

ARC researcher and UFS collaborator honoured by *Wheat Focus*

Long days in the field, hours in the glasshouse and meticulous data work for some, is just science. For Dr Tarekegn Terefe and Prof Willem Boshoff, it is a mission that has now earned them Authors of the Year 2025 and *Best Article of 2025* in *Koringfokus / Wheat Focus*.

Anelisa Gusha
ARC-SMALL GRAIN

Their research on wheat stem rust has struck a chord with readers and editors alike. Their article, “*Western Cape 2024 season: New stem rust races detected on wheat*,” combines scientific rigor with practical advice for wheat producers.

The piece is the result of a collaboration between the rust research team at ARC-Small Grain (ARC-SG) led by Dr Terefe and Prof Boshoff from the University of the Free State (UFS). By blending ARC-SG’s surveillance data with Prof Boshoff’s risk analysis, the team produced findings that farmers can apply directly to protect their crops.

“I feel honoured and encouraged. To see our work recognised in this way is very special,” said Dr Terefe. “Together, we translated comprehensive surveillance findings and cultivar response data into a story that is useful to wheat producers and the rust research community.”

Stem rust continues to evolve, threatening wheat cultivars nationwide. Dr Terefe said spotting new races early and sharing that information is not just science but it is a commitment to food security.

“The long hours in the field and glasshouse are meaningful

because they make a real difference for farmers,” he said. Dr Terefe was quick to shine a light on the teamwork that brought this achievement to life.

“This award belongs to my team in Bethlehem, the Small Grain team in Stellenbosch, and the national cultivar evaluation team in Bethlehem. Their dedication to planting trap nurseries, conducting surveys, and pathotyping in the glasshouse made this work possible.”

He also thanked the South African Winter Cereal Industry Agency (SAWCIA) and the Department of Agriculture for their sustained funding support, which ensures long-term rust surveillance. Looking ahead, both scientists plan to continue sharing their findings.

“As long as stem rust keeps evolving, there will always be new data to share. We will continue ensuring farmers, researchers, and stakeholders stay informed and prepared,” Dr Terefe said.

Prof Boshoff added that recognition from a producers’ magazine is particularly meaningful. “It is very special to see research acknowledged by the farmers and industry members who actually use it,” he said.

“As a plant pathologist, my goal is not only to conduct applied research but also to report findings where they matter most. Through media and industry platforms, we can raise awareness, promote sound disease control strategies, and reduce the risk of outbreaks.”

Having grown up on a farm, Prof Boshoff said his passion for agriculture has been part of his life from the beginning.

“I was fortunate to work with and learn from my father. Being a researcher in agriculture is a privilege, and my life has been enriched by interacting with colleagues and friends throughout my career.”

Both Dr Terefe and Prof Boshoff agreed that seeing their research published and recognised is one of the most rewarding parts of their work.

“There’s no better feeling than contributing to an article and seeing it published,” Prof Boshoff said.

* *Wheat Focus / Koringfokus* is published since 1983 and the trophy awarded to researchers since 2001. 🍷



Prof Willem Boshoff and Dr Tarekegn Terefe with the trophy presented by *Wheat Focus / Koringfokus*.

