



MENTORSHIPS IN HECTORSPRUIT

It has been proven in the past that by taking hands and supporting each other rather than working against each other is what will grow South Africa's economy. This is nowhere more true than the agricultural sector. Farmers, government and other affiliated institutions often lean on one another for support and not only does this create an inclusive economic environment, but also a basis for trust in each other.

The new Seda branch in Malelane recently approached MASDT to act as business advisors and to conduct mentorship programmes and coaching for various Seda funded projects in the Hectorspruit area of Mpumalanga. The agreement includes a range of technical and practical workshops to uplift the struggling local entrepreneurs.

The mentorship programme started in the second week of March and the first project at hand was Magolide Poultry Farming. Magolide is owned by the Bodila family who started farming in 2015 after they purchased a 14 hectare smallholding in Hectorspruit. Initially the family wanted to farm tropical fruit like mangos and litchis, but after careful deliberation with MASDT consultants, they decided that broiler production would not only be a market savvy choice, but also more cost effective.



Before embarking on mentorship programmes, MASDT first assesses the need, skills levels and available opportunities of the specific project. Focus areas are addressed assessment is then followed by an interview of the farmers and an evaluation of their production processes. A physical assessment of the farm is performed which will influence the emphasis of workshops and the production monitoring process.

The mentors used the Growth Wheel™ 3600 Screening tool and the 30-60-90 Day Action plan for a more systematic approach to MASDT's business advisory services. These tools assist in checking how well the project does in each focus area, identifying and focussing on the most detrimental challenges in the business, making decisions and taking the relevant action.

Such an approach provides a 360o perspective on all the components of a business, thus assisting the farmer to focus on each component individually and according to relative prioritisation. It helps the farmer as well as the mentor to enhance the decision making process on the farm.

The mentors used technical workshops where both employees and owners were exposed to a classroom situation while each topic was extensively covered. The owners also underwent Business Management courses in order to make more informed decision about the farms financial goals. Employees were treated to further practical workshops in the broiler houses.

An external stakeholder was invited to present topics on SARS compliance, Income tax requirements and the benefits of VAT registration. MASDT's Procurement Department has already started following up on market linkages for reputable suppliers in the area.

Mr and Mrs Bodila are still new to broiler farming and most challenges faced are common ones that MASDT Business Development Officers come across each day. Yet it is problems that can easily be overcome with the right training and coaching and therefore it was decided that Magolide Poultry Farm would be included into MASDT's three year mentorship programme to insure that they receive continued support in their new venture.



FEEDBACK ON PARLIAMENTARY VISIT

The saying goes that God works in mysterious ways. Others believe that destiny or chance plays a role where paths cross and lives are influenced for the better. Whatever you believe in, there is an undeniable fact that we get what we work for and deserve.

In the April edition of the MASDT newsletter it was reported that Bushbuckridge was visited by a Parliamentary Commission to evaluate the progress on some of the government funded projects. As mentioned before, the delegation was extremely impressed by the projects who were aided by MASDT. Those complimenting words proved to be true when one of the Parliamentary officials approached Vurhonga Farming and placed an order for an astronomical 3.5 tons of orange sweet potatoes from the farm.

The official echoed the advice that Vurhonga received from MASDT Business Development Officer - Collen Mashigo - who recommended that they plant orange sweet potato on an additional hectare to supply the growing demand for the sweet orange vegetable.

Collen assisted Vurhonga in drafting and submitting the invoice, totalling to R 31 465.00.

Vurhonga has proved that when you work hard and keep your faith, success will become your destiny.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTORY SURVEYS

Farmers and their needs might beat the core of MASDT's vision, but ultimately happy customers are our aim.

It is important to know what your client requires in order to turn them into profitable and sustainable ventures. MASDT has always been keen on knowing how our services can be improved, conclusively creating a positive environment where communities and business relationships can flourish. We don't see just clients, we make friends in the long run.

Therefore, MASDT is currently conducting Customer Satisfactory surveys to verify their service delivery, maybe even identifying new challenges for the future.

Reports are basically questionnaires where clients can rate the services they receive from their respective Business Development Officers as well as the BDO's knowledge and competence. These reports are kept confidential and are conducted by Business Development Manager - Innocent Makuwaza.

So far the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and a good indication of where certain criteria can be approved upon. The surveys will be conducted over the next two months

WECONNECT CONFERENCE 2017



On Thursday the 11th of March MASDT's Managing Director, Mrs Lynette Bezuidenhout, attended the annual WEConnect Conference in Sandton, Johannesburg.

WEConnect International is a global network that connects women owned businesses to qualified buyers around the world and helps women owned businesses succeed in global value chains. The network currently has certification in 21 countries that includes 744 certified women's business enterprises and more than 5400 self-registered women's business enterprises.

WEConnect International identifies, educates, registers, and certifies women's business enterprises based outside of the U.S. that are at least 51% owned, managed, and controlled by one or more women, and then connects them with multinational corporate buyers.

This year's event in Johannesburg saw prolific personality Lynette Ntuli opening the proceedings as Conference facilitator. Ntuli is well known for her act as television presenter but she is also a women's business owner. Other prestigious speakers included Hon Minister Susan Shabangu and Elizabeth Vazquez, the CEO and Co- founder of WEConnect. It was a jam-packed event which consisted of various key note speakers addressing the crowd and several networking sessions.



Staff feature

Collen Mashigo is MASDT's dashing Laboratory Technician and have been featured in a lot of newsletters because of the interesting job he has. Collen is a very well spoken man and not everyone knows that he can speak five languages! We asked Collen to answer the following questions;

What do you do at MASDT?

I am a Laboratory Technician/ SHE Representative

How long have you been with the organisation?

2½ good years to date and planning to have more enjoyable successful years to come.

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

I started working for 17 years before joining MASDT in September 2013. I was employed as a Laboratory technician/Supervisor at the fruit processing factory (Dickon Hall Product) in Mataffin from 1996 to 2005 and later that year was promoted to the very same industry/company to become a Warehouse/logistic manager and later early 2011, I left the company and join the construction industry where I became a Safety officer in February 2011 up until I join MASDT in September 20, 2013 to date.

What is your experience like at the organisation?

The unity among the staff and management, working with academically and creative young people where I get to understand their input in the industry and also learn a lot of things that I never thought I will understand in my life. And also to be given a time to express and research your own work or rather input to the organization and be taken seriously.

What's the best part about your job?

The fact that MASDT plough back the experience to the people and helping poor people to grow economically and become sustainable in terms of agricultural business. I like the experience gain in terms of encouraging young people at school to pursue their career in agriculture. The personal growth in agriculture has made me see life differently.

Tell us a bit about your family?

I am a father of four beautiful children (two boys and two girls) and a husband to my long lasting wife. Thanks to God for having my own family and make me grow to become the responsible man I am today. Raised by a single parent, without the presence of a father figure did not prevent me from learning from other good successful MAN on how to become a good man, a father and husband. Born and raised in Sabie and I am currently residing in Pienaar. I am still lucky my loving mother is still alive to encourage me. I am the last born of the family of four children to my mother.

What are your hobbies?

.....mmmmhhh it's a combination of many things if I can say so but mostly I adventure with my family to see the beautiful nature of the Lowveld area, watching soccer and movies TV.

What do you enjoy for relaxation?

I love music so and have a lot of Afro Jazz collection that I play; I do a lot of life coaching to children. And most of all being with my family at all times.