

Irrigation cultivars – the new kids on the block

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2020 is slowly, but surely, coming to an end and it will definitely be a year to remember. Despite all the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the ARC-Small Grain has still been able to continue with research and development to successfully deliver on its goals.

The three breeding projects continued actively with trial preparations during the national lockdown. Due to the dedication of employees the planting season was carried out successfully, allowing the development of superior, high-yielding cultivars to continue. Even though 2020 took an unexpected turn for the worst, the ARC-Small Grain has had reason for celebration. Earlier this year, the industry approved two lines for release. These two lines have been renamed as the new cultivars, Usutu and Selons. Both are currently being multiplied for commercialisation. Some seed are expected to be available for purchase by 2022 and both the cultivars should be readily available by 2023.

Usutu

Usutu is a spring wheat cultivar for the irrigation areas. It has a medium to late growth period with excellent yields and an average straw length of 105 cm. It has not exhibited any lodging problems, despite its exceptional yields and large ears. In terms of disease resistance, Usutu is moderately resistant to leaf rust and moderately susceptible to stripe rust. Over the last four years it has had an average yield of 12 t/ha and during 2019 it produced an average yield of 13 t/ha.

Selons

Selons, also an irrigation spring wheat cultivar, has a medium growth period and a slightly shorter straw. The average straw length is 95 cm and shows no lodging problems. Like Usutu, Selons is moderately resistant to leaf rust, but it is resistant to moderately susceptible to stripe rust. Selons is also capable of high yields, with a 4-year yield average of 11,4 t/ha. During 2019 it produced an average yield of 12,5 t/ha.

Umgeni

Another line approved by the industry earlier this year is Umgeni, which will without doubt be the new flagship cultivar for the ARC in the irrigation areas. Large seed multiplications for commercialisation will proceed during 2021. We are hopeful that Umgeni will be available for purchase during 2023. It has a short growth period and exceptional yields. During 2019 Umgeni produced an average yield of 13 t/ha and it has a 2-year yield average of 12,5 t/ha. Apart from its superb yield potential, it is also moderately resistant to leaf rust and resistant to stripe rust.

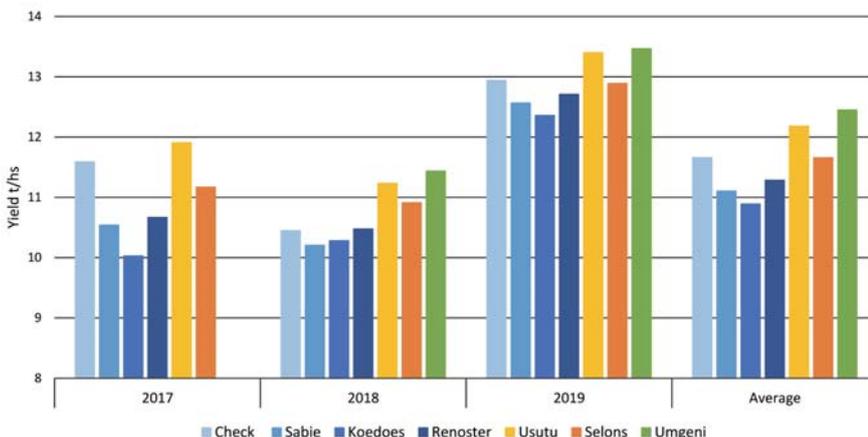
With these new cultivars as well as the current cultivars on offer, the ARC-Small Grain has a complete package that suits the needs of all producers. Renoster and Koedoes are currently available for purchase and are excellent cultivars in their own right. Both these cultivars have short growth periods and average yields of 11 t/ha. During 2019 both Renoster and Koedoes realised yields of 12 t/ha. For further information, please contact Kim Delport at 021 809 3558 or coetzeek@arc.agric.za.



Usutu (Photo 1) and Selons (Photo 2) at Vaalharts research station.



Renoster at Vaalharts research station.



Graph 1: Cultivar yields between 2017 and 2019.