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Overview of fertilizers

Pecan trees, like many other fruit and nut-bearing trees, rely on a balanced supply of essential nutrients to thrive and produce healthy nuts. Some key nutrients for pecans are nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), and potassium (K), to name but a few. Additionally, micronutrients such as zinc, calcium, magnesium, sulfur, and trace elements can also be very beneficial. Here's a breakdown of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium:

Nitrogen (N) is crucial for overall tree growth and the development of robust foliage, contributing to the production of vibrant, green leaves. However, it's worth noting that an excess of nitrogen can lead to overly vigorous vegetative growth, potentially compromising nut production.

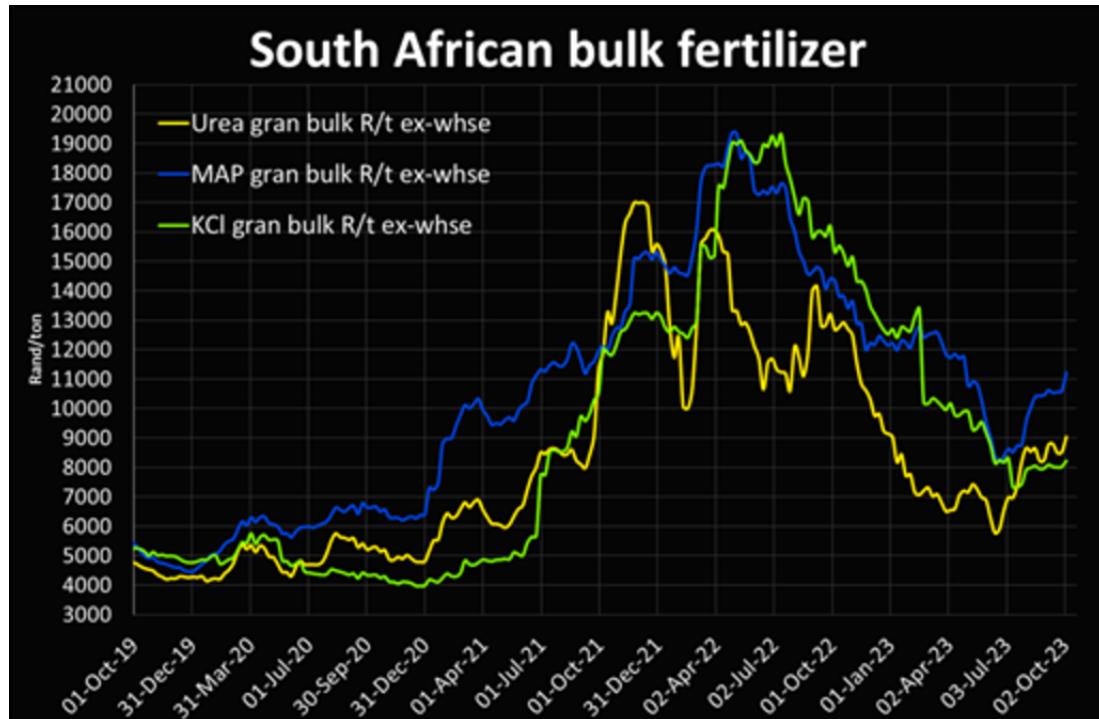
Phosphorus (P) plays a pivotal role in root development, flower formation, and the efficient transfer of energy within the plant. Its significance is particularly pronounced in the early stages of growth.

Potassium (K) is essential for maintaining the overall health of the tree, bolstering disease resistance, and facilitating optimal water uptake. Furthermore, it has a positive impact on the quality of the nuts.

For fertilization, one can consider various options tailored to these nutrient requirements. Urea, a nitrogen-based fertilizer containing a substantial 46% nitrogen by weight, can be beneficial. Similarly, MAP (Monoammonium Phosphate) proves valuable, with a significant composition of +22% phosphorus and 11% nitrogen. Furthermore, KCl (Potassium chloride) offers a concentrated source of potassium, typically containing 50%-52%, accompanied by 45%-47% chlorine.

Fig. 1. Fertilizer Prices, 2019-2023.

Source: F Curve Insights, 2023.



The price of MAP October 5th, 2023, is R11,219 per tonne, while Urea (granular) and KCl (granular) are priced at R9,042 per tonne and R8,232 per tonne, respectively.

Fertilizer prices have experienced a significant drop in the past year and are now recovering to pre-COVID levels. This decline can be attributed to a sharp decrease in demand for fertilizers. Over the past three years, the exorbitant costs of fertilizers led producers to reduce their usage, resulting in lower yields and ultimately contributing to the decrease in fertilizer prices over the last year.

Additionally, a downward pressure on prices is also being influenced by countries extending their production of fertilizers. This is a response to the shortage caused by the Russia-Ukraine war, which disrupted the global supply of fertilizers as Russia, being the world's largest supplier of fertilizers, plays a crucial role in this market.

Increased fuel costs

Fig. 2. Brent Crude Oil Price, 2023.

Source: Trading Economics, 2023.



In recent months, the price of Brent crude oil has experienced a notable increase, rising from \$73 per barrel in June to a peak of \$94 per barrel on September 27th. This represents a significant 27% surge within a three-month period. Consequently, this surge has contributed to higher fuel prices throughout September and October. Compounded by a weakened Rand against the Dollar, which stood at R19.21 on September 27th, the cost of petrol and diesel has been further driven up.

Encouragingly, there has been a recent decline in the price of Brent crude oil to \$84 per barrel as of October 6th. However, its impact on fuel prices will likely only be observed in November if this level is sustained. Currently, the Rand is trading at R19.41 against the Dollar on 6th October, which could potentially offset the effect of the lower oil price.

Fig. 3. Fuel Price, Sept and Oct 2023.

Source: BusinessTech, 2023.

Inland	September Official	October Official
93 Petrol	R24.14	R25.22
95 Petrol	R24.54	R25.68
Diesel 0.05%	R23.05	R25.02
Diesel 0.005%	R23.28	R25.22

Coastal	September Official	October Official
93 Petrol	R23.42	R24.50
95 Petrol	R23.82	R24.96
Diesel 0.05%	R22.32	R24.29
Diesel 0.005%	R22.59	R24.53

These are the fuel prices for the month of September 2023 and October 2023, Petrol increased by R1.08 and R1.14 and Diesel by R1.94 and R1.97.

Water rights and licensing

Having a thorough grasp of water rights holds high importance in agricultural practices, particularly in the context of pecan tree irrigation. It's vital to verify the validity of your water license and ensure it aligns with the specific irrigation needs of pecan trees.

This consideration also carries significant weight when acquiring property; confirming possession of essential water usage rights becomes imperative.

Furthermore, the proper registration of boreholes is essential to adhere to designated limits on water extraction. Valuable resources for assistance in registration include Water User Associations, Irrigation Boards, Catchment Management Agencies (CMA), and The Department of Water and Sanitation.

Takeboife Morake - transformation leader in Gauteng South



Morake, as he is known by colleagues and friends, first connected with SAPPA representatives in 2017 during the exploration of expanding the transformation program into the Gauteng-south region. In this capacity, Morake played a pivotal role as a liaison and guide, particularly as the "Region-G farms" were entirely unfamiliar terrain for SAPPA.

Morake actively participated in every farm visit, swiftly gaining expertise in the farm evaluation process, specifically concerning pecan production requirements. Soon after, he was assigned for development and training as a mentor for emerging small-scale pecan farmers in the region. Presently, Morake's status remains as a "mentor in training," recognizing that comprehensive knowledge of pecan nut production only comes with years of hands-on experience.

In 2020, expressing an interest in establishing a pecan nursery, Morake received a sponsorship from SAPPA consisting of 2,000 Ukulinga seeds. These seeds were planted in one of the allocated tunnels at the Gauteng Department of Agriculture Farms in Eikenhof. In January 2022, SAPPA provided additional support by connecting Morake with a specialist in grafting. Morake then embarked on the grafting of Wichita and Navaho cultivars shortly thereafter.

This endeavour significantly contributed to the SAPPA transformation program, enabling the sourcing of pecan trees locally. In August 2023, SAPPA purchased all of Morake's "marketable" trees, which were ample to meet 95% of the program's needs.

In 2023, SAPPA generously sponsored an additional 20kg of Ukulinga seed, further propelling Morake's pecan nursery ventures. We extend our best wishes to Morake for success in this endeavour.

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