W\(h\)ilst on the roadshows that took place in Mpumalanga, the Transformation Administrator had the privilege of visiting one of the BEE farms, Sibonelo CPA and the Elandshoek Seedless Lemon Development. The purpose of the visit was to meet with the beneficiaries of the project and to look at the farm as a whole - its operations, management, development as well as looking for any gaps that might hinder development.

**BRIEF BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT**
The SIBONELO CPA was originally registered in 2001 with the express purpose of providing a legal base upon which the community could establish a practical and viable Agricultural Business. The Project would enable the Community involved in the Sibonelo development at Elandshoek to aspire to gainful employment and at the same time offer an opportunity for “Skills Development”.

**MANAGEMENT OF THE PROJECT**
The Sibonelo team is at this time led by the Chairperson, Ms Susan Moloto ably assisted by Sarah Mabuza as Supervisor and five women members in the farm production team. The management and production is under the control of the Farm Manager, Mandisa Shabangu and another male member as tractor driver/irrigation supervisor. The administration of the Seedless Lemon Project is undertaken jointly by the Chairperson and the managers. The preparation and completion of farm records are undertaken by the farm managers and together they process the month end Internet payments and transfers required to ensure payments to staff and creditors.

**PROPERTY**
The property is approximately 200 hectares in extent and only has some 30 hectares of arable land available for agricultural development. Of these, 15 hectares have been established to the planting of the Seedless Lemon Orchards.

**PRODUCT**
The Seedless Lemons command a niche sector in the Export Market and also meet an exclusive demand sector in the Local Market at a time when few other lemons are available.

Being a continuous bearer, the seedless lemon is unique in the lemon supply chain as it produces throughout the season, although it does bear more prolifically in the winter months.

**FUNDING**
Due to funding constraints during the 2007 / 2008 season, Sibonelo was granted a loan facility of R250 000 by Capespan for their fertiliser and chemical insecticide requirements. Strict and disciplined control on the available funds ensured that the meager finances were utilised effectively. In September 2008 the Capespan loan was fully repaid, Sibonelo were then granted a production loan facility by MADC to cover fertiliser and chemical requirements for the 2008/2009 season.

With careful management of funds and resources Sibonelo have also repaid their MADC indebtedness (May 2009) and are currently operating on a positive cash flow.

**CGA MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME**
The CGA Mentorship Programme was introduced to the Sibonelo CPA in 2007 when the Mbombela Municipality’s financial support for the Sibonelo Project was withdrawn.

The CGA Mentorship Programme has of necessity extended beyond the originally intended programme. The focus of Mentorship has been designed to be conducted around the practical activities being undertaken at the time of season. Exposure and involvement in all sectors of activity allow for training to be achieved and responsibility accepted by the management team as the demand dictates.

The emphasis applied in Mentorship is to capacitate the mentees and to ensure efficiency and quality of production is attained in all fields of activity in this Agri business.

**PRODUCTION**
The farm being managed and run by a small team has successfully maintained and adhered to the planned programme over the past two years. They have been aided by seasonal contract labour engaged specifically to assist with the harvest. The production achieved over the season 2007/2008 season has enabled the project to meet expectations.

In the 2007/2008 season a gross harvest of 123.8 tonnes yielded a net profit of R5 983.

The 2008/09 season yielded a harvest of 735.4 tonnes and a net return of R383 000 after having successfully repaid their loans to Capespan and MADC.

The 2009/10 season was equally successful, but after having purchased a new mower, a good second hand tractor and spending essential funds on necessary irrigation and other production costs, little funding remained for further capital development. An application is being compiled to apply for funds from the MADC for a Business Loan to enable further capital development for the proposed extension to the orchards and the necessary infrastructure required to enable ‘GLOBALGAP’ compliance and accreditation.

- **Harvest and Packing** The harvest is undertaken by a small team of contract labour under the control and direction of the Farm Production Supervisor, Sarah Mabuza. Harvested fruit is transported daily to the packhouse at Twycross who have afforded the Elandshoek Seedless Lemon Project
a committed and dedicated service of transporting, grading, packing and consigning the packed fruit for export and delivery to the local supermarket destinations.

- **Marketing** The guidance given to the Sibonelo Team by the CGA Mentor and Packhouse Manager is researched and directed, giving due consideration to quality and volumes available and the many practical constraints. The Sibonelo CPA is currently marketing their product locally.

- **Harvest Estimate 2010/2011** The harvest for 2010 is expected to yield approximately 480 tonnes, the returns generated from this harvest is likely to realise a gross return of approximately R1 000 000, with a net positive return on cash-flow at the end of this season after interest and the repayment of the due instalment of the business loan.

**FUTURE OF SIBONELO CPA**

The future for Sibonelo is to ensure compliance to the internationally accepted norms for Export fruit. Sibonelo will have to attain accreditation for “GlobalGap compliance”. This will involve meeting the criteria for buildings, storage, water quality, insecticide and chemical spray equipment, together with numerous other disciplines to be implemented.

These, together with the provision of suitable chemical insecticide sprayer, tractor, trailer and other harvesting equipment are needed as a matter of urgency and will of necessity be required in order that future export of the Sibonelo fruit be permitted.

A further 15 hectares of irrigable land is available to be planted to either seedless lemons or the normal “eureka lemon” once the necessary funding has been secured. The addition of these extra orchards will ensure the Sibonelo Project has sufficient volume of maturing fruit to be harvested at any one time, thus enabling the pack-house to prepare adequate volumes for consignment to the markets. At present, dispatched consignments are shared with other producers to ensure full load consignments. These are not always available as Sibonelo is the only “Seedless Lemon” producer in the near vicinity.

**Dirk Burger joins Sun World International**

Mr. Dirk Burger has been appointed as Regional Licensing Manager for Sun World International, LLC in South Africa as from May 1, 2010. He will be responsible for development of Sun World bred table grape and stone fruit varieties in South Africa as well as concluding and maintaining relevant contractual agreements with licensees, a position previously held by Johan Jooste. Johan is presently responsible for international licensing of Sun World varieties.

Dirk is well known for his valuable contributions in various aspects of post harvest research on table grapes as well as growth regulators. He will be based at Sun World’s offices in Paarl.