



## FOOD SECURITY IN THE TOBACCO PRODUCTION ENVIRONMENT

### SUN CURED VIRGINIA TOBACCO FARMERS ESTABLISHED

British American Tobacco SA joined hands and financially supported MASDT, a Non Profit Company to embark on an emerging farmer development project in 2011 in the Buffelspruit community, Mpumalanga for the very first time. A mere 0,5ha was planted as a trail to investigate the viability of producing Sun Cured Virginia (SCV) tobacco in this area. SCV tobacco is used as a filler-style tobacco and the production cost is much lower than flue-cured tobacco.

The emerging farmers in the community were all survival farmers and their very first exposure to tobacco production. 14ha of maize and 1 ha of vegetables were also produced in that time for food security purposes. The 1ha tobacco-1ha food production-principle was initiated by BAT and not negotiable for this Mixed Farming Incubation program, managed by MASDT.

The result of the trail proved positive and since then, the SCV production area expanded to 30ha in Jeppe's Reef/Buffelspruit and 28ha in Badplaas/Steynsdorp areas in Mpumalanga, as well as 23ha in the Groblersdal and 17ha in the Venda areas in Limpopo during the 2015/16 production season.

With financial support of BAT some of the following infrastructure and upgrades were done in the areas:

- Purchasing of tractors and implements;
- upgrade and repair an existing borehole;
- electrified a building to be used for office purposes;
- building of a small shed/storing facility;
- executing heavy-duty land preparation;
- erecting around 250 plastic SCV tobacco curing tunnels of 10m x 5m each;
- 8 portable sprinkler irrigation systems with pumps were purchased;
- second-hand equipment and implements were re-built in a temporary workshop;
- a small milling facilities for green mealies was established;
- repairs to a dam in Groblersdal for irrigation purposes;
- clearing of canals in Badplaas and Buffelspruit areas;
- purchasing of a diesel trailer;
- Purchasing of diesel motor for irrigation pump;
- Purchasing of delivery vehicles with trailers;
- Design and purchasing of 35 mechanical tobacco presses; and
- Upgrade the entrance to one farm, to name a few.



MD of MASDT, Lynette Bezuidenhout hands out the evidence of bonuses paid out

Currently 74 emerging farmers are producing SCV tobacco in the 2 Provinces. Yields increased from around 15 tons in 2012 to 140 tons in 2016. During the 2015/16 season, 18 of the 19 farmers in Buffelspruit/Jeppe's Reef area could repay their loans and made a profit – to an collective amount of R471,187.33. The best performing farmer, Thandi Timba, produced 2,440.80kg on her 1 hectare. The loans include monthly labour fees.

Two women farmers in Buffelspruit/Jeppe's Reef area are disabled but despite this, are making a success of their farming ventures.

Badplaas area had 2 outstanding performing farmers producing a yield of 2,993kg/ha and 3,732kg/ha respectively! These farmers are commercial in the true sense of the word.

The farmers of Jeppe's Reef/Buffelspruit and Groblersdal areas were selected to change to Flue Cured Virginia (FCV) production within the next 2 seasons to ensure that black commercial FCV farmers are established. Although market trends have influenced the product strategy to change from SCV to FCV and consequently to bring emerging farmers into the commercial mainstream of FCV tobacco producers, BATSA remains committed to assisting MASDT in supporting the development of rotational crop farmers who can achieve sustainability through effective farming and business management principles, both with and without tobacco.



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



## MASDT AND BAT SIGNS CONTRACT WITH THE MATSAMO TRADITIONAL COUNSEL

In a previous newsletter it was mentioned that MASDT, in conjunction with British American Tobacco (BATSA) have numerous tobacco projects which they are mentoring in the Buffelspruit area of the Nkomazi Municipality near Malelane in Mpumalanga.

These projects are still going strong, but recent events have catapulted MASDT's reach in the area. In December 2016 an agreement was reached and a contract signed between MASDT, BATSA, The Matsamo Traditional Council and other local tribal chiefs of the area, in order for MASDT to act as sole agricultural service provider, covering the greater Buffelspruit region, empowering the whole community with the necessary agricultural skills training and development. This guidance and training will involve all aspects of the agricultural sector and is not only limited to tobacco.

BATSA, who is the main benefactor of these projects, supplement the farms with vegetables through their Sustainable Economic Development Program (SED) in order for farmers to produce other crops for extra income for when the tobacco season is over.

This contract gives MASDT and BATSA an official mandate to supply the whole area with the blessing of the local tribal chiefs and the Traditional Council, and will promise great impact on the local economy and job creation.

MASDT hopes to play a vital role in the upliftment of this region's community, and strives to make this tropical area a tobacco hub once again.

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## New Appointment

### LETHABO SEKGOBELA

Lethabo Sekgobela is the latest addition to the MASDT jewel box. Lethabo (23) is a local returning to his roots, as he was born in Pretoria before the family moved to White River. He completed his Bachelor's degree in Agriculture and majored in Cultural Business Management at the esteemed University of Stellenbosch, specializing in Animal Production with emphasis on cattle, sheep and goat farming.

After his studies, Lethabo worked as a student on a poultry broiler farm in Plaston, near White River, to get to know the subject and the industry a little better and to expand his knowledge and field of expertise. After this he worked as an intern for the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform for some time before landing the prestigious post of Business Development Officer at MASDT in January 2017.

This articulated youngster shows great promise and he says he cannot wait to jump into the deep end and get started to make a difference in the lives of aspiring farmers.



## FOLLOW UP ON MATABANE CO-OPERATIVE

MASDT's newsletter featured the Matabane Co-operative projects in the Stoffberg area in Mpumalanga as the success story of the month in a previous edition. This project successfully graduated the Incubation Program in 2014 with its broiler chickens production and this little fledging farming venture is still growing more successful by the day.

In November 2016 Matabane Co-operative received more funds from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Eskom Foundation to build additional two broiler houses to expand their broiler production. The farmers approached MASDT to aid them in building these broiler houses. The project already has four existing broiler houses which accommodates 2 500 birds - 500 birds in each.

A further 2 500 chicks were purchased for the new, bigger broiler houses and divided equally between the farmers with each farmer receiving 500 chicks.

The project had a successful five week broiler production cycle of 2 500 birds. Although the project still struggles with various electricity problems, like load shedding, they have managed to rear their chickens with a less than 3% mortality rate and sold all of them at four weeks old. One of the farmers managed to secure a consistent market at the Tompi Seleka College of Agriculture in Marble Hall in the Limpopo Province.

This is giving the co-operative such a boost that they claim to need extra houses to sustain their demand and ensure that they are always in production.

At the moment the co-operative has sold over 2 000 chickens at R45 each and have generated a total income of R79 545.00 since receiving the new infrastructure.



## MASDT ATTENDS STRATEGIC AND CONTACT SESSION

Seda Technology Programme hosted a Strategic and Contact Session with 27 Incubators to ensure that the stakeholders have the same vision and objectives.

It was held at the CSIR Convention Centre in Pretoria on the 27th of January. There was vigorous discussions and very open heart-to-heart talk. This was a positive move and seeing that the Incubators are funded with money from the fiscus, also necessary to ensure return on investment of our tax money. The event was well attended and MASDT enjoyed being part of the session