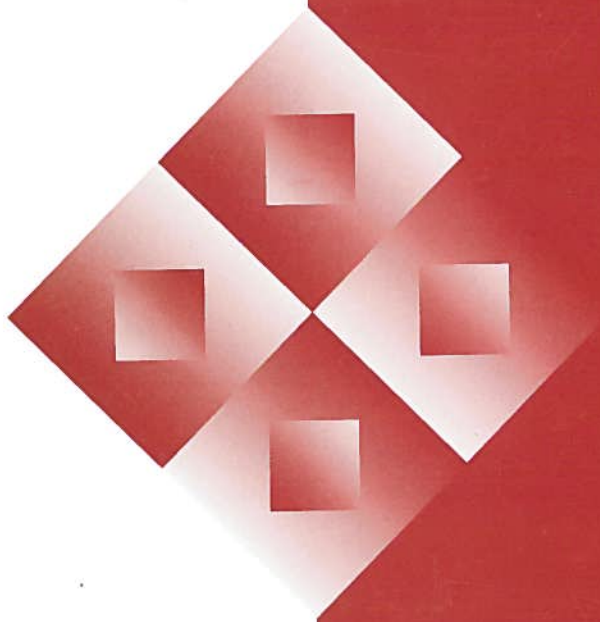

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RESEARCH NOTE

THE NEED FOR AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION AND DATA: RESEARCHERS AND POLICY MAKERS[1]

A. Frick[2] and J.A. Groenewald[3]

Mail surveys were used to analyse the needs of policy makers and researchers of agricultural information and data. A 56% response was achieved with the policy makers. Policy makers showed a high degree of interest in information and data concerning imports and exports, yields, volume of production, producers' prices, stocks and areas planted annually to field crops. In terms of horticultural crops, volume of production, quantities and value of trade and areas of annual crops are required by most. These statistics are mostly desired quarterly. The livestock statistics desired by most policy makers involve quantities and value of imports and exports, abattoir slaughter volumes and producer prices, mostly monthly. Policy makers also express interest in forecasts of the important crops and livestock. In terms of basic statistics, policy makers showed interest in information on marketing methods and income from farm activities. Scant interest was shown for data regarding employment.

A disappointing response rate of 28% was obtained from researchers. Among those who responded, there was a high level of interest in statistics concerning planted areas, imports and exports, producer prices, volume of production, consumer prices, yields and areas harvested of field crops. Researchers showed a lower level of interest in horticultural crops. In the case of livestock, interest centred mainly on livestock numbers, imports and exports, producer prices and costs of production, mostly on an annual basis. The only basic statistics for which over 60% of the researchers showed much interest, was the income from farming activities.

DIE BEHOEFTE AAN LANDBOU-INLIGTING EN DATA: NAVORSERS EN BELEIDSMAKERS

Posopnames is gebruik om die behoeftes van beleidsmakers en navorsers vir landbou-inligting en data te bepaal. Die beleidsmakers het 'n 56% respons gelewer. Beleidsmakers het 'n hoë mate van belangstelling getoon in inligting en data rakende invoer en uitvoer, opbrengste, produksievolume, produsentepryse, voorrade en jaarliks aangeplante oppervlaktes van akkerbougewasse. In die geval van tuinbou word veral produksievolume, hoeveelhede en

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[2] *Unigrain Trading Company and graduate student, University of the Orange Free State.*

[3] *Dept of Agricultural Economics, University of the Orange Free State, P O Box 339, Bloemfontein 9300.*

waardes van handel en oppervlaktes jaarlikse gewasse vereis, meestal op 'n kwartaallikse basis. Die lewendehawestatistiek in grootste aanvraag by beleidsmakers behels hoeveelhede en waarde van in- en uitvoer, abattoir slagvolumes en produsentepryse, meestal maandeliks. Beleidsmakers toon ook belangstelling in vooruitskattings van die belangrikste gewasse en vee. In terme van basiese statistiek het beleidmakers belangstelling getoon in inligting rakende bemarkingsmetodes en inkomste uit boerdery-aktiwiteite. Slegs skrale belangstelling is getoon in indiensnemingsverwante data.

'n Teleurstellende respons van 28% is verkry by die navorsers. By die wat gereageer het, was daar groot belangstelling in statistiek rakende oppervlaktes geplant, in- en uitvoer, produsentepryse, produksievolume, verbruikerspryse en oppervlaktes akkerbougewasse geoes. Navorsers het minder belangstelling in tuinbougewasse getoon. In die geval van lewendehawe het die belangstelling grotendeels gesentreer op veegetalle, in- en uitvoer, produsentepryse en produksiekoste, meestal op 'n jaarlikse basis. Die enigste basiese statistiek waarin oor 60% van die navorsers heelwat belangstelling getoon het, is inkomste uit boerderybedrywighede.

1. INTRODUCTION

Changing times also bring changes in the needs for agricultural data and information on the part of decision-makers who want to use such data for their purposes. A review of literature has shown that the most meaningful delineation of users of agricultural data and information comprises four main groups: policy-makers, researchers, agribusiness and farmers together with extension officers (Frick & Groenewald, 1999). The needs of these different groups are also different (Riemenschneider & Bonnen, 1979).

South Africa has over the past decade undergone considerable change, including changes that affect agricultural information needs, and hence also the need for agricultural data (Frick & Groenewald, 1999). At the same time, the supply of non-experimental data declined with the dissolution of control boards and with budget cutbacks, such as those which caused the Central Statistical Service to postpone the agricultural census that was planned for 1998.

The provisioning of information and data can be effective and productive only if it is aimed at the requirements of those who utilise the information and/or data for decision making. Research was, therefore, done to determine the requirements of four groups of users: policy makers, researchers, agribusiness and farmers. Results of the research pertaining to agribusiness' needs have already been published (Frick & Groenewald, 1999). In this article, the needs of policy makers and researchers receive attention.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Mail surveys were used to determine information and data needs. In the case of policy makers, 30 persons were identified as main policy makers and questionnaires were mailed to them. In the case of researchers, it was hoped that data would be gathered from 100 persons and assuming a response of 50%, a sample of 200 was drawn, using systematic sampling from a list previously assembled of researchers involved at various institutions. The questionnaires included besides an introduction, sections on the *need for current statistics* and the *need for basic statistics*. The questionnaires contained questions on the priority and frequency of need of a list of statistics involving field crops, horticulture and livestock. Questions were also asked concerning forecasts, sources and types of decisions for which information is needed.

3. RESULTS: POLICY MAKERS

3.1 Introduction

Of the 30 questionnaires sent out, 17 were received back (a 56% response rate); 16 were used in the analysis.

3.2 The need for current statistics

3.2.1 *Field crops*

The need for current statistics for *field crops* is summarised in Table 1. The **priority** column lists the percentage of respondents indicating the listed statistics as very important. For example, 80% of the respondents indicated that *quantity of imports and exports* is very important. Statistics indicated by 60% and more of the respondents as being very important, are *quantity of imports and exports, yield, value of imports and exports, volume of production, producer prices, stocks of products* and *area planted to annual crops*. Statistics that do not seem to be as important, i.e. required by less than 30% of the respondents are *cost of production, consumer prices of products* and *utilisation of products*. The **frequency** column lists the percentages of respondents indicating that they need the data yearly, quarterly, monthly or weekly. For example, only 13,3% of the respondents indicated they need *quantity of imports and exports* yearly, 40,0% require it quarterly, 33,4% monthly and 13,3% weekly. Except for *cost of production*, the results indicate that the statistics are mostly needed quarterly.

Table 1: The need for current statistics by policy makers: Field crops

	Priority	Frequency			
	Very important	Yearly	Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly
Quantity of imports and exports	80.0%	13.3%	**40.0%**	33.4%	13.3%
Yield	73.3%	40.0%	**53.3%**	6.7%	0.0%
Value of imports and exports	73.3%	13.3%	**40.0%**	33.4%	13.3%
Volume of production	66.7%	13.3%	**53.3%**	33.4%	0.0%
Producer prices	66.7%	33.3%	**46.7%**	20.0%	0.0%
Stocks of products	66.7%	6.7%	**40.0%**	13.3%	40.0%
Area planted to annual crops	60.0%	13.3%	**40.0%**	26.7%	20.0%
Area harvested estimates	46.6%	33.3%	**53.3%**	13.4%	0.0%
Consumption of products	33.3%	40.0%	**46.7%**	6.6%	6.7%
Prices of production inputs	33.3%	26.7%	**40.0%**	26.6%	6.7%
Utilisation of products	20.0%	33.3%	**53.3%**	13.4%	0.0%
Consumer prices of products	20.0%	13.3%	**40.0%**	26.7%	20.0%
Costs of production	20.0%	**46.7%**	26.7%	19.9%	6.7%

Statistics are either needed on a national or magisterial district level (each 36% of the respondents). Statistics on a provincial level appear to be important (26% of the respondents). Products for which the statistics are needed are, in order of importance, maize, wheat, sunflower seed, groundnuts and sorghum.

3.2.2 *Horticulture*

The need for current statistics for *horticulture* is summarised in Table 2. The statistics indicated by 60% and more of the respondents to be very important are *volume of production, quantity of imports and exports, value of imports and exports* and *area planted to annual crops*. Statistics on *prices of production inputs* and *stocks of products* do not seem to be as important. The statistics are mostly needed quarterly; however, statistics on *consumer prices of products* are needed monthly while *producer prices* are needed weekly. *Volume of production* is needed yearly.

The statistics are needed on average on a national basis (36% of the respondents), followed by magisterial district level (34% of the respondents) and provincial level (28% of the respondents). Products for which the statistics are needed in order of importance are deciduous and other fruits, vegetables, citrus fruits and subtropical fruits.

Table 2: The need for current statistics by policy-makers: Horticulture

	Priority	Frequency			
	Very important	Yearly	Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly
Volume of production	73.3%	**42.9%**	28.6%	28.5%	0.0%
Quantity of imports and exports	73.3%	15.4%	**46.2%**	30.7%	7.7%
Value of imports and exports	66.7%	21.4%	**42.9%**	28.6%	7.1%
Area planted to annual crops	60.0%	28.6%	**50.0%**	21.4%	0.0%
Consumer prices of products	53.3%	28.6%	7.1%	**35.7%**	28.6%
Area harvested estimates	46.7%	35.7%	**50.0%**	14.3%	0.0%
Yield forecasts	46.7%	28.6%	**42.9%**	28.5%	0.0%
Producer prices	46.7%	21.4%	21.5%	21.4%	**35.7%**
Costs of production	40.0%	35.7%	**50.0%**	7.2%	7.1%
Utilisation of products	33.3%	35.7%	**57.1%**	7.2%	0.0%
Consumption of products	33.3%	**35.7%**	**35.7%**	28.6%	0.0%
Stocks of products	26.7%	35.7%	**50.0%**	14.3%	0.0%
Prices of production inputs	26.7%	23.1%	**38.5%**	30.7%	7.7%

3.2.3 *Livestock*

The need for current statistics for *livestock* is summarised in Table 3. The statistics that are very important to 60% and more of the policy makers, are *quantity of import and exports, abattoir slaughter volumes, producer prices* and *value of imports and exports*. Statistics on *herd composition, cost of production, prices of production inputs, utilisation of products, consumer prices of products* and *number of animals in feedlots* seem to be very important for only 30% or less of the respondents, and are, therefore, not important in aggregate terms. Statistics are needed quarterly and monthly. However, *quantity of imports and exports* is needed weekly while *herd composition* is needed yearly.

The statistics are on average needed on a national (42% of the respondents) and provincial level (38% of the respondents). Statistics needed on a magisterial district level do not seem to be as important (19% of the respondents). Products for which the statistics are needed in order of importance are cattle and calves, sheep and goats, broilers, pigs and ostriches.

3.2.4 *General*

Of all respondents, 87,5% indicated that they need forecasts. The products for which the forecasts are needed are in order of importance maize, cattle and calves, wheat, sheep and goats, deciduous fruits, ostriches and poultry. The statistics were mostly needed between 1 month (56,3% of respondents), and

Table 3: The need for current statistics by policy-makers: Livestock

	Priority	Frequency			
	Very important	Yearly	Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly
Quantity of imports and exports	78.6%	16.7%	25.0%	25.0%	**33.3%**
Abattoir slaughter volumes	64.3%	7.7%	23.1%	**61.5%**	7.7%
Producer prices	64.3%	15.4%	15.4%	**38.5%**	30.7%
Value of imports and exports	64.3%	25.0%	25.0%	**33.3%**	16.7%
Livestock numbers by category	57.1%	38.5%	**46.2%**	15.3%	0.0%
Farm slaughter volumes	57.1%	7.7%	**46.2%**	38.5%	7.6%
Consumption of products	42.9%	30.8%	**38.5%**	23.1%	7.6%
Number of animals in feedlots	28.6%	30.8%	**53.8%**	15.4%	0.0%
Consumer prices of products	28.6%	15.4%	30.8%	**38.5%**	15.3%
Utilisation of products	21.4%	38.5%	**53.8%**	7.7%	0.0%
Prices of production inputs	21.4%	8.3%	**66.7%**	16.7%	8.3%
Cost of production	21.4%	27.3%	**45.5%**	27.2%	0.0%
Herd composition	7.1%	**72.7%**	27.3%	0.0%	0.0%

three months (31,3% of respondents) after the date of the collection of the data. The sources of statistics indicated by the respondents are the Department of Agriculture, especially the publication Abstract of Agricultural Statistics, own sources and Statistics South Africa (formerly the Central Statistics Service). The statistics are mainly used for information services, trade strategies and policy decisions. The requested level of accuracy for the desired statistics as indicated by 53,9% of the respondents is 80% while 41,2% of the respondents indicated a level of 90%.

3.3 The need for basic statistics

Basic statistics for policy makers are discussed according to the needs for *institutional or infrastructural, economic* and *employment* statistics. Respondents indicated a very low need for basic household statistics, particulars of farmers and farming unit statistics; these are not discussed in detail. Number *of farmers* falls into the basic household category; 44,7% of the respondents indicated it as very important.

Table 4 lists the results of the needs for *institutional and infrastructural* statistics. The category *methods of marketing* is indicated by 60% and more of the respondents as being very important. Statistics on the *level of mechanisation, quantity of land purchased or sold, pesticides usage* and *sources of water* supply do not appear to be regarded as important.

Table 4: The need for basic statistics by policy-makers: Institutional or infrastructural

	Priority	Frequency			
	Very important	10 Yearly	5 Yearly	2 Yearly	Yearly
Methods of marketing	64.7%	**40.0%**	20.0%	13.3%	26.7%
Access to credit and finance	58.8%	**30.8%**	23.1%	23.1%	23.0%
Area under irrigation	52.9%	**50.0%**	16.7%	16.7%	16.6%
Access to training and development	47.1%	28.6%	**35.7%**	21.4%	14.3%
Land utilisation	41.2%	**38.5%**	30.8%	15.4%	15.3%
Methods of irrigation	41.2%	**46.2%**	23.1%	7.7%	23.0%
Capital structure	35.3%	**42.9%**	35.7%	14.3%	7.1%
Fertiliser or chemical usage	35.3%	**30.8%**	**30.8%**	23.1%	15.3%
Access to government support	35.3%	30.8%	**30.8%**	23.1%	15.3%
Sources of water supply	29.4%	38.5%	**38.5%**	7.7%	15.3%
Pesticides usage	29.4%	**38.5%**	23.1%	23.1%	15.3%
Quantity of land purchased or sold	23.5%	**33.3%**	16.7%	25.0%	25.0%
Level of mechanisation	17.6%	**42.9%**	28.6%	21.4%	7.1%

Statistics are mostly needed ten yearly, except for statistics on access to *training and development, access to government support* and *sources of water supply* that is needed five yearly.

Table 5 lists the results of the need for economic statistics. *Income from farm activities* is regarded as very important by 70,6% of the respondents. *Non farm expenditure, value of other assets* and *household expenditure patterns* seem not to be important. Statistics are mostly needed ten yearly.

Table 5: The need for basic statistics by policy-makers: Economic

	Priority	Frequency			
	Very important	10 Yearly	5 Yearly	2 Yearly	Yearly
Income from farm activities	70.6%	**40.0%**	26.7%	0.0%	33.3%
Income from non-farm activities	47.1%	**42.9%**	21.4%	7.1%	28.6%
Value of land	47.1%	**38.5%**	30.8%	7.7%	23.0%
Amount of farming debt	47.1%	**42.9%**	14.3%	14.3%	28.5%
Interest payments	41.2%	**38.5%**	15.4%	15.4%	30.7%
Rent payments	41.2%	**38.5%**	15.4%	15.4%	30.7%
Intermediate production expenses	35.3%	**42.9%**	21.4%	7.1%	28.6%
Household expenditure patterns	23.5%	**42.9%**	21.4%	7.1%	28.6%
Value of other assets	23.5%	**53.8%**	15.4%	7.7%	23.1%
Non-farm expenditure	17.6%	**46.2%**	15.4%	7.7%	30.7%

Table 6 contains *employment* statistics needed by policy-makers. None of these was regarded as very important by 60% or more of the respondents. Those required more than the others are *number of regular workers, number of unemployed workers* and *number of family workers.* Statistics on *salary or wage rate* and *remuneration of employees* do not seem to be regarded as important. Statistics are needed mostly ten yearly.

Table 6: The need for basic statistics by policy-makers: Employment

	Priority	Frequency			
	Very important	10 Yearly	5 Yearly	2 Yearly	Yearly
Number of regular workers	41.2%	**50.0%**	21.4%	14.3%	14.3%
Number of unemployed workers	41.2%	**46.2%**	30.8%	7.7%	15.3%
Number of family workers	35.3%	**50.0%**	21.4%	21.4%	7.2%
Remuneration of employees	29.4%	**38.5%**	30.8%	15.4%	15.3%
Salary or wage rate	23.5%	**38.5%**	30.8%	15.4%	15.3%

Irrespective of the category of basic statistics needed, respondents on average needed the statistics mostly on a magisterial district level (42,5% of respondents), followed by provincial level (30% of respondents) and national level (25,3% of respondents). Among the respondents, 93,3% needed the statistics for both the commercial and developing sector, while 6,7% needed the statistics for the developing sector only.

Regarding the degree of currency of the statistics (how much time between date of collection and date of publication), 50% of the respondents required the statistics within three months, 18,8% within six months and 31,3% within one year. The types of decisions are very much similar for current statistics. The level of accuracy required by 46,7% of the respondents is 90%.

4. RESULTS: RESEARCHERS

4.1 Introduction

Of the 200 questionnaires sent out, only 56 questionnaires (a 28% response rate) were received back; 54 were used in the analysis. Of the respondents, 22,6% indicated that they are involved in micro economic research, 17,9% in macro economic research, 20,2% in marketing research, 20,2% in management research and 40,8% in industry relationship research.

4.2 The need for current statistics

4.2.1 *Field crops*

Sixty percent or more of the 54 respondents regard statistics on *area planted to annual crops, quantity of imports and exports, producer prices, volume of production, yield, consumer prices of products* and *area harvested* as very important (see Table 7). None of the statistics were regarded as very important by less than 30% of the respondents. Except for *producer prices* that are needed weekly, the statistics are mostly needed monthly, quarterly and yearly.

Table 7: The need for current statistics by researchers: Field crops

	Priority	Frequency			
	Very important	Yearly	Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly
Area planted to annual crops	71.7%	**47.7%**	25.0%	27.3%	0.0%
Quantity of imports and exports	69.6%	25.6%	25.6%	**41.9%**	7.0%
Producer prices	67.4%	11.6%	20.9%	**37.2%**	30.2%
Volume of production	63.0%	**43.9%**	24.4%	24.4%	7.3%
Yield	60.9%	25.0%	34.1%	**36.4%**	4.5%
Consumer prices of products	60.9%	7.7%	38.5%	**38.5%**	15..4%
Area harvested	60.0%	**38.1%**	31.0%	28.6%	2.4%
Area planted to perennial crops	58.7%	**61.0%**	26.8%	12.2%	0.0%
Value of imports and exports	53.2%	30.8%	23.1%	**41.0%**	5.1%
Prices of production inputs	52.2%	26.8%	**56.1%**	14.6%	2.4%
Consumption of products	47.8%	**35.0%**	**35.0%**	27.5%	2.5%
Stocks of products	45.7%	**22.5%**	35.0%	**37.5%**	5.0%
Utilisation of products	37.0%	**42.5%**	32.5%	22.5%	2.5%

On average, the statistics are mostly needed on a provincial level (38% of the respondents) and national level (34% of the respondents). Statistics are most needed in order of importance for maize, wheat, sunflower, groundnuts and soybeans.

4.2.2 *Horticulture*

Area planted to annual crops seems to be the most important statistic needed while *stocks of products* do not seem to be as important (Table 8). Statistics are mostly needed yearly.

On average, the statistics are mostly needed on a national level (37% of the respondents) and a provincial level (36% of the respondents). The statistics are

needed in order of importance, for deciduous and other types of fruit, citrus and subtropical fruits, vegetables and viticulture.

Table 8: The need for current statistics by researchers: Horticulture

	Priority	Frequency			
	Very important	Yearly	Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly
Area planted to annual crops	63.6%	**53.7%**	29.3%	27.3%	0.0%
Area planted to perennial crops	58.1%	**71.1%**	21.0%	7.9%	0.0%
Volume of production	56.8%	**43.8%**	31.8%	24.4%	0.0%
Producer prices	56.8%	18.9%	24.3%	**35.1%**	21.7%
Consumer prices of products	56.8%	8.3%	**36.6%**	30.1%	25.0%
Quantity of imports and exports	56.8%	**35.6%**	30.3%	30.3%	3.8%
Value of imports and exports	56.8%	**40.6%**	29.3%	27.4%	2.7%
Area harvested estimates	54.5%	**47.5%**	35.0%	17.5%	0.0%
Yield forecasts	50.0%	29.3%	**39.0%**	29.3%	2.4%
Cost of production	50.0%	**53.8%**	33.3%	10.3%	2.6%
Consumption of products	45.5%	28.6%	**37.1%**	31.4%	2.9%
Prices of production inputs	45.5%	33.3%	**53.8%**	10.3%	2.6%
Utilisation of products	31.4%	**48.6%**	20.0%	28.6%	2.8%
Stocks of products	29.5%	**38.2%**	23.5%	23.5%	14.8%

4.2.3 *Livestock*

According to the listed results in Table 9, *farm slaughter volumes* are not important. However, *livestock number by category, quantity of imports and exports, producer prices, value of imports and exports* and *cost of production* are indicated by 60% and more of the respondents as very important. Statistics are mostly needed yearly; however, some statistics are also needed quarterly and monthly. On average, the statistics are mostly needed on a national and magisterial district level (35% of the respondents respectively). The statistics are needed mostly in order of importance for cattle and calves, fowls slaughtered, sheep and goats and wool.

4.2.4 *General*

Seventy eight percent of the 54 respondents need forecasts of the statistics. Forecasts are needed for maize, wheat, deciduous fruits, cattle and calves and fowls slaughtered. Among the respondents, 44,7% need the statistics within one month after the date of collection, 42,6% after three months while a small percentage need the statistics after six months or one year. Important sources of statistics are the Abstract of Agricultural Statistics issued by the National

Department of Agriculture, Statistics South Africa as well as the National Department of Agriculture. The level of confidence is between average and good. Decisions based on the statistics are mainly research, advice and marketing strategy and planning decisions. The level of accuracy of the statistics is required by 34,8% of the respondents to be 80% and 50% of the respondents to be 90%.

Table 9: The need for current statistics by researchers: Livestock

	Priority	Frequency			
	Very important	Yearly	Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly
Livestock numbers by category	62.5%	**63.9%**	33.3%	2.8%	0.0%
Quantity of imports and exports	62.5%	**35.3%**	26.5%	29.4%	8.8%
Producer prices	60.0%	17.6%	**29.4%**	**29.4%**	23.6%
Value of imports and exports	60.0%	**34.3%**	28.6%	34.2%	2.9%
Cost of production	60.0%	**58.3%**	22.2%	16.7%	2.8%
Consumer prices of products	57.5%	12.1%	30.3%	**33.4%**	24.2%
Prices of production inputs	55.0%	35.3%	**38.2%**	23.6%	2.9%
Consumption of products	42.5%	**39.4%**	27.3%	24.2%	69.1%
Abattoir slaughter volumes	40.0%	20.0%	**31.4%**	28.6%	20.0%
Number of animals in feedlots	35.0%	35.3%	**41.2%**	17.6%	5.9%
Herd composition	35.0%	**70.6%**	29.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Utilisation of products	35.0%	**47.1%**	32.4%	20.5%	0.0%
Farm slaughter volumes	27.5%	**37.1%**	34.3%	20.0%	8.6%

4.3 The need for basic statistics

Basic statistics are divided into *economic, particulars of farming unit* and *institutional or infrastructural* statistics. Questions were asked about statistics on *employment, basic household* and *economic* statistics; respondents indicated a very low need for those statistics, and they are not discussed in this study. According to Table 10 statistics on *income from farm activities* are very important. Statistics on *amount of farming debt, income from non-farm activities* and *value of land* are also regarded as very important by 50% and more of the respondents. Statistics on *non-farm expenditures* are apparently not regarded as important. All the statistics are needed annually. The low level of interest on the part of researchers on most types of basic statistics is rather surprising.
Regarding statistics on *particulars of farming* unit, only 50% and 40% regard the *size of farming units* and *type of farming operations,* respectively, (see Table 11) as important. *Number of people living on farm units* and *type of land tenure* do not seem to be important to the respondents. Except for *size of farming unit,* the statistics are mostly needed five yearly. These results are once again

surprising, given die political interest in these matters and the amount of controversy among South African agricultural economists regarding the relative merits of small and large farm units.

Table 10: The need for basic statistics by researchers: Economic

	Priority	Frequency			
	Very important	10 Yearly	5 Yearly	2 Yearly	Yearly
Income from farm activities	68.0%	7.0%	16.3%	20.9%	**55.8%**
Amount of farming debt	54.0%	12.2%	9.8%	17.0%	**61.0%**
Income from non-farm activities	50.0%	11.6%	18.6%	20.9%	**48.9%**
Value of land	50.0%	16.7%	7.1%	26.2%	**50.0%**
Intermediate production expenses	40.0%	7.3%	12.2%	26.8%	**53.7%**
Household expenditure pattern	40.0%	7.5%	22.5%	25.0%	**45.0%**
Interest payments	38.0%	7.3%	12.2%	22.0%	**58.5%**
Rent payments	36.0%	7.3%	19.5%	26.8%	**46.4%**
Value of other assets	36.0%	12.2%	12.2%	31.7%	**43.9%**
Non-farming expenditure	30.0%	7.5%	27.5%	22.5%	**42.5%**

Table 11: The need for basic statistics by researchers: Particulars of farming unit

	Priority	Frequency			
	Very important	10 Yearly	5 Yearly	2 Yearly	Yearly
Size of farming unit	50.0%	10.3%	30.8%	23.1%	**35.8%**
Type of farming operation	42.0%	7.7%	**35.9%**	30.8%	25.6%
Type of land tenure	36.0%	13.2%	**34.2%**	28.9%	23.7%
Number of people living on farm unit	34.0%	13.5%	**35.1%**	21.6%	29.8%

Table 12 suggests that *area under irrigation* is regarded as the most important statistics (institutional or infrastructural) by the respondent (57%). *Level of mechanisation* does not seem to be important to the respondents. The statistics are needed yearly.

The statistics are on average mostly needed on a magisterial district level (30% of the respondents), followed by 28% of the respondents who needed the statistics on a provincial basis. Among the respondents, 14,6% needed the statistics for the commercial sector only, 4,2% for the developing sector only and 81,3% for both the commercial and developing sectors. Further, 20% of the respondents needed the statistics three months after the collection of data, 32% needed it after six months and 36% needed it after one year. Only 2%

Table 12: The need for basic statistics by researchers: Institutional or infrastructural

	Priority	Frequency			
	Very important	10 Yearly	5 Yearly	2 Yearly	Yearly
Area under irrigation	57.0%	7.5%	20.0%	20.0%	**52.5%**
Land utilisation	48.0%	13.5%	18.9%	24.3%	**43.2%**
Access to credit and finance	47.0%	5.4%	18.9%	21.6%	**51.1%**
Methods of marketing	45.1%	7.7%	12.8%	28.2%	**51.3%**
Fertiliser or chemical usage	38.0%	8.1%	16.2%	24.3%	**51.4%**
Access to training and development	38.0%	8.1%	10.8%	29.7%	**51.4%**
Methods or irrigation	37.3%	7.9%	28.9%	21.1%	**42.1%**
Quantity of land purchased or sold	36.0%	5.6%	22.2%	19.4%	**52.8%**
Sources of water supply	36.0%	10.3%	23.1%	30.8%	**35.9%**
Capital structure	34.0%	10.8%	21.6%	29.7%	**37.8%**
Pesticides usage	34.0%	7.9%	13.2%	23.7%	**55.3%**
Access to government support	34.0%	7.9%	15.8%	31.6%	**44.7%**
Level of mechanisation	27.5%	7.9%	18.4%	**39.5%**	34.2%

needed the statistics after two years of the date of collection of the data. The sources of the statistics are mainly the Abstract of Agricultural Statistics, National Department of Agriculture, various publications and own surveys. Respondents utilise statistics currently and in future mainly for decisions regarding research programmes, consultation, research and policy analysis. As far as the level of accuracy for the statistics is concerned, 46,5% of the respondents indicated requiring a level of 90%, 29,5% of the respondents a level of 80% and 11,6% of the respondents a level op 70%. Only 2,3% of the respondents indicated a level op 60%.

5. CONCLUSION

It appears that policy makers are largely interested in trade statistics, producer prices, current production and areas planted to crops. They are also interested in information pertaining to marketing methods, access to credit and finance, area under irrigation and income from farm activities. The apparent lack of interest in production costs, consumer prices, prices of inputs, product utilisation, land transactions and employment statistics is surprising, given the political and policy issues of today.

The low response rate by researchers is rather disappointing, given the attitude towards research invariably assumed to reign among researchers. This may possibly be ascribed to narrow focus areas by some researchers. The

researchers showed interest primarily in production statistics, product and input prices, costs, income from farm activities and areas under irrigation. The low level of interest in labour statistics and also on farm size distributions is both surprising and a source of concern if the current debates are scrutinised.

Both policy-makers and researchers are interested in forecasts. While this interest is certainly expected among policy-makers, it has been less so among researchers. Statistics are needed with various frequencies and levels of accuracy. In most cases, they are preferred with regular frequencies, soon after collection and processing and with accuracies of 80% or above.

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