

Project in Hoedspruit plants first lime trees

The Moletele Community, Komati Fruit Group and international beer company ABInBev recently celebrated a momentous occasion. The first lime trees were planted at the Moletele Limes project sponsored by ABInBev. Each of the participating groups – ABInBev, Komati Fruit Group, Moletele CPA and department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development – planted a tree during a ceremony.

THE MOLETELE CPA in Hoedspruit is the owner of the farm Richmond Kopano Farming (Pty) Ltd, a subsidiary of the Komati Group. A portion of 60 ha is leased to Moletele Limes (Pty) Ltd. The shareholders in Moletele Limes are Moletele CPA (51%) and Komati Group (49%).

Komati Group has successfully negotiated a subsidy with ABInBev for the establishment of a lime project where limes will be grown for 12 months of the year. Limes produced will be offered to ABInBev and the balance either exported or sold on the South African local market.

The limes trees will be kept in production by Komati Fruit Group. After two to three years the lime trees will be harvested and will be available to be used with the consumption of Corona Beer produced by ABInBev. By applying various innovative farming methods, the aim will be to produce and harvest limes throughout the year. ☺



Piet Smit, CEO of Komati Fruit Group on the left, and Albert Thabane, Chairman of Moletele CPA on the far right, with the Moletele CPA Committee members during the tree planting ceremony.



Milaan Thalwitzer, Chairman of Komati Fruit Group Board; Albert Thabane, Chairman of Moletele CPA; and Josh Hamman, ABInBev Director Agricultural Development and Sustainability.

Rural hub business model to nurture small-scale farming

Food insecurity, unemployment and skills shortfalls continue to plague rural areas across South Africa, but the franchise retailer SPAR is helping to close these gaps with its Rural Hub business initiative. The Rural Hub model forms part of the retailer's drive to support and empower small-scale local farmers, create jobs and sustain local economies.

FIRST STARTED IN Mopani in the Limpopo province in 2017, with a dedicated packhouse established to buy the product direct from local farmers, future hubs are now being planned. Hectares planted, farmers trained and mentored, and people employed are all on the rise.

All the participating small-scale farmers receive the following support interventions: grants and loans, mentorship, market readiness, market access and leadership. All the participating small-scale farmers have been trained in financial management, land preparation, planting, integrated pest and disease management, fertilisation, irrigation and harvesting.

"To us, food safety is non-negotiable and we're proud to report that all of our Mopani rural farmers achieved the LocalGAP Intermediate level in 2019 and will be GlobalGAP

certified in 2020," says SPAR Risk and Sustainability Executive, Kevin O'Brien. The Mopani Rural Hub packaging facility is, furthermore, assessed in accordance with the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) and Global Markets Program.

"We are seeing some of our farmers becoming fully-fledged commercial farmers in their own right, as yields reach commercial farming quality thereby opening up more opportunities to sell their produce. We see that as a fantastic achievement," he says. As an example, in 2020, the programme's farmers supplied a range of products under the Freshline Brand for the first time.

A ringing endorsement of these achievements came when SPAR Rural Hub won the rural and township development award and the overall winner award at the Absa BusinessDay Supplier Development Awards. ☺