



## The Termites are Coming!!!

By Grant Dryden

The challenges we face in Africa are nearly all the same, irrespective of nations, and we have probably been asked the "termite" problem several hundred times, due to obvious reasons. It is a common case that whenever an ecosystem is in a broken state, that even beneficial organisms become a problem. God in His wisdom has placed them on the earth for the express purpose of playing a role in keeping the land in order and in balance. All creatures have been made for this purpose, even termites.

In our current conventional systems where we have denuded our lands of all surface cover through overgrazing, burning, ploughing and destruction of the soil cover, causing them to become like deserts, we leave a totally defunct ecosystem which cannot function as God created it to. Termites are detritus feeders, which means that they prefer to feed on dead plants and trees rather than living plants. They get their nutrients from cellulose, which is an organic fiber found in wood and plant matter. When we initially begin to increase God's blanket on the surface of the soil, the termites will definitely increase their activity to breakdown this readily available material, especially where a small land is done to this standard. So the problem here is that they are eating your blanket cover, which is important to have on the ground, and not that they are eating your plants. However, as soon as the system is brought into order over time, the termites will be unable to remove and bury God's Blanket fast enough and God's blanket will begin to accumulate to the point where we can achieve our objective of 100% cover of the soil surface 2.5cm thick.

Quotes from the field:

"Termites are not a problem. People are really nervous about them, but God made them as well and they have a purpose. You did well to cover your soil with God's blanket. Keep on feeding the termites by covering your soil and they will not eat your crops. The termites incorporate the organic matter into the soil and they are actually making your soil more fertile. The termites will also increase your rain penetration tremendously. Start to see them as your allies not your enemies. I know this is hard to imagine, but it works."

August Basson (Farming God's Way – Lesotho)

"Termite problem.....what problem?" Dickson Shuwali from Malawi after 4 years of doing Farming God's Way.

Termites are actually only partly to blame for the rapid destruction of organic surface residues (God's blanket). A large proportion of the residues are decomposed by bacteria. The low levels of organic carbons in the soil, as a result of a history of conventional tillage practices, starve the bacteria and when God's blanket is applied, it provides a perfect environment for them to flourish. Every time the plough goes into the field it is like we send the ecosystem back to square one again, to the primary stages of succession. Although we can't see them or hear them, like we can termites, they often have a far more destructive role to play in the "too rapid" decomposition of God's blanket than termites do. Most of these bacteria are free living in the soil and can survive the poor soil fertility and high acidity resulting from conventional tillage, however their more favourable competitors such as slow breakdown fungi and other decomposers, cannot survive, mostly due to the frequent soil inversion. The only way to correct this biotic imbalance is to stop ploughing and to keep on applying God's blanket until God's factory in the soil is restored back into order, which takes time. Over time the fungi to bacteria levels improve and even the numbers of natural predators of the bacteria themselves increase.

Just like in most things with God – He loves to restore what has been stolen or broken, but it is a process not a quick fix. We have watched these phenomenal changes take place in many countries where farmers have implemented Farming God's Way wholeheartedly.

God has shown us how we should do it and we must, as His children, humble ourselves and follow after Him in all of our ways. Through His creation He has shown us that the soil should be covered with a blanket of plant material and in Farming God's Way our standard is 100% cover and 2.5cm thick. Don't let the fear of termites distract you from entering the journey of restoration.