South African

Commercial sorghum quality for the 2023/2024 Season

Acknowledgements
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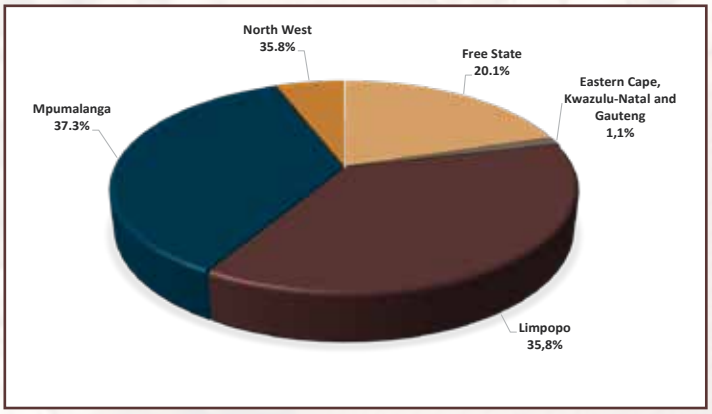
- The Sorghum Trust for its financial support in conducting this survey.
- Agbiz Grain and its members for providing the samples to make this survey possible.
- The Crop Estimates Committee (CEC) of the Department of Agriculture (NDA) for providing production related figures.
- South African Grain Information Service (SAGIS) for providing supply and demand figures relating to sorghum.

Introduction

The final commercial sorghum crop figure of the 2023/24 production season as overseen by the National Crop Estimates Liaison Committee (CELC) was 98 000 tons. This figure represents a year-on-year increase of 3.9% (3 640 tons). The two major sorghum producing provinces, Mpumalanga and Limpopo, respectively contributed 37% and 36% of the total crop. The national yield average of 2.33 t/ha declined with 16% compared to the previous season.

Graph 1: Provincial contribution to the production of the 2023/24 sorghum crop



Figures provided by the CEC.

During the harvesting season, a representative sample of each delivery of sorghum at the various grain intake points, was taken according to the prescribed grading regulations. The sampling procedure for the samples used in this survey is described on page 28. Twenty-five (25) composite sorghum samples, representing different production regions, were analysed for quality. In addition, nine (9) imported sorghum samples from Brazil were analysed and the results compared with that of the local sorghum crop.

The samples were graded, and test weight and thousand kernel mass determined. Sub-samples were milled and analysed for moisture, crude protein, crude fat and starch content. After sieving and dehulling by means of a Barley pearler, the fraction of the sample larger than 1.8 mm were milled and Hunter Lab colour analyses conducted. Multi-mycotoxin analyses as well as Image analyses (Length, Width, Elongation (% Width/Length) and Volume/surface area (%)) were also performed on these samples.

This is the seventh annual sorghum crop quality survey performed by The Southern African Grain Laboratory NPC (SAGL). SAGL was established in 1997 on request of the Grain Industry. SAGL is an ISO 17025 accredited testing laboratory and participates in various proficiency testing schemes, both nationally and internationally, as part of our ongoing quality assurance procedures to demonstrate technical competency and international comparability.

The goal of this crop quality survey is the compilation of a detailed database, accumulating quality data collected over several seasons on the national commercial sorghum crop. The data reveal general tendencies and highlight quality differences in the commercial sorghum produced in different local production regions. A detailed database containing reliable analytical data collected over several seasons, is essential in enabling industry to comment on proposed legislative levels and to supply reliable data for targeted research projects.

In addition to the quality information, production figures (obtained from the Crop Estimates Committee (CEC)) relating to hectares planted, tons produced and yields obtained on a national as well as provincial basis, over an eleven season period, are provided in this report. SAGIS (South African Grain Information Service) supply and demand information is provided in table and graph format. Import and export figures over several seasons are also included.

The national sorghum grading regulations as published in the Government Gazette of 8 January 2016 are provided as the last section of the report.

Production

Sorghum is a tropical grass grown primarily in semi-arid regions of the world. Sorghum can grow in areas too dry for maize and is deemed to be the fifth most important grain crop grown in the world (after maize, wheat, rice and barley).

World sorghum production for the 2023/24 season was 59.1 million tons and for the 2024/25 season 63.4 million tons. The United States of America remains the largest contributor (8.7 million tons in the 2024/25 season). See Table 1a for the world sorghum trade (export and import figures) as well as production, consumption and stocks figures in Table 1b.

Table 1a: World Sorghum Trade October/September Trade Year, Thousand Metric Tons

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26 Sep
Trade Year Exports					
Australia	2 267	2 753	2 060	2 700	2 600
Argentina	1 800	800	1 100	1 400	1 400
Brazil	10	1	93	175	75
India	41	37	33	40	50
Nigeria	50	50	50	50	50
Ukraine	72	66	36	40	45
Paraguay	21	38	63	135	35
Others	170	85	86	97	102
Subtotal	***4 431***	***3 830***	***3 521***	***4 637***	***4 357***
United States	**7 387**	**2 965**	**5 964**	**2 400**	**5 400**
World Total	***11 818***	***6 795***	***9 485***	***7 037***	***9 757***
Trade Year Imports					
China	10 991	4 863	8 341	5 500	7 600
Mexico	362	176	60	500	600
European Union	167	38	16	200	200
Japan	258	241	127	130	200
Kenya	79	152	24	160	75
Eritrea	95	63	162	70	60
Ethiopia	12	35	14	275	50
Somalia	50	50	50	50	50
Sudan	75	110	60	75	50
Taiwan	55	50	51	55	50
Others	386	310	475	549	303
Subtotal	***12 530***	***6 088***	***9 380***	***7 564***	***9 238***
Unaccounted	**- 712**	**707**	**104**	**- 528**	**519**
United States	**0**	**0**	**1**	**1**	**0**
World Total	***11 818***	***6 795***	***9 485***	***7 037***	***9 757***

Note:
Unaccounted: This term includes grain in transit, reporting discrepancies in some countries and trade to countries outside the USDA database.

All trade tables contain Trade Year (TY) data which puts all countries on a uniform, 12-month period for analytical comparisons: Sorghum Oct/Sep, irrespective of the different local marketing years. TY 2024/25 corresponds to Oct 2024 to Sep 2025.