

# The importance of soya bean oilcake in animal feed

By Anina Hunter, chairperson, AFMA

**S**outh Africans live in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world with ever increasing challenges and opportunities. Given the multitude of challenges we've had to face the past few years, the importance of self-sufficiency and less dependence on imports have been some of the major drivers in assuring that South African production of soya beans meet local demand. Soya bean oilcake dominates the protein contribution to animal feed.

## Positive growth

Government, industry and producers have over the past few years developed this sector with great success. South Africa is reaching a point where we will be able to export soya beans and meet local demand. Soya bean crushers have invested in crushing capacity to ensure the growing crop can be processed with great success.

There is no substitute for soya bean oilcake – it will remain the major inclusion component in poultry diets and is an important source of protein and energy in animal feed. It is widely used in livestock and poultry diets due to its high nutrient content and relatively low cost

compared to other sources of protein, available at the required volumes and at constant supply year round. Local soya bean and soya bean oilcake prices have increased significantly over the past few years; the driver of late is not world stocks, but rather international events and prices.

## A source of nutrients

Soya beans contain more than 40% protein, making it one of the richest sources of protein available for animal feed. It also provides essential amino acids, such as lysine, methionine and tryptophan, which are crucial for animal growth and maintenance.

Soya bean oilcake is also a good source of protein and energy. Lower protein diets are becoming mainstream and essential synthetic amino acids such as arginine and isoleucine are used strategically to further lower the cost of diets while leading to reduced levels of oilcake in broiler diets. The balance lies in weighing up the lowest cost diet per ton in line with the cost-efficient option, to deliver the highest profitability in a production unit.

In addition to its protein content, soya bean oilcake is also rich in unsaturated fatty acids, including linoleic and linolenic acids, which are important for the health and wellbeing of animals. Another benefit is the variety of minerals, including iron, calcium and phosphorus, it contains. These are essential for the development and maintenance of strong bones and tissues in animals.

## Feed conversion

The use of soya bean oilcake in animal feed has been shown to improve feed conversion efficiency. It also helps reduce the cost of animal feed, and is relatively cheap compared to other sources of protein such as meat and dairy products. These products are not readily available at required volumes to fundamentally change the inclusion rate of soya bean oilcake in South African poultry feed diets.

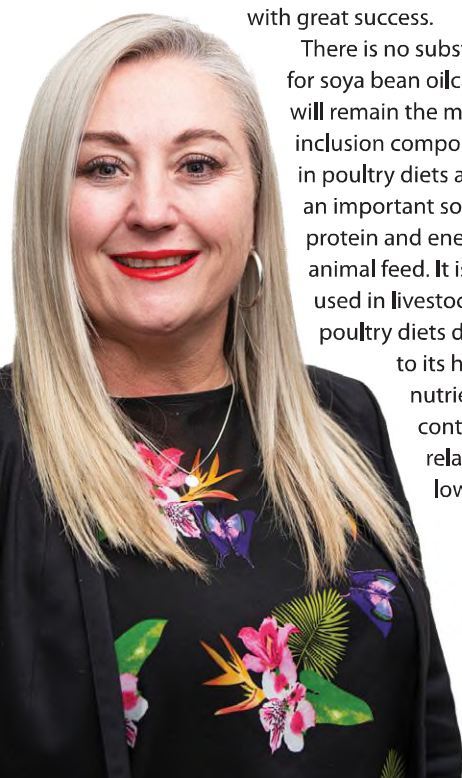
The fibre component of oilcake has also proven important for gut health and improving feed conversion efficiency. The fibre content of sunflower oilcake is advantageous for gut health and pellet quality.

The quality of soya bean oilcake is extremely important as an over- and under-processed product will not deliver the nutritional advantages mentioned and will negatively impact livestock performance. Crushers are constantly improving their processes to ensure that the value of soya bean oilcake can be extracted down the value chain. Local crushers are therefore measured against agreed quality criteria as this is paramount to ensuring animal performance and health. This market sector can only succeed if local crushing plants can be run sustainably with the support of industry. Unfortunately, these crushers also face challenges relating to local electricity and water supply.

## Successful production

Investment in cultivar development for the local climate has contributed to the successful growth of local soya bean production. Every year more hectares of soya beans are planted and improved yields to drive crop profitability is a constant focus. International benchmarking against the rest of the world's products remains important to ensure our competitiveness. This is also true when analysing local soya bean oilcake quality – we have determined that our local products have a higher sugar content relative to the rest of the world.

Overall, soya bean oilcake plays a crucial role in the animal feed industry, providing essential nutrients for the growth and maintenance of livestock and poultry. 🌱



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