

Amahlathi Ethu



“I started my business with one bakkie and 20 employees” – Michael Ngubane

Michael Ngubane began his career as a forest guard for Mondi in 1986, then progressed to become a silviculture supervisor, gaining valuable experience in forestry operations.

In 2001 he started his own business, Siyathuthuka Forestry, doing road maintenance and weeding for Mondi. In 2010 he took a step up, securing a full silviculture contract with SiyaQhubeka Forestry in Kwambonambi.

In 2014 Siyathuthuka joined forces with another SQF contractor, Dubumthunzi, to pool resources in order to modernise their operations and improve productivity.

Low interest loan

The new business, Amahlathi Ethu, secured a low interest loan from Mondi Zimele for the purchase of three tractors, a planting machine and labour truck. Mondi Zimele also provided a comprehensive package of business support including coaching and training of key staff members.

Siyathuthuka (which operates under Amahlathi Ethu) currently employs 90 people from the local community and is on target to plant 1 400 ha by year-end.

The Mondi Zimele loan has been repaid in full, and Michael is planning to buy another tractor soon.



“You have to be a people person to win in this game”

Elvis Shabangu was recruited to manage in-field operations as part of the business’ growth plan. Elvis brought new expertise and a willingness to adapt and learn.

“It’s a physically demanding job and we’re always in-field making sure the team is happy and operating at peak performance.”

Elvis said that the biggest challenge is making the transition from manual to mechanised operations – and keeping everybody happy.

