



NEWS RELEASE

Agricultural Research Council Celebrating Entomology

The Agricultural Research Council, as the premier science institution in South Africa that conducts fundamental and applied agricultural research in support of developing a prosperous agricultural sector, is one of the premium sponsors of the 23rd International Congress of Entomology to be held at the Durban ICC from 6 to 12 July 2008.

The theme of the congress is "Celebrating Entomology: Contributions to Modern Science".

Over 2 000 international entomologists from leading universities, departments of agriculture, and science research organisations, will descend on South Africa for a six day programme to confer on the advancement of entomology and the study of insects, as a contributor to modern science.

Some of the topics to be addressed include pest management, pesticides, forestry entomology, medical and veterinary entomology, ecology, and the global challenge of climate change, particularly with respect to insect distributions.

The Agricultural Research Council conducts extensive research in all areas to be covered by the congress and will be sharing its findings through presentations and inputs.

One of the fields of entomological research in South Africa is directed at commercial and resource-poor farmers to address current and anticipated threats. The research also aids law enforcement agencies and those concerned with environmental issues.

The South African National Collections of Arachnids, Fungi, Insects and Nematodes, is housed and maintained by the ARC. These collections are amongst the most comprehensive biological reference resources of their kind in Africa, containing several million documented specimens and a wealth of associated taxonomic, biological and bio-geographical information on agricultural and environmentally important organisms.

Research on the ecology of insect pests of important food crops, such as maize and vegetable crops is undertaken at the ARC, as the repeated application of insecticides to control pests may affect human health and environmental pollution.

The ARC aims to develop biological control strategies for ubiquitous pests, such as cereal stem borers, diamondback moth and African bollworm, and the use of natural enemies as environmentally sustainable alternatives to insecticide application.

There exists a long history of research on the South African native honeybee species, especially in combatting the threats posed by various pests and diseases to the beekeeping industry. The ARC is also involved in successfully training previously disadvantaged communities in the art of beekeeping as a means to alleviate poverty.

The impact of pesticides on the environment, the efficacy of pesticides due for registration, the use of suitable pesticide application methods, the analysis of environmental pesticide residues and the control of pests of stored grain and oil seed are research activities also undertaken by the ARC. Several projects are specifically targeting developing agriculture, especially involving the correct management of pesticides.

Invasive alien plants pose a major threat to the South African natural agricultural resources such as pastures, soil and water, as well as biodiversity. Both terrestrial and aquatic weeds are targeted and, where possible, biological control agents are tested and released against alien plants when they are still at an early stage of invasion.

Not only has the ARC invested in many years of entomological research, but also in the advancement of young entomologists through its' professional development programme, many of whom have been employed by the ARC and are currently studying towards MSc and PhD qualifications.

For more information on the International Congress of Entomology visit www.ice2008.org.za

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