

IN THE news September 2016



MASDT
MOBILE AGRI SKILLS
DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING (NPC)

COLLEN MASHIGO'S AUGUST REPORT

Spring is here and for vegetables farmers especially this is a very busy time of the year. It also means a busy time for Collen Mashigo, MASDT Business Development Officer and Mobile Lab technician who has ten plant and animal production projects in the Nelspruit/Barberton area.

Collen currently oversees four projects who all farm with fresh produce including tomatoes, cabbage green beans and green peppers covering an area of 3 ha with most of the cabbage producers busy harvesting cabbages at the moment.

On Khayelikude Magam the project has planted various crops, and Collen reports that these are looking healthy. He also assisted the farmer to open a portal to the WIKWIO program for identification of weeds and the subsequent combating thereof.
(Article on the WIKWIO portal in August 2016 Newsletter)

Some of the other farms relies on river water and the recent drought has affected them severely. This is the case with Thlakanelo Trading which relies on river water and couldn't plant in time. For the mean time that have prepared the field and has a decent piggery to keep them afloat.

Mama Lizo- a cattle farm near Barberton - was advised to move the cattle to other grazing pastures as the current fields are also very dry, even though the cattle are looking healthy. Experts expect the drought to be alleviated once the summer rains come, though they are thought to be later rather than sooner. Mama Lizo wants to substitute the cattle farm with vegetables and while waiting for the much needed rain, has sent soil samples to the Mobile Lab for testing to start the preparations on their fields for next year's crops.

A lot of emphasis was put on livestock health by Collen and he has helped the state veterinarian with numerous cases of vaccinations and other checkups so he could advise his clients accordingly.

Collen Mashigo is certainly moving and shaking and even finds the time to look for suitable markets for his clients. He has introduced Siphamandla Investments to an abattoir in Komatipoort and has met with a promising baconer that might be interested in pigs from Campbell Farming Services. He has advised all his vegetable producers to keep in mind the December rush and the demand for green peppers during that time.

CHRIS BOTHA ATTENDS VARIOUS FARMER'S DAYS



Rossgro presented a Farmer's day on at Rossgro's farms in White River during September . It was a day filled with interesting events and discussions. The emphasis was placed on brooding and various companies displayed their products to farmers and interested parties from all over the region who attended the day. Leading poultry medicine manufacturer - Avinev introduced their new vaccine against velogenic Newcastle disease and presented a fully comprehensive look at the disease in a well documented slide show. Diversity was well represented in a presentation held by the organizers in Zulu to underline brooding management.

Eagle's Pride Hatchery delivered a presentation on their products and invited all that attended to liaise with the companies representatives. Healthy brooding for healthy stock was once again at the order of the day. Chris Botha - MASDT Procurement Officer - attended the event and said it is such a good platform for networking and for discovering new products that he is sure will benefit all MASDT poultry production clients.

Chris also attended a Farmer's day at Jakkals Steyn Farm near Komatipoort on September 15 presented by Hydrotech where the producers introduced new variants of tomatoes and green peppers. The people who attended the event were treated to guided walks on the farm whilst seeing the new variants first hand. A total of 12 variants of tomatoes could be seen as well as three new variants. There were 23 variants of Green Peppers to be seen as well as eight new variants were introduced.



On September 19 MASDT travelled to Buffelspruit in the Nkomazi region, Mpumalanga, to hand over much deserved performance bonuses to the farmers at the Bomake Co-op - an MASDT tobacco project sponsored by British American Tobacco (BAT).

Despite the terrible drought, the farmers worked tirelessly and at the end of the season turned over a successful harvest of 51 601.90 kg of Sun Cured Virginia tobacco (SCV). Together the Co-op made a combined profit of R471 187.33 . Performance bonuses was handed over to those farmers who proved themselves and individually contributed to the success of the harvest.

To the average farmer the profit might not seem like a large amount, but the difficult conditions which these farmers produce in, makes this no small amount to be scoffed at, and epitomises the term 'hard earned cash'.

Buffelspruit lies nestled in between mountains in a fertile valley in the Jeppe's Reef area South-East of Malelane. The Jeppe's Reef road has been under severe construction for the last three years and the last 5 km of gravel road to the farms is really tough going and may look attractive to the avid 4x4 enthusiast. During the rainy season it is even worse and many a vehicle needs to be towed out. Needless to say this is an extremely rural and untouched area.

Farmers toil on the fields themselves with only a few helping hands and during the hot summer months , temperatures are an average 35C in the shade. They harvest and cure the tobacco on site and need the help of a tractor to bring the harvest to a central drop off point.

Managing Director of MASDT, Mrs. Lynette Bezuidenhout, personally handed the performance bonuses over and said she couldn't be more proud of each individual farmer and this bonus proves that the farmers were committed. "I am so proud of them, it shows that they understand the importance of hard work, and now they can reap the fruits of it".



Staff feature

THULATHI TSOBOLE

a) What do you do at MASDT?

I work as a Business Development Officer in Plant Production under Badplaas and Nkomazi region

b) How long have you been with the organisation?

I started with MASDT as intern in 2014 and became permanent employee of the organisation in July 2015

c) How long have you been working in corporate and what did you do before you joined MASDT?

I was exposed to farming during the year of 2011 as a assistant supervisor in Qutom farm around Delmas and resigned 2013

d) What is your experience like at the organisation?

MASDT have been good towards me and enhanced my agricultural experience.

I learned a lot from Melody and Inocent when it comes to the incubation program.

e) What's the best part about your job?

being in the field of farming on daily basis

f) Tell us a bit about your family?

I live with both parents and I only have 1 child but remain single

g) What are your hobbies?

Reading and watching movies

h) What do you enjoy for relaxation?

I play soccer and spend most of my time in church



MAIZE PRODUCTION AT BOMAKE COOPERATIVE, Buffelspruit, Mpumalanga

FOOD SECURITY and JOB CREATION

MASDT also supervised and administer the production of 98ha of food crops during the previous production season in the different areas. The production of these crops contributed to food security and hunger alleviation in the local communities. The production of maize increased from 2ha in 2011/12 to 72ha in 2015/16 country-wide and Monsanto SA joined this project by donating DKC78-45 and DKC78-35 seed to the different projects. In Buffelspruit area, the farmers decided to support the Thembaletu Home Base Care Centre which works with vulnerable children affected by poverty and ravages caused by HIV and Aids. The farmers donate maize meal to the Centre for the feeding scheme.

In Venda, some schools were assisted to establish vegetable gardens under the supervision of the Sub Mentor in that area.

This initiative created 567 jobs in the previous season.

TRAINING AND MENTORING

MASDT is also an accredited Training Service Provider with AgriSETA and from 2011 to date 214 heads country wide was trained in SCV tobacco, vegetable, maize and bean production. 2 Mentors and 6 Sub Mentors oversee the projects in 6 production areas.

MASDT initiate Agriculture Incubation in 2007 which is an intensive business empowerment program for at least 3 years. This includes registration of legal entities and knowledge transfer in all aspects of the business. The tobacco farmers are now in full control of their loan- and budget planning. They supplement their income with the food production crops and the community is getting the advantage of locally produced food at affordable prices.

This initiative proofed that true sustainable commercial farmers can be established in the most rural areas under guidance of experienced Mentors. MASDT is grateful to BAT SA of providing



MAIZE STORING AT BOMAKE COOPERATIVE



BEAN PRODUCTION AT NGUGUWANE COOPERATIVE