

# IN THE news

## July 2017



# MASDT

MOBILE AGRI SKILLS  
DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING (NPC)

### NSTF- SOUTH32 AWARDS 2017



The National Science and Technology Forum (NSTF) is the national watchdog for influencing the formulation and delivery of science, engineering, technology and innovation public policy in South Africa. It is also the most representative multi-stakeholder non-profit forum in the country that promotes SET's. The professionals involved in the member organisation have the opportunity to share their insights on NSTF platforms as all projects are collaborative in nature and national in their reach.

The annual awards ceremony celebrates the research and development advances that leaders and leading companies have played in the respective industries. This year, the forum hosted its 19th celebration during a Gala Dinner in Gauteng on the 29th of June 2017.

MASDT was nominated by North West University, Potchefstroom Campus through a strict system by peers and affiliated stake-holders of the NSTF and consequently won the prestigious award for the best non-governmental institution that includes technology transfer, education and training in their services.

MASDT's Managing Director - Mrs. Lynette Bezuidenhout - attended the event and received the award on behalf of the company. Lynette thanked the company and said - "This award is received in all humbleness, through the grace of God and is dedicated to all the Staff of MASDT."

Well done to all at MASDT. It is good to know that the company is on the right path when a prestigious accolade like this one is brought home.



## SMMIE incubator for emerging farmers in rural areas



**Achievement by an NGO including technology transfer or training activities**

**Shelll Nurcombe-Thorne**

**M**obile Agri Skills Development and Training (MASDT) may have started out as a training and service provider in the agricultural sector, but the plight of emerging farmers in remote and rural areas led the company's change to a non-profit company within two years. Positioned as a "one-stop centre" for SMMIEs in the agricultural sector, MASDT has received multiple awards for its groundbreaking incubation process that helps emerging farmers generate agricultural produce on a small-scale commercial basis.

Managing director Lynette Bezuidenhout says her passion for enriching the lives of rural communities has its roots in her early childhood. "I grew up in the rural parts of the Northern Cape where my father was a stud farmer. My love for the soil, knowledge gained from growing up on a farm, and passion for improving living standards all led to the birth of MASDT."

According to Bezuidenhout, the

company's acclaimed three-year incubation has a clearly defined aim: to develop farmers to the point where they can sustainably generate income and employment from their agricultural business. "Not only are our graduates more capable of farming their own lands or obtaining employment in the agricultural sector; many of them actually become employers of other people as they expand their farming operations and require additional labour."

MASDT's core offering is their instantly recognisable mobile research and training vehicle that is tasked with bringing necessary training and skills to the farm gates instead of expecting trainees to make the costly journeys to urban education centres. This mobile "classroom" is in the form of a 20m Scania truck with a laboratory and high-tech electronic equipment. Two high-definition television screens on the outside of the truck relay what is going on inside, and all laboratory equipment runs on solar power.

"Our mobile laboratory is mainly there to provide affordable testing services to farmers," says Bezuidenhout. "These tests determine crop selection based on the soil's chemical composition, identify water quality problems that negatively affect crop production, and assist farmers with selecting the correct fertilisers and quantities required. In essence, it helps emerg-

ing farmers understand their natural resource base to reduce their risk and guesswork, and ultimately saves them money."

Continuing with the necessary practicalities needed for emerging farmers to succeed, MASDT's incubation process includes helping farmers gain access to productive land in communal areas; tractors, implements and other equipment needed for land preparation, planting, spraying and harvesting; and the guidance of a procurement manager when purchasing seeds, fertiliser, pesticides, packaging material, animal feed and other necessary requirements (on a cost recovery basis).

It's no wonder that the project has had a resounding effect. On an economic level, emerging farmers receive affordable goods, services, training, and access to professional advice. This, in turn, reduces their farming costs and risk of crop failure, making them both more employable and more likely to create job opportunities when later expanding their farming operations.

"Our focus at MASDT is primarily on skills development and training, as well as local income generation, employment and food security," concludes Bezuidenhout. "But on a fundamental level, what we are doing is creating hope for a better future, helping farmers believe in themselves, and giving back dignity."

NSTF Award  
Winner Article -  
MASDT 2017  
Mail & Guardian

Mobile Agri Skills Development and Training managing director Lynette Bezuidenhout.

## GROWTH WHEEL CERTIFICATION



The *GrowthWheel*<sup>®</sup> Certification Course Seminar took place during 13th - 14th of June 2017 in Sandton. MASDT currently has one license and hopes to certify and license all Business Development Officers in the near future. Business Support Officer, Melody Chuime is already certified and took new Business Development Officer, Lethabo Sekgobela, to attend the seminar.

The course outlined the importance of having a 360° perspective to challenges that are generic to all businesses and the best ways to help business owners make decisions and take action on a priority basis.

There are six main tools that *GrowthWheel*<sup>®</sup> uses;

**1. Score Board** - where one maps out the ambitions according to priority and importance.

**2. Screening Tool** - to assess the progress, opportunities and needs of the business and to prioritise which ones to focus on as trying to make several decisions will not bring growth.

**3. Action Plan** - that helps to practically plan the activities needed towards implementing the decisions.

**4. Decision Sheets** - that help to map the important issues to consider when implementing specific decisions.

**5. Framework** - are designed to help companies set up an Agenda for how to move forward with their businesses

**6. Articles** - to help set the agenda for growth in business and give information and inspiration during the business journey.

All the tools mentioned above are available on an online platform and can be shared with clients that have internet access.

Attending the *GrowthWheel*<sup>®</sup> Certification Seminar was a real eye opener for Lethabo and the tools are constantly being updated according to the needs of and relevance to clients that are using *GrowthWheel*<sup>®</sup>.

The *GrowthWheel*<sup>®</sup> tool helps Business Development Officers to advise clients on how to make decisions rather than the Business Development Officer making the decisions for them. By asking the right questions the Business Development Officer can find out the root cause of certain problems instead of just dealing with problems on the surface and only partially solve challenges.

The simplicity that *GrowthWheel*<sup>®</sup> views business allows one to prioritise tasks without feeling overwhelmed by the several decisions and actions that need to take place. Melody and Lethabo report that the seminar was extremely educative and think it can aid the companies' clients immensely by simplifying sometimes challenging business decisions.



## INDUCTION WORKSHOP



Induction workshops for newly recruited clients are in full swing and one such workshop was presented in the MASDT Mobile Laboratory situated at the MASDT offices on the Canary Walk premises in Nelspruit on the 14th of June.

Five new clients and one potential client attended the workshop which was facilitated by Business Development Officers Collen Mashigo, Thulati Tshobole and stalwart Wilson Nkosi.

The clients all range from animal to plant production ventures. The workshop was opened by Business Development Officer, Collen Mashigo, who welcomed the clients to their first workshop and discussed the business and technical workshops scheduled for the duration of the incubation contract. Invoice books were issued and Collen demonstrated the correct way to complete the invoice books as well as the expense sheets.

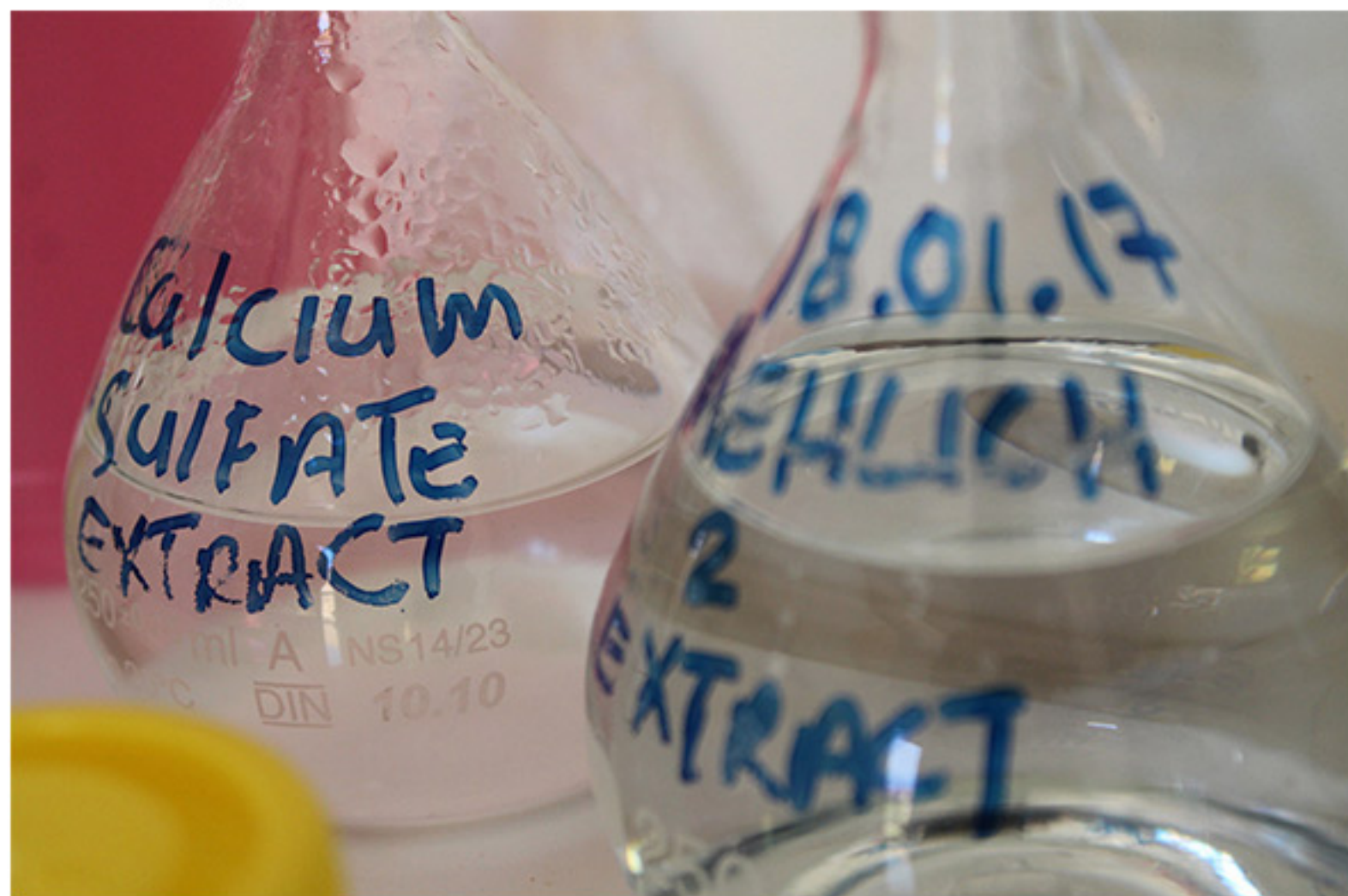
Mr. Mashigo then explained the purpose of the Mobile Laboratory and motivated the farmers to submit their soil samples for testing and their water for water analysis and stressed the importance of this as their crops and animal's health depended on the right amounts of nutrients in both. He continued to explain how they should apply the laboratory's recommendations when they receive the results and reminded them to make use of the Procurement Department when ordering fertilisers.

Clients were nestled in the comfortable atmosphere of the lab with its classroom setting which makes it ideal for interaction between the client and their Business Development Officer during a workshop. Educational information was distributed on each subject.

Next Business Development Officer Thulati Tshobole mesmerised the group with his logical approach to crop protection. Thulati is known to have a knack for simplifying sometimes confusing topics, and all the clients felt that their various questions were answered while gaining new insights.

Wilson Nkosi, who is MASDT's veteran Business Development Officer and animal production expert, then discussed the most common diseases to be found in specifically broiler chickens. He also showed some photographs using his tablet which helped the clients to see certain symptoms to look out for firsthand, and Wilson gave them the correct procedures to follow to prevent and treat these diseases.

According to these Business Development professionals the day was a resounding success and report that the one potential client for 2018 from Sibusisekile Co-operative was elated at the quality of the workshop and the knowledge he gained. He stressed how he cannot wait to be included in the Incubation Programme for 2018 to help his business grow.





## STAFF FEATURE - PRETTY NKOSI

### a) What do you do at MASDT?

- Junior Business Development Officer/ Graduate Placement Student

### b) How long have you been with the organisation?

- 3 months and 3 weeks, I started as a receptionist at this organisation and I managed to work for a month as a receptionist and thereafter I got an opportunity to become Junior Business Development Officer as approval was received from AgriSETA so that I could do my practical year with MASDT with funding from them.

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

- I am still new in the corporate world, I graduated in 2016 and by that time I was already doing my internship in the department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries in the directorate plant production, for a period of 12 months.

### d) What is your experience like at the organisation?

- So far I would say it's a good experience, because when I came to MASDT, my aim was to gain more experience, but I didn't expect that I would gain so much in a short period of time. I love the fact that I get to share my knowledge with farmers and at the same time I also learn from them. I love the fact that this job comes with a lot of challenges which are tough but the good part is solving the problems and seeing our farmers being happy and appreciative of the job that we do. That to me is so rewarding.

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

- The best part about my job is that I am doing what I have studied for, which is Bachelor of Science in Agriculture. This is what I have always wanted to do in life and as young as I am, this job grants me an opportunity to give technical advices to farmers, develop the business of the farmers, engage with other stakeholders in the agricultural sector, and also improve my knowledge since I always interact with very informative people. What stands out about this job is I get to interact with different people (especially old farmers). I get to learn so much from them while I do my job.

### f) Tell us a bit about your family?

- I have two siblings, a younger and an older brother, my mother passed away in 2012, when I was doing my first year at University of Zululand, it was tough but knowing that my mother and my dad are the ones who believed in me the most and pushed me to work very hard to complete my studies in time. One thing I have learned from my parents was that good things do not come easy but we have to work very hard for things in life. The support that I get from my family makes me stronger in life, even if there are things which are not going okay, but knowing that my family will always have my back, makes me push harder.

### g) What are your hobbies?

- I love travelling, listening to music (selected RnB as well as afro pop music) but what I love the most is singing.

### h) What do you enjoy for relaxation?

- For relaxation I love watching movies - especially comedy because I love to laugh and listen to music especially classical music because it puts my mind at ease.