

and interest in taking economic risks such as commercial production. Development needs to build on what rural people are already trying to do and provide options that reduce risk rather than increase it through greater livelihood specialisation.

A one-size-fits-all approach should not be allowed to persist for another decade. We need to differentiate between blocks of communal land along a number of criteria (agro-ecological, social, politico-institutional and economic) and come up with credible ways of improving livelihoods that are applicable to those more homogeneous blocks. In order to improve the effectiveness of interventions, it is essential that planners and extension staff have a realistic grasp of the objectives and constraints of communal livestock farmers in particular areas and stop basing their interventions on the ecological and economic assumptions and ideals of the commercial farming model.

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South African Council For Natural Scientific Professions (SACNASP)

The Natural Scientific Professions Act of 2003 is in the process of being implemented and the current Council has entered into consultation with the various “learned societies” such as the GSSA to discuss issues related to these different organisations and how it will affect the members of such organisations. The following is a summary of the information that was disseminated at a meeting held between the SACNASP Council and the “learned societies” on 1 July 2005 in Pretoria.

Natural Scientific Professions Act Of 2003

The new Act of 2003 brought a number of changes to the previous Act of 1993. Several of these have a direct effect on the different professional/learned societies such as the GSSA. These societies are now described as “voluntary associations” and do not have direct council representation anymore. It is seen as being a more inclusive approach. According to the new Act the minister of Science and Technology (currently Minister Mosibudi Mangena) is responsible for the nominations and placements of advertisements for council members of SACNASP. A panel will then be appointed by the minister to make recommendations on appointments. The minister will have to inform “voluntary organisations” to nominate persons as members of council. The invitation to nominate members will be done by notice in the Government Gazette.

Powers of the council

Council will have to make recommendations

with regard to the minimum qualifications/requirements for registration and the period of validity of such a registration. This was necessitated by the removal of the previous category for “Technologists” and replacing it with a new category for “Certified Scientists”.

The Council will also establish structures to become involved with the education and training of natural scientists and will perform functions within the South African Qualifications Authority Act (1995) and Higher Education Act (1997).

Categories of registration

There are three categories namely 1) professional natural scientist, 2) candidate natural scientist, and 3) certified natural scientist. These new categories will need new requirements and abbreviations also.

Qualification and experience requirements

Professional Natural Scientist (Pr.Sci.Nat.)

A 4-year B.Sc., B.Sc. (Honours) or B.Tech. degree, or a 4-year N.H. Dip., **plus** three years appropriate experience in a natural scientific profession;

OR

A M.Sc. or M.Tech., **plus** two years experience in a natural scientific profession;

OR

A D.Sc., Ph.D. or D.Tech., **plus** one year experience in a natural scientific profession.

Certificated Natural Scientist (Cert.Sci.Nat.)

Any person who holds an appropriate THREE-year degree/diploma (or equivalent qualification) from a South African university, university of technology or a technikon (or a similar institution), which is accredited by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the Council for Higher Education (CHE) and by the Education Committee of the Council, and who, for **at least one year**, has performed work of an appropriate nature, shall be eligible for registration.

Candidate Natural Scientist (Cand.Sci.Nat.)

Any person who holds an appropriate FOUR-year degree/diploma ((or equivalent

qualification) from a South African university, university of technology or a technikon (or a similar institution), which is accredited by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the Council for Higher Education (CHE) and by the Education Committee of the Council, shall be eligible for registration. (No work experience required).

A candidate Natural Scientist is a person who intends to register as a Professional Natural Scientist (Pr.Sci.Nat.) after completion of the appropriate three years vocational experience as may be required.

Registration

One of the more contentious issues of the new act is the wording of regulation 20(1) of the act stipulating that “**Only a registered person may practise in a consulting capacity**”. It was first thought that it is referring to person doing consultancy work, but Council understands it as anyone who advises another in this field. Thus it was explained it would include lecturers at tertiary institutions, persons within government organisations such as the ARC, private consultants etc. This will have the implication that all persons in these different sectors must register with SACNASP in a field of practice.

Fields of practise in natural scientific professions

Council feels that the current list is outdated and have asked the Registration Committee of SACNASP to revise the current list. The list is included for GSSA members to peruse and send through any comments to Leslie Brown (lrbrown@unisa.ac.za) before the end of August.

Fields of Practise

Agricultural Science
Animal Science
Biological Science
Botanical Science
Chemical Science
Earth Science
Ecological Science
Environmental Science

Food Science
Forensic Science
Forestry Science
Geographical Science
Geological Science
Hydrological Science
Industrial Science
Marine Science
Materials Science
Mathematical Science
Mathematics Education Science
Metallurgical Science
Microbiological Science
Natural Science Education Science
Physical Science
Radiation Science
Water Care Science
Zoological Science

Recognition of voluntary organisations

The SACNASP Council has in terms the Act prescribed the requirements with which a voluntary association for the Natural Sciences will have to comply with to be recognised. The following is the most important information regarding the requirements:

An association shall in terms of its constitution, further the interest of at least one discipline belonging to the following groups of related sciences (Earth Sciences; Chemical Sciences; Physical Sciences; Mathematical Sciences; Biological Sciences; and Agricultural Sciences)

An association shall have at least 50 corporate members (member of an association who have voting rights in such an association).

At **least two-thirds** of the corporate members of an association shall be **registered with SACNASP** as natural scientists.

Identification of work

SACNASP Council has informed all members present at the meeting that they intend to consult with the various voluntary associations on various aspects especially the identification of the type of natural scientific work that may be performed by registered persons.

Code of conduct

A new code of conduct will have to be developed. The proposed one is available from Leslie Brown upon request since it is too long to include.

General comments

From the above and the meeting it is clear that many aspects still need to be discussed and concluded before final implementation of the Act. There are many aspects still unclear that need attention. Various members of the GSSA have raised concerns about the need to be registered, the different fields of practise as well as the qualification requirements to be registered. The regulation that least two thirds of the GSSA's members have to be registered to be recognised as a voluntary organisation also has implications for the society's continued existence and will need to be debated. Various other issues such as “why become a member of a voluntary association and not just register with SACNASP?” will also be put in the spotlight. I am of the opinion that it would require a collective effort between the different voluntary organisations, which fulfil an important role in the furthering of their respective fields of expertise, and the SACNASP Council to arrive at a workable and acceptable relationship.

SACNASP Council has requested that the different voluntary associations provide them with comments on all the different issues especially the “fields of practice”, “type of natural scientific work that may be performed by registered persons” and the “code of conduct”. Members of the GSSA are therefore invited to send all their comments or questions directly to Leslie Brown (lrbrown@unisa.ac.za) who will collate all the info into one document to present to SACNASP Council. This would be our “window of opportunity” to give an input as a society and maybe to ensue that the interests of our members are looked after and catered for. As soon as more information becomes available it will be circulated to members.