

Brief Curriculum Vitae

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I hold a PhD in Agronomy from the University of Stellenbosch (2000). I have worked as a maize breeder (1995 and 1996) at the Agricultural Research Council in Potchefstroom... On completion of my PhD I struggled to find work in agriculture and over the next three and a half years coached hockey, managed a lumber store and fitted laminated flooring. I lectured Engineering Science (N1 to N3), at Boland College Strand Campus, for 18 months before taking a post as an Agronomy lecturer at the Cape Institute for Agricultural Training (Elsenburg) in July 2005. I lectured in Agronomy, Pasture Science and Crop Protection for two and a half years before moving to Research and Technology Development Services at the Western Cape Department of Agriculture as a senior researcher in November 2007. Since 2009 I have supervised and co-supervised 15 completed Master theses and 1 PhD.

My main research interests are on sustainable dryland cropping systems based on Conservation Agriculture practices. The body of the research comes from 2 large long-term trials (Langgewens and Tygerhoek Research farms) and 3 smaller on-farm trials with producers in the Napky, Riversdale and Hopefield.

Following several foreign visits focusing on Conservation Agriculture I was determined to initiate a CA forum for the Western Cape where producers, researchers and industry role players could come together to talk about CA issues within our province. This was realized in 2012 with the backing of Landbouweekblad and the Department of Agriculture. The Western Cape Conservation Agriculture Association (CAWC) was born following an open invitation meeting at Elsenburg. Since the inception 6 annual conferences was held and featured local and international presenters. A monthly newsletter and a website form part of the effort to advance CA production in the Western Cape and is my responsibility.

I served as vice president, president and past president on the board of the South African Society of Crop Production from 2014 to 2016. While serving on the board I managed to introduce two new awards for the society that is handed out at the annual Combined Congress. These awards are for the best research presentation and poster in conservation agriculture. I am also the secretary of the CAWC since 2012.

I was appointed as the 2017 Agricultural Writer's Agriculturist of the year.

I am living my passion for agriculture through my research and the conservation agriculture work with producers in the Western Cape.

Abstract

Moving Conservation Agriculture forward

Conservation Agriculture (CA) has come a long way in the Western Cape since its humble beginnings in the Heidelberg area of the southern Cape. Jack Human, the father of CA in the Western Cape, was the first to change the way he was farming and that led to a revolution in cereal production in our province.

Results from the long term cropping trials of the Department of Agriculture has shown the benefit of the transition to CA through minimal soil disturbance, diversity in crop rotation and maximum retention of plant cover on the soil. The inclusion of an animal factor also plays a major and often times forgotten role in the success of the system. This practice has been growing steadily over the past 35 years and has spread into other areas of the country through the work of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture and the KZN no-till club. More and more of our northern famers has seen the benefit of CA and conversion is gaining momentum.

For any system to stay viable it has to be flexible and look at new avenues of improvement. Regenerative agriculture is one of the new buzzwords and is the next step in the evolution of CA, with the inclusion of cover crops and high intensity grazing to enhance the sequestration of soil carbon at a faster pace. The aim of these injections in current CA practice also bodes well for the weaning of artificial inputs and thus placing CA on a higher road to sustainability.

