

Plant health in the spotlight at Pannar Extravaganza

By [Ursula Human](#)

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This year's Pannar Extravaganza focused on plant health; a theme specifically selected to tie in with the United Nations' International Year of Plant Health 2020.



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Plaas Media attended the Delmas leg of the roadshow on 26 February to learn more about the most important plant health factors farmers should be aware of for maize, sunflower, soya beans and fodder crops.

Gerhard Engelbrecht, territory sales agronomist at Pannar, was the go-to expert on yellow maize diseases and cultivars. He discussed diseases such as common rust, northern corn leaf blight and grey leaf spot, all of which are caused by moderate to high temperatures and prolonged leaf wetness due to dew or rain.



Plant health for oilseeds

Soya beans and sunflower were other important commodities that were discussed. In terms of both these crops, Pannar's experts focused specifically on Sclerotinia (*Sclerotinia sclerotiorum*).



In soya beans, yield losses could amount to 0,25t/ha for every 10% infected plants in the field. This disease is driven by seasonal changes such as higher temperatures and moisture. Soya plants are usually in flower during the warm and wet time of the year, which is why the fungus leaves black debris (sclerotia) in the soya beans when harvested.

Pannar agronomist Nico Barnard emphasised that Sclerotinia can easily be spread via the combine harvester if an infected area is harvested before a non-infected field. These spores can also be dormant for seven to eight years while waiting for the ideal environmental conditions to make their presence known.



Sclerotinia can also cause havoc in sunflowers. Corné van der Westhuizen, an agronomist at Pannar in the North West, said that this plant disease usually occurs when the weather is warm and sunny, with temperatures between 23 and 25°C. The fungus also easily overwinters in soil and can occur in any type of soil. Other diseases of importance for sunflowers include charcoal rot, Alternaria leaf blight and rust.

Focus on fodder crops

Lucern, annual and perennial ryegrass, oats, Japanese radish and feed sorghum were some of the fodder crops that were in the spotlight at the Pannar Extravaganza.



Feed sorghum (forage sorghum) was one of the crops that Petrus van Rooyen, pasture product manager at Pannar, suggested as a silage crop, as were maize, oats and teff. According to Pannar's experts, a crop that is ideal for feed flow management throughout the year is lucern, which can be cultivated at high yields throughout the year.

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