In November 2002, David and Kathie Sole were violently evicted from their farm in Mazoe, just north of the Zimbabwean capital, Harare, thus ending 75 years of family farming. They decided to venture into Mozambique and in late 2004 located a 50 hectare smallholding on the Northern shore of Lake Chicamba.

The land was initially without infrastructure, hence electricity, buildings, water storage and irrigation were installed by the Sole’s who continued to face immense challenges to make the necessary headway in the underdeveloped, unsophisticated foreign land.

Produsola LDA became a reality when the commercial nursery, aided by the financial assistance of a Dutch grant, PSOM, was completed in November 2008. It is located midway between the western Zimbabwean Machipanda border post and Chimioi, provincial capital of Manica Province in Mozambique. The farm is situated five kilometres off the N6 National highway and approximately three hours from the Beira port.

The nursery consists of a seedling shade area, three growing shade areas, four tunnels complete with pad and fan capability, and a pack shed. All water utilized for the nursery is chemically treated. All pine bark medium is fumigated prior to planting.

The nursery has the capability of producing up to 150 000 fruit trees at any one time. Computerised irrigation provides modern technology to water distribution, plant nutrition and pest control. A 3 600 cubic metre plastic liner reservoir located at the highest point of the farm gravity feeds all water used for the nursery. Two moveable water driven pivots have been installed to produce plants required for budwood purposes.

The citrus seedlings – approximately 150 000 seedlings of Rough Lemon, Swingle, Carriso and Troyer are all from imported seeds from CFB in Uitenhage. Close to 17 000 trees have now been budded, again with CFB material and another 30 000 whips are due to be budded in August. The Sole’s hope to have their tree certification within the next three to four months, as they work towards their final accreditation requirements. They have been advised by both Peter Caminada and Chris Maggs at various times over the past year. Thys du Toit and Hennie le Roux from CRI both visited the nursery last year and have not stinted with their advice and encouragement.

Produsola owners Dave and Kathie Sole are confident that the Beira Corridor will soon become a project which will attract. It will take a combination of drivers, private investors, and government enabling policies to start the process. The much hoped-for Zimbabwean return to democracy and investment...
A fresh wave of “negotiation” between foreign buyers and SA citrus exporters around food safety requirements, particularly which Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs) are applicable for export citrus, has highlighted the need to remind supply chain participants of the resources available to them during these discussions.

The obvious concern with a negotiation is that if sellers are repeatedly drawn into a debate about which MRL standards apply a situation is perpetuated whereby Food Safety continues to be used as a competitive instrument. The issue is not that entities should be prevented from competing in the marketplace but rather that the full implications of new requirements are understood and that they pose no risk to the sustainability of the SA citrus export industry.

The implications of competitive food safety strategies have been discussed in previous articles in this Journal but the key ones can be summarized as follows:

- Ultimately undermining consumer confidence in what is considered “safe” food.
- Buyer requirements may not always factor in obligatory requirements to CONTROL, as opposed to manage, certain pests and disease of phytosanitary significance. This is particularly important as non-tariff barriers replace tariffs as a means of regulating/restricting trade.
- With a decreasing number of available plant protection products (PPPs) further restriction on permissible PPPs is a sedative to Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies.
- There is a clear digression from science-based mythology used in Food Safety strategy. This makes decisions difficult to defend.
- There is a clear digression from the legal framework used in Food Safety strategy. While buyers certainly have the right to set commercial requirements that are different from the legal parameters, pursuing alternative points of reference leaves the legal parameters obsolete. And without a legal framework, a heavy burden of responsibility falls on supply chain participants to ensure safety. Can this burden be carried by the private sector?
- Potential development of resistance to key PPPs.

Broadening the engagement with buyers to consider these implications is the goal of the CGA MRL Help Desk, co-ordinated by Paul Hardman at CGA. Presently growers and export agents make use of this Help Desk (at least on a weekly basis). Typical actions include coordinating a response to a buyer on behalf of many suppliers to that buyer; engaging with CRI and experts to provide scientific evidence to support a particular recommendation; informing buyers of the Recommended Usage Restrictions document published by CGA/CRI; providing a point of contact to engage with buyers on behalf of growers and agents; instilling confidence in the SA citrus industry’s ability to provide safe food. As part of the ongoing activities of this Help Desk Prof Vaughan Hattingh and Paul Hardman will be visiting the UK, Belgium and Germany later in the year to engage with buyers around food safety matters.

Citrus growers and exporters are particularly encouraged to make use of this service offered by CGA.

**CGA MRL HELP DESK**

**PAUL HARDMAN**

A fresh wave of “negotiation” between foreign buyers and SA citrus exporters around food safety requirements, particularly which Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs) are applicable for export citrus, has highlighted the need to remind supply chain participants of the resources available to them during these discussions.

Dave and Kathie Sole have 50 years experience between them in large scale commercial farming. They also have experience in cut rose production, together with propagation, and modern hydroponics systems. They believe that the Beira Corridor has the capability of producing the volumes and quality of fruits and vegetables that could surpass that of the north East of South Africa.

Their contact details are available from the CGA.

**Citrus area overlooking Chicamba Dam.**

**Produsola’s first building – May 2007.**