

# Spotlight on Agriculture

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## HARDAP RESEARCH STATION

### INTRODUCTION

The Hardap Dam near Mariental was completed during 1963 and the development of the Hardap Irrigation Scheme was started in the area. A need arose for a research station to assist the farmers of the Scheme with the problems and questions they encountered during production under the local conditions, as the farmers at the Scheme did not have any knowledge on crop farming under irrigation. The Hardap Research Station, under the previous dispensation, was officially opened in 1966, with Mr. Huiszamen as the manager. In total it consists of 107 hectares (currently of which 96 hectares are cultivated). The soil and production potential of the Station was poor and thus perfect for the purpose of research and training, as this ensured that the Station would not compete with the farmers in the marketing of their produce. Originally assistance to the farmers was given mainly in different cultivation methods. Since the Independence of Namibia, the Station resorts under the Directorate of Research and Training of the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development.



*Lucerne field with date palms in the background*

A total of 798 000 m<sup>3</sup>/year bulk water is supplied by a canal system from the Hardap Dam for the irrigation of the fields on the Scheme. Salinity of the soil is a problem in these areas and the different methods of irrigation were also investigated over the years. The problem was greatly solved through the erection of drainage canals to the river.

### CROP PRODUCTION

Presently there are a number of variety trials been executed at the Station. The varieties of each crop are tested for the adaptability under the local irrigation circumstances, the production and the quality of these crops. A number of companies and organizations are taking part in these variety trials, with a wide range of people benefiting from the research carried out at the Station (Table 1). All crops are produced under irrigation.

**Table 1. Crops tested and produced on the Station during 1999/2000.**

Crops	Number of Varieties	Beneficiaries of research	Destination of produce
Cotton	12	Seed companies, farmers, MAWRD	Open market
Dates	3	NDC, commercial and communal farmers	Open market in future
Grapes	8	Communal farmers, MAWRD	Open market as raisins
Lucerne	4	MAWRD, other research stations	To Research Stations
Maize	11	Seed companies, farmers, MAWRD	To Research Stations
Sweet potato	10	Communal farmers, MAWRD	Multiplication only
Wheat	16	Seed companies, farmers, MAWRD	Open market

MAWRD – Ministry of Agricultural, Water and Rural Development  
 NDC – National Development Corporation

The cotton trial is part of the National Cotton Variety Test of Namibia. Although it is carried out under irrigation at Hardap Research Station, it is performed under dry land conditions at all other sites in Namibia.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

The Station is used to present courses for students from the different Tertiary Institutions, as well as commercial and communal farmers and agricultural officials, while the facilities are also used by private companies for information days.



**Wheat cultivar trials**

Hardap Research Station is part of the International Wheat Programme. A number of varieties are distributed to the involved SADC countries and tested under a range of conditions. The Station received sixteen cultivars and after the evaluation three were recommended for the Hardap Scheme.

Five tons of dates were produced at the Station during the previous season (March 1999), which confirmed the sustainability of date production in Namibia. There are plans for the future to phase out the whole Hardap Research Station to the National Development Corporation to resettle landless people on date production units.



**Wheat harvesting**



**Taking care of the grape vines**

The Station also assists in the development of the communal farmer, his knowledge and a better livelihood. Farmers of the southern communal areas are involved with a number of gardening projects and together with the officials at the Station problems with salinity of the soil and water, insects and the shortage of irrigation water were identified. The officials at the Station implemented some on-station trials to search for practical and affordable ways to render these problems, which were then proposed to the farmers.

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