

VOORSITTERSVERSLAG

J C VON SOLMS, AECI Bpk

Dit is met genoë dat ek aan u verslag lewer oor die werksaamhede van die Vereniging gedurende die afgelope jaar. In hierdie, die 21ste jaar van die bestaan van die Misstofvereniging in sy huidige vorm, is dit miskien paslik om 'n paar van ons belangrikste doelstellings soos saamgevat in ons Akte van Oprigting en Statute te beklemtoon. Hulle is:

- * om die ekonomiese gebruik van misstowwe aan te moedig en te ontwikkel met die doel om die vrugbaarheid van die grond te verbeter, om beter oeste op te lewer en om die welvaart van landbou in die algemeen te bevorder;
- * om navorsing op enige gebied binne die doelstellings van die Vereniging wat tot voordeel van die Vereniging en/of sy lede geag word, te doen . . .
- * om daadwerklike samewerking van die Departement van Landbou, georganiseerde landbou en die koöperatiewe beweging te probeer verkry.

If we examine our efforts during the last year against these objectives, and examine, firstly, the consumption of fertilizer and the improvement in soil fertility and yield that has been achieved, I can report that during 1979 fertilizer consumption on a plant food basis increased by 6,2% by comparison with the previous year. This is a bigger increase than both 1978 (5,3%) and 1977 (5,1%).

The physical tonnage delivered showed very little increase, which means that there was considerable improvement in the use of products of higher concentration. The average concentration of fertilizer delivered during the year was just under 26% compared to 22½% in 1977 and 12% in 1960. Consumption of nitrogen showed a growth of 8,9% in 1979 and of phosphate 6,0%, whereas potash usage declined by 3%.

There are, however, now signs that the trend of reduced usage of potash is being reversed as a result of work by the researcher seconded to the Society by the International Potash Institute, co-operation and consultation by scientists of the Society, member companies, and Government and university personnel, and which has resulted in a positive scientific approach to potash fertilization. This approach has revealed a positive relationship between yield and potash used in combination with nitrogen and phosphate.

In our attempts at finding methods to increase crop production, it is essential to continue identifying limiting factors and to search for solutions and whereas, in the past, emphasis fell on the determination of fertilizer guidelines this emphasis in our research programmes, has, during the last year, shifted to an integrated production system by which production of grain could be maximised and this resulted in certain adjustments to fertilizer guidelines.

Work done in the North Western OFS and the Western Transvaal showed improved average yields in controlled fertilizer experiments on maize of 3,9 tons per hectare in 1970/1971 to 4,4 tons in 1975/1976, 4,8 tons in 1976/1977 and 7,3 tons in 1978/1979. This sharp increase is due to a number of interdependent factors, and include

- a) Increased fertilizer levels of nitrogen and phosphate which were, respectively, 50% and 100% higher than in 1970/1971.
- b) A changed geographical planting pattern (ie change in planting rows).
- c) reduction in post planting cultivation, and
- d) better control of certain pests.

However, similar experimental work in the Eastern Transvaal Highveld does not show the same dramatic trend, and a number of pertinent questions arise regarding factors which limit production as well as the production potential of the region. It is felt that these questions will only be answered conclusively by a multi-disciplined investigation into fundamental aspects of plant breeding, physiology, climate and fertilization. This work is perhaps best done at a university, and the progress toward a breakthrough to substantial increased production in the South Eastern Transvaal will depend on the success of such work.

Navorsing met betrekking tot die bemesting van droëland koring moet gesien word teen die agtergrond van skamele proefresultate wat in die jare voor 1977 beskikbaar was en, as sulks, nie omvattend genoeg was vir vertroubare aanbevelings deur die misstofnywerheid nie, en die proefwerk was dus oor die algemeen slegs van betekenis vir 'n beperkte gebied. Dié situasie het gelei tot die daarstelling van 'n koringnavorsingsafdeling by die MVSA deur wie proefwerk in die afgelope twee jaar onderneem is. In die uitvoering van hierdie werk word voortdurend oorleg gepleeg met die personeel van die Klein-graansentrum wat ook besig is met proefwerk op hierdie gebied om oorvleueling van werk te vermy. Die resultate van hierdie proefwerk word oorgedra by wyse van boeredae, lesings, studiegroepe en artikels in ons tydskrif "Plantvoedsel".

In the area of pasture fertilization most of the formal projects which have been continuing for the last few years were concluded in 1979, and the results of these projects have brought to light a number of factors which are being disseminated by the Society and agronomists of member companies. As a result of decisions taken in conjunction with member companies during August 1979, formal projects still in operation in this field will be completed during this year and no further projects will be financed by the Society. Of course, a number of projects are self-financing and will continue. Emphasis will be placed on the dissemination of

current knowledge. Farms on which fertilization of pastures is practiced with success are used as focal points for training of both farmers and agronomists of member companies.

A limited number of study groups are also being introduced to encourage effective control of the integration of fertilized pastures in farming systems and thereby to encourage the use of fertilizer in animal production.

Een van die probleme met landbou-ontwikkeling en -produksie in swart tuislande en state, is gebrek aan kennis van kunsmis en die wetenskaplike gebruik daarvan. Dit is daarom dat die MVSA se bevorderingsaktiwiteite in hierdie geval toegespits is op kortkursusse, maar ook op bystand met sekere aspekte van die beplanning van produksieprojekte. Dit geskied op versoek van die betrokke instansies, naamlik, die Departement van Samewerking en Ontwikkeling, Departement van Opvoeding en Opleiding, die Ekonomiese Ontwikkelings Korporasie, die onderskeie Departemente van Landbou en Bosbou en die plaaslike nasionale ontwikkelings-korporasies.

Met stygende grondstof- en produksiekoste was dit onvermydelik dat verkoopspryse van kunsmis gedurende 1980 opwaarts aangepas moes word. Na besprekings met en ondersoek deur die owerhede is pryse met ingang 1 Januarie met 'n gemiddeld van 17,3% verhoog. Van hierdie verhoging was 1,3% toe te skryf aan die besluit van die Regering om ooreenkomstig sy beleid om subsidies geheel en al uit te faseer, die subsidie op kunsmis in te trek. Van die styging van 16% wat kunsmisvervaardigers ontvang het was nagenoeg 12% as gevolg van die styging van grondstofkoste.

These costs, over which the Industry has no control, included a price increase on sulphur of nearly 90%, on potash of 40%, on oil-based raw materials for nitrogenous fertilizer production of 76%, and an 80% increase in sea freight rates.

The Industry continues to strive to keep cost increases to a minimum, but, even so, the allowed prices do not include all

elements of cost increases and an amount totalling R4,2 million, as a result of the effect of inflation on production costs, was not granted and will have to be absorbed by the Industry.

Price rises in fertilizers are, of course, not unique to South Africa. It is an international problem and, as an example, it should be noted that average prices in the USA during 1979 were 18% higher than in 1978.

The cost increases and the dependence of our Industry on foreign raw materials are of concern not only to the Industry, but to the Government, and a Committee of Inquiry appointed by the Minister is currently examining these aspects. This investigation will also cover the profitability of the Industry, and it is hoped that when the Committee submits its report in August, it will recommend that the rate of return on capital investment allowed to fertilizer producers be set at a level sufficiently high so as to encourage future investment which will ensure continued production at a level necessary to satisfy the demands of South African agriculture.

In conclusion, I must report on the costs of running the Society. As you know, these costs are covered by subscriptions of members, but this year members were not allowed the recovery of these costs by way of an allowance in fertilizer prices. This aspect is under discussion with the relevant Government Departments, as also is the scope of the work done by the Society in relation to the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. It is hoped that these discussions will lead to a satisfactory clarification and a clear definition of the relative rôles to be played by all parties in the service to agriculture.

Dit bly nou net oor vir my om my dank, asook dié van die Uitvoerende- en Bestuurskomitees oor te dra aan die Direkteur en personeel van die Vereniging vir hulle harde en getroue werk van die afgelope jaar en vir die sukses wat ons as gevolg van dié werk behaal het.