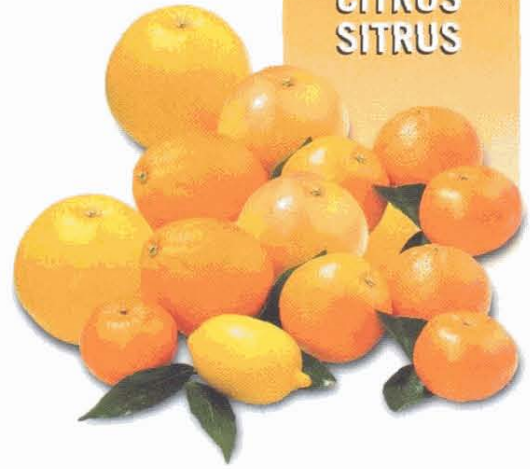




Mr. Green Mbhalati, business manager of Tekwane.



CITRUS
SITRUS

New trees for Tekwane

Tekwane, a lemon farm close to Nelspruit in the Mpumalanga Province is one of Government's BOT (Build-Operate- and Transfer) projects. The trees are however past their production time and are now being replaced in order to avoid transferring orchards that are not viable.

The lemon project commenced in 1972 by the Danish company United Plantations (Africa) Limited. The farm was bought by the KaNgwane Government and managed by the parastatal Agriwane. It was then transferred to the Mpumalanga Development Corporation (MDC) when the homeland system collapsed. In 2001, through an act of parliament, Mpumalanga Development Agricultural Corporation (MADC) was created whose major function is to upgrade all the business enterprises for transfer to previously historically disadvantaged communities and is the only agricultural development corporation that is available in the country.

The MADC reports to the provincial legislature through the MEC for Department of Agriculture and Land Administration (DALA) and has the mandate to provide a range of identified financial products and/or services to facilitate the creation of a cadre of emerging commercial farmers from the previously disadvantaged communities.

During the days of KaNgwane up to the late 90's under the management of MDC, the replacement of old orchards did not take place and this resulted in the decrease of production. Tekwane is situated in some of the best growing regions for lemons in the country but a few years ago Tekwane was at the crossroads. Re-planting of trees is a crucial fact in the survival of any fruit farm.

The MADC are busy re-establishing the orchards in order to avoid transferring orchards that are not viable. By the end of this year about 42 000 new trees will be planted, the maximum that the packhouse can handle.

One of the important factors for the survival of the farm is that Tekwane has one of the most valuable lemon rootstock trials in the country.

Tekwane is EurepGap accredited and is following the ABET training programme for the workers and provides an agricultural learnership. The 47 permanent workers and 160 seasonal workers are all staying in the nearby KaNyamazane Township. Unfortunately the equipment is sometimes vandalised and exposed to theft from the surrounding township and a lot of money has to be spent on crime prevention.

According to Mr. Green Mbhalati, business manager, the future prospect of the farm looks good. Mr. Mbhalati started in 1977 as a field foreman and being so long at Tekwane, he has an intimate knowledge of the farm. Tekwane is a fulfillment of the MADC broad policy of assisting emerging commercial farmers by providing required services and helps to unlock the agricultural potential by developing economically viable farming enterprises. Having a clinic on the farm supports government social programmes.



Green Mbhalati with workers installing new micro-jet irrigation lines.