use in mind, should be on your Christmas wish list.

Covering industrial, construction, gardening, woodworking and various categories of sporting use, each pair of gloves has characteristics optimised for their specific activity.

For example the Spandex Red gloves for offroad riders have a terry cloth panel on the back of the thumb, making wiping sweat off goggles and brow easy.

They are available through leading outlets or through Tork Craft's South African distributor, [Vermont Sales](#).



## GIFT IDEAS

### **Cordless garden power tools**

The new range of Worx 20V tools for garden tasks will make many of the more onerous jobs around the garden and plot a breeze.

All based on the same 20V Li-ion battery system, the range comprises a chainsaw, a one-handed pruning saw, a grass shear scrubber and shrub trimmer, a pole saw, and ~ a new machine ~ a jaw saw.



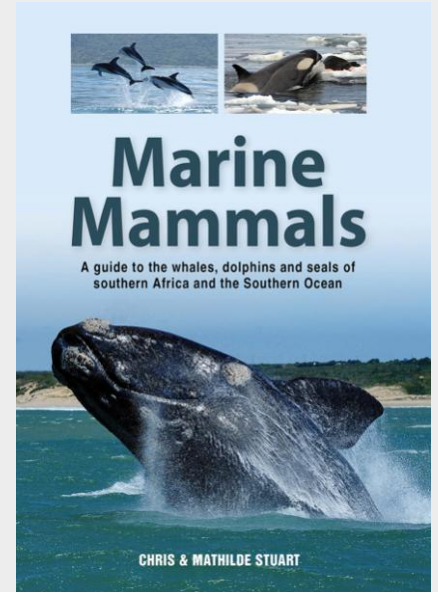
The jaw saw (pictured above) comprises a “jaw, which clamps around the branch to be cut, holding it securely, while a small chainsaw within, with a 15cm cutting bar, gets to work severing the wood.

This device will prove a boon when pruning trees, clearing scrub and cutting firewood.

Worx tools are available from leading outlets or through the South African distributors, [Vermont Sales](http://VermontSales.com).

### **Marine mammals book**

If tools for DIY and jobs around the plot don't light your fire, a new, beautifully illustrated book from Penguin Random House that looks at marine mam-



mals off the southern African coast might be more your bag.

Written by Chris and Mathilde Stuart, this easy-to-use identification guide to the whales, dolphins and seals found in Southern African waters and the Southern Ocean is compact yet comprehensive. Close to 50 species occur in the region and the book covers key identification features, behaviour, diet and distribution. There are detailed illustrations of diagnostic characteristics.

It also includes the best times and places to view more commonly seen species. Common behaviours such as breaching, spyhopping, lob-tailing,

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## GIFT IDEAS

bow-surfing and logging are explained.

The book unpacks marine mammals' evolutionary background and remarkable adaptations to aquatic life.

The recommended retail price for *Marine Mammals: A guide to the whales, dolphins & seals of Southern Africa and the Southern Ocean* is R150.

### For the kids

Christmas is a time for the kids, and this Christmas is no exception.

Apart from a number of ranges of headwear and apparel branded with the logos of famous companies such as CAT, Willy's and John Deere, it's to be expected that the famous international power equipment brands would have their own ranges of toys. In focus this year is Husqvarna's range of a kid's chainsaw, brushcutter, hedge trimmer, leaf blower, lawnmower and even a remote controlled mower that go beyond merely being push-about.

In the case of the chainsaw, for exam-

ple, a plastic chain moves around the cutting bar and the machine makes a chainsaw-like buzzing noise when the trigger is pressed.

The brushcutter, likewise makes a buzzing noise, and the attachment where the cutting line or blade would be lights up with LEDs and spins when the trigger is pressed.

For a more elaborate present Husqvarna sells the chainsaw in a kit form, complete with a helmet and gloves.

To view the range, [click here](#).



Husqvarna (and Stihl) also have a number of handy foldable and non-foldable pruning saws and secateurs in the smaller end of their product offerings which will make useful presents. 🌸

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# Weddings and cabbages



The Western Cape, with its rolling hills and lovingly-tended vineyards, can be a beautiful place. Indeed, it's a wonderful place, and has some wonderful venues in which to get married. Who would not like their wedding pictures taken in such glorious surroundings? Serried rows of vines, their branches laden with bunches of grapes ripening for the harvest, set against a backdrop of majestic mountains. Trouble is, tending vineyards is an agricultural pursuit, no different to growing peaches or mealies or cabbages. All are affected by the seasons, and all require different interventions as the seasons change. And sometimes, even the most beautiful vineyard can look like a building site when it's been pruned, and before the new season's growth has had a chance to materialise. And so it was a young couple of my acquaintance booked their venue, and invited their families and friends ~ all Gauteng based ~ to their wedding. As the day approached, the entire party undertook the trek to the Cape, and arrived in their finery at the wedding chapel. After the ceremony the entire party trooped outside for the wedding photos. There to be confronted not by lush vegetation, but rather by dry, brown fields filled with what looked like no more than dead scrub.

Which reminded me of another wedding I attended a few years ago, a most lavish affair, the reception held in a lovely venue on a mountainside over-

looking Hart-beespoort Dam. If you are familiar with that area you will know that the Moot valley stretches westwards from the dam, its soil among the most fertile in the country and its climate protected by the mountains on either side; its fields thus capable of easily producing two crops a year. So as you drive through the Moot you will see its fields covered in an ever-changing kaleidoscope of mealies, tomatoes, soya, sunflower ~ and cabbage. Again, the young bride- and groom-to-be decided on the venue largely because they saw a lovely field of green mealies close by, which they deemed would make a lovely backdrop for their wedding pictures. But the march of the seasons deemed otherwise. By the day of the wedding the farmer had long since harvested his mealies, and ploughed and planted a thriving crop of cabbages, which were just about ready for harvesting themselves. Now if you have ever stood near a large field of cabbages ready for harvest, you will detect a certain whiff. Of fart. It doesn't take much imagination to realise that serried rows of Glory of Enkhuizens stretching as far as the eye can see, exuding a mild miasma of blocked drains, make at best an unusual backdrop to what are supposed to be mementoes of the best day of one's life. Small wonder then that the marriage only lasted all of 18 months.