



AgEcon SEARCH
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL & APPLIED ECONOMICS

The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library

This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.

Help ensure our sustainability.

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search

<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>

aesearch@umn.edu

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

No endorsement of AgEcon Search or its fundraising activities by the author(s) of the following work or their employer(s) is intended or implied.



Agrekon

Agricultural Economics Research, Policy and Practice in Southern Africa



ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/ragr20

Introduction to volume 60 of *Agrekon*

Johann Kirsten

To cite this article: Johann Kirsten (2021) Introduction to volume 60 of *Agrekon*, *Agrekon*, 60:1, 1-6, DOI: [10.1080/03031853.2021.1886493](https://doi.org/10.1080/03031853.2021.1886493)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03031853.2021.1886493>



Published online: 31 Mar 2021.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 698



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 1 View citing articles [↗](#)



Introduction to volume 60 of *Agrekon*

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the existence of the Agricultural Economics Association of South Africa (AEASA). This is young by most standards, but the milestone still makes us the 12th oldest surviving Agricultural Economics Association in the world. We are, however, in this celebratory year mourning the untimely passing of our Past-President and leader in the agricultural economics profession in South Africa, Prof. Mohammad Karaan. We will miss him dearly, and so to honour his role and contribution to our association, we pay tribute to him in this issue of *Agrekon* (page 88). The COVID-19 pandemic has also resulted in the deaths of a number of our other agricultural economics colleagues early in 2021. They include Prof. Micah Masuku, Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture and Professor in Agricultural Economics at the University of Eswatini, and Bokkie Strauss, former Agricultural Attaché in Washington and Brussels and later a senior Executive and Director of Capespan. May their souls rest in peace.

The March 2021 issue of *Agrekon* introduces its 60th volume, which presents an ideal opportunity to reflect on the history and evolution of the journal. This editorial, as well as the contribution by Prof. Nick Vink (pages 7–10) on his experience as editor of *Agrekon*, provide an introduction to this very important milestone.

The inaugural issue of *Agrekon* was published in the first quarter of 1962, following its establishment by the South African Department of Agriculture. Its aim was to “communicate important events in the field of agricultural economics and to serve as forum for the exchange of topical views”. *Agrekon* was the personal brainchild of Mr SJJ de Swardt, Head of the Division of Economics and Markets in the Department of Agriculture for many years. He was a pioneer in agricultural economics research and education, and it was under his guidance that many a young graduate was sent overseas for post-graduate study, training and research.

In the first issue of *Agrekon* in January 1962, De Swardt described its aim as being to spread information about the policy and actions of the Department, Control Boards and other organisations, as well as to act as an organ for publishing research results to stimulate scientific debate. This was clearly evident from the contents of the first few decades of *Agrekon*. The journal largely contained opinion pieces and overviews of economic trends, as well as descriptive pieces on the controlled agricultural marketing system. Between 1962 and 1989 (volumes 1–28), 40% of authors were affiliated with government departments, control boards and other parastatals, while 56% were affiliated with South African universities and 4% with universities abroad (mainly the guest speakers at the AEASA annual conference). In the next three decades, 64% of authors were affiliated with South African universities, 9% with parastatals (such as Agricultural Research Council, Human Sciences Research Council and Water Research Commission) and government departments and 27% with international institutions and universities.

In the first editorial, mention was made of the formation, in 1961, of AEASA. Ties between the association and *Agrekon* became stronger over time. Papers presented at AEASA conferences were published in *Agrekon* from 1969 to 2002. Also, as AEASA did not have an official publication, *Agrekon* developed into one of the most important publishing venues for South African agricultural economists. Since the late 1970s in particular, academic articles came to make up the bulk of *Agrekon*'s pages. It is for this reason that Wissing and Groenewald (1987) could come to the conclusion that after 25 years, *Agrekon* had achieved the status of a scientific publication. A factor contributing

to the achievement of this status was the establishment in 1972 of the SJJ de Swardt Agrekon Prize to reward the author of the best article published in *Agrekon*.

When the Department announced in 1989 that they were considering the privatisation of *Agrekon*, AEASA jumped at the opportunity. Here was a journal, already established as an important medium and barometer of the state of research and practice of agricultural economics in Southern Africa, with international distribution and citation in a major abstract series (World Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology Abstracts), that could be taken over with minimal teething and financial problems. By mutual agreement, volume 28 of *Agrekon* was the last published by the Department of Agricultural Economics and Marketing. Starting from 1990 (volume 29), *Agrekon* was officially published by AEASA.

With the introduction of volume 60, there are now two distinct periods (of basically 30 years each) in the history of *Agrekon*:

1. The first 28 volumes published by the Department of Agricultural Economics and Marketing and printed by the Government printers
2. The next 32 volumes published by the Agricultural Economics Association of South Africa, and since 2010 in partnership with Taylor & Francis.

In 2010 *Agrekon* entered yet another era. While the Journal was already incorporated into the International Bibliography of Social Sciences (IBSS) list, it gained inclusion in the extended list of the ISI in that year (following a successful application in 2008); later in that same year, responsibility for its publication was given to Taylor & Francis, a publishing house founded in 1798, thus giving the Journal a global reach with about 2900 subscribers.

Agrekon is now part of a family of 18 journals in the Web of Science's "Agricultural Economics & Policy" category. They are:

- *Food Policy*
- *Annual Review of Resource Economics*
- *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*
- *Journal of Agricultural Economics*
- *Agricultural Economics*
- *European Review of Agricultural Economics*
- *Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy*
- *Agribusiness*
- *Journal of Wine Economics*
- *Australian Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics*
- *Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics*
- *China Agricultural Economic Review*
- *Agricultural Economics – Zemedelska Ekonomika*
- *Canadian Journal of Agricultural Economics*
- *International Food and Agribusiness Management Review*
- *German Journal of Agricultural Economics*
- *Custos e Agronegocio Online*
- *Agrekon*

Within this family of journals, *Agrekon's* Impact Factor remains on the low side, but has had remarkable improvement in the last year, as shown in [Table 1](#):

Numerous Editors have served *Agrekon* during its six decades of existence. In the first period, when the Journal was published by the South African Department of Agriculture, there was an Editorial Committee. The names of the Chair of this Committee as well as of the Editor are provided in [Table 2](#). It is also interesting to note that Prof. JA Groenewald started his service on the Editorial

Table 1. *Agrekon's* ISI impact factor: 2010–2019.

Impact Factor (year)	Impact Factor
2010	0.426
2011	0.653
2012	0.327
2013	0.140
2014	0.183
2015	0.250
2016	0.224
2017	0.233
2018	0.326
2019	1.196

Source: Web of Science, 2020.

Committee with volume 9, no. 2, i.e., in 1970, a position he held until the “privatisation” of *Agrekon*. Another interesting name is that of Ms AW Visagie, to date the only woman who has taken responsibility for *Agrekon*.

The evolution of *Agrekon* as a journal can be analysed through various themes such as the subjects of the articles, the affiliation of the authors, and full text downloads and citations. We cover each of these briefly now.

Focus areas

In a previous exercise (Kirsten 2002) I used JEL codes to classify the articles published in the first 40 volumes of *Agrekon*. There are obvious weaknesses in this process given the fact that more than one JEL code can be used. Nevertheless, the exercise showed that the micro analysis of farm firms/households and agricultural marketing and policy dominated the first 40 years of *Agrekon's* existence, and are jointly responsible for more than 50% of all articles published. There was no substantive change in the mix of articles across the four decades.

In a new exercise I applied the themes of the various volumes (1–4) of the *Handbook of Agricultural Economics* published by North-Holland between 2007 and 2017 to classify the articles published in *Agrekon* over the past six decades (See Table 3).

The analysis presented here shows some clear trends that correspond with the agricultural policy and political dispensations in South Africa, as well as the increasing internationalisation of the South African economy and academic establishment post-1994. For example, during the Apartheid years and the economic sanctions between 1976 and 1990, there were no papers covering the theme of agricultural trade. This only happened after 1994, following the signing of the Marrakech

Table 2. The editors of *Agrekon*.

Vol (no.)	Chair of Editorial Committee	Editor	Period
1(1)–4(3)	C van der Merwe	HJ van Rensburg and OE Burger	1962–1965
4(4)–9(1)	AJ du Plessis	AJ Beyleveld	1965–1970
9(2)–11(4)	AJ du Plessis	GJ Wissing	
12(1)–14(3)	SAD van Schalkwyk	GJ Wissing	
14(4)–16(2)	SJ van N du Toit	GJ Wissing	
16(3)–16(4)	WJ Treurnicht	GJ Wissing	
17(1)–20(3)	IS Geldenhuys	GJ Wissing	
21(1)–25(3)	HS Hattingsh	GJ Wissing	
26(1)–26(3)	CS Blignaut	AW Visagie	
27(1)–28(3)	JSG Joubert	AW Visagie	
29(1)–32(4)		J van Zyl and N Vink	1990–1991
33(1)–36(4)		JA Groenewald	1992–1997
37(1)–40(4)		TI Fényes	1998–2001
41(1)–49(4)		N Vink	2002–2010
50(1)–53(4)		A Jooste	2011–2014
54(1)–		JF Kirsten	2015–

Table 3. Focus areas of articles published in *Agrekon*: 1962–2019.

Agricultural economics focus area	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s
Farm management and micro-economics	14.4%	19.5 %	17.6%	9.6%	4.8%	3.1%
Agriculture and the macro-economy and economy-wide models	11.9%	1.3%	5.2%	3.5%	2.9%	0.8%
Agricultural and food policy	14.4%	22.1%	18.3%	12.8%	4.5%	4.7%
Agricultural development and land reform	6.8%	12.1%	7.2%	17.2%	10.9%	13.2%
Marketing, supply chains and consumers	22.9%	11.4%	11.8%	7.7%	5.4%	11.7%
Demand analysis	0.8%	3.4%	5.2%	3.0%	2.2%	1.6%
Production economics and supply analysis	4.2%	4.0%	5.2%	2.8%	4.8%	6.6%
Productivity and efficiency analysis	0.8%	0.7%	0.7%	1.9%	4.2%	3.9%
Resource and environmental economics	1.7%	4.7%	4.6%	9.3%	10.9%	7.8%
Agricultural finance	5.9%	1.3%	3.3%	5.1%	2.2%	0.8%
Markets, institutions and transaction costs	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.5%	8.3%	3.5%
Invention and innovation	0.8%	1.3%	0.7%	2.6%	6.4%	8.9%
Cooperatives	2.5%	0.7%	2.0%	1.2%	2.6%	2.3%
Trade and competitiveness	8.5%	2.0%	0.0%	7.9%	9.6%	10.9%
Farm labour	4.2%	0.7%	1.3%	2.3%	2.2%	0.8%
Agricultural economics as career and discipline	0.0%	12.1%	2.6%	3.5%	1.6%	3.5%
Risk, insurance and futures markets	0.0%	2.0%	8.5%	5.6%	7.1%	5.1%
Agribusiness	0.0%	0.0%	3.9%	0.9%	2.9%	2.7%
Food security	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	2.6%	6.4%	8.2%

Agreement and the liberalisation of agricultural markets in South Africa by the mid-1990s. The large number of African students who joined South African universities in the post-1994 period, as well as the growing collaboration with international institutions, the CGIAR and international universities, also ensured that global themes and focus areas were increasingly covered in *Agrekon*. This also explained why the share of articles related to farm management issues dropped to 3% from its peak of 20% in the 1970s.

The deregulated agricultural environment in South African agriculture was probably responsible for the lower share of agricultural policy papers after 2000, while the focus on land reform, agricultural development and food security, as well as trade matters, took its place with marked increases in their share of papers.

Within the various themes there have also been substantive shifts in focus. For example, in the “marketing, supply chains and consumers” theme, the papers in the last two decades were more focused on supply chains and consumer studies, while in the early years had focused more on the controlled marketing dispensation and industry market overviews.

Author affiliation

The affiliation of authors appearing on the articles published in *Agrekon* also showed some marked changes over the years. Again, politics and the ownership of the journal as well as the change in publisher in 2010 and the ISI listing all contributed to these changes. In addition, South African authors increasingly started to collaborate with international institutions, which also increased the diversity of authorship.

During the first three decades (volumes 1–28), virtually all authors (96%) were affiliated to South African government departments, parastatals and universities. This has changed rapidly since 1990, and especially since 2010. In the last six years (volumes 54–59), the author affiliation of papers published in *Agrekon* was completely different:

- South African universities (30%)
- International research institutions and universities (62%)
- Other South African institutions (8%)

In recent years, *Agrekon* has been receiving many manuscripts from other African universities, especially those in Ethiopia.

Table 4. Affiliation of authors published in *Agrekon*: 1962–2020.

Author affiliation	Number	Share
University of Pretoria	419	26%
University of KwaZulu-Natal	224	14%
University of the Free State	165	10%
Stellenbosch University	119	7%
RSA Department of Agriculture	64	4%
Development Bank of Southern Africa	41	3%
Agricultural Research Council, Pretoria	33	2%
University of Limpopo	25	2%
Rhodes University	21	1%
University of Fort Hare	19	1%
University of Cape Town	17	1%
University of Reading	17	1%
University of South Africa	16	1%
North-West University	16	1%

Source: Extracted from SCOPUS database, February 2021.

Despite the recent increase in the diversity of authors publishing in *Agrekon*, it is still remarkable that 75% of the articles published in *Agrekon* over the last six decades was produced by authors affiliated to only 14 institutions, as listed in Table 4. Only the University of Reading (UK) features here amongst mostly South African universities

In light of the dominant South African focus of the papers in *Agrekon* up to 2010, it will be no surprise that familiar names will dominate the list of authors whose names appear on papers published in the journal. Publication incentives at South African universities since the late 1980s and the importance of research output in the university funding model and academic promotion contributed to the surge in output by university-based researchers. *Agrekon* published 1149 papers over the six decades carrying the names of 1685 authors. A total of 54% of these names belong to only 20 authors, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Top 20 authors in *Agrekon*: 1962–2020.

Author	Number of papers
Groenewald, JA	149
Van Zyl, J	90
Kirsten, JF	80
Nieuwoudt, WL	72
Ortmann, GF	63
Vink, N	42
Van Rooyen, CJ	40
Van Schalkwyk, HD	33
Lyne, MC	32
Darroch, MAG	31
Oosthuizen, LK	27
Hattingh, HS	26
Jooste, A	25
Gregory, JJ	24
Momberg, Q	24
Joubert, JSG	23
Thirtle, C	23
Fényes, TI	22
Van Rensburg, HJ	22
Kleynhans, TE	21
Sartorius von Bach, HJ	20
Meyer, FH	19

Source: Extracted from the SCOPUS database, February 2021.

Readership and impact

There are currently 2920 institutions across the globe with full access to *Agrekon*. However, *Agrekon's* readership is mainly in Africa, with most (49%) of all article downloads taking place on the continent. Institutions in the EU are responsible for a further 26% of all article downloads. In 2012 *Agrekon* recorded a total of 7032 full text downloads (FTDs), which increased substantially to almost 26,000 in 2019.

We have listed *Agrekon's* Impact Factor, which reflects a marked improvement in the last year, in [Table 1](#). *Agrekon's* impact is also measured by the so-called altmetric score, which records the mentions of articles from the journal in the media, policy documents and social media. The altmetric analysis assigns an “attention score” to each article and thereby provides an indication of the attention the article has received outside the normal academic publication channels.


Agrekon receives between 180 and 200 article submissions each year, with 32% coming from South Africa, 18% from Ethiopia and 12% from China. In 2014 more than 60% came from South African based authors. *Agrekon* has a dedicated editorial board and panel of referees that perform a top-class service. Their critical understanding of quality publications and the importance of rigour and unique contributions to the discipline have all contributed to the quality of the published articles and thus the higher impact factor. This, however, implies that our acceptance rate will be low and therefore varies between 12% and 20%, which is in line with most top journals in the field.

We would like to thank our referees and editorial board for their contribution to *Agrekon* over the years and trust that they will continue to contribute to the success of the journal.

Finally, a warm word of welcome to Prof. Edilegnaw Wale Zegeye (University of the Free State) who will be joining the editorial team as the new Associate Editor for *Agrekon*.

References

- Kirsten, J.F. 2002. Forty years of agricultural economics scholarship and practice in South Africa: A time to challenge the consensus and refocus our intellectual work. *Agrekon* 41, no. 4: 251–284.
- Wissing, G.J., and J.A. Groewald. 1987. *Agrekon*: The first quarter-century. *Agrekon* 26, no. 2: 1–5.

Johann Kirsten
Editor-in-Chief, *Agrekon*
 jkirsten@sun.ac.za