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International Forest Day: Forests and Energy

By Hannel Ham

In 2012, The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 21 March the International Day of Forests (IDF). The aim is to celebrate and raise awareness of the importance of all types of forests. Countries are encouraged to undertake local, national and international efforts to organise activities involving forests and trees such as tree planting events. IDF raises awareness on forests and trees, including their role in climate change. This year's focus will be on Forests and Energy. Although a public holiday in South Africa (Human Rights Day), IDF is a global day of observance and not a public holiday.

With this year's focus on forests and energy it is important to remember that energy from biomass is one of the oldest forms of energy used by man and that wood was the principle source of energy until about the mid-nineteenth century. Fuelwood is still the dominant energy source in developing countries, accounting for most of the wood usage in Africa. While developing countries aspire to move away from often-unsustainable use of fuelwood to "modern" energy sources such as nuclear (even in South Africa!) we also see an increase in biomass usage in developed countries as a climate change mitigation approach - truly a remarkable contrast in thinking!

Despite how people and countries think about biomass usage we have to recognise that forests cover about one third of the world's land mass and that approximately 1.6 billion people, including more than 2 000 indigenous cultures, depend on forests for their daily livelihood (including energy usage). Therefore, forests (whether planted for modern short rotation fuelwood crops or protected examples of ancient natural forests) are vital to the planet for many reasons, including:

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21 March International Day of Forests

- Providing shelter for more than half of the terrestrial species of animals, plants and insects.
- Contributing to the balance of oxygen, carbon dioxide and humidity in the air.
- Protecting watersheds, which supply fresh water to rivers.

However, we cannot take these forests for granted. Deforestation accounts for 12 to 20% of the global greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming. Join hands with Foresters worldwide at #IntForestDay and be part of International Day of Forests 2017. More information at <http://www.fao.org/international-day-of-forests/en/>.

KZN SAIF Branch: Trees for Schools Programme

By: Wayne Jones & Mmoledi Mphahlele

Since 2013 the SAIF KZN Branch has been involved in the Tree for Schools Programme. Where possible, each school is linked to one of the commercial companies who volunteer their time and effort to initiate and monitor the project. During 2013 the first project was started at the Mountain Home School (Figure 1) with the help of Mondi. This was followed, in 2014, with the Lions River School supported by Sappi. In 2015 the project moved to Baynesfield where NCT assisted with tree planting at the Nels Rust School.



Figure 1: SAIF at the Mountain Home School.

This programme continued in 2016 with no less than 30 indigenous trees planted at two schools. Twenty new trees were planted at the Esigodini Centre by Sappi and a further ten trees at the Mountain Home School by Mondi. Hosted by the Principal, Mrs Nokuthula Zuma and volunteers (Figure 2), a further five *Searsai pendulina* and five *Combretum kraussii* were added to the gardens around the Mountain Home School.



Figure 2: Principal of Mountain Home School, Mrs Nokuthula Zuma, with staff and scholars.

The new trees were given the best start, with good pits, compost and lots of water (Figure 3a and 3b). As can be seen in Figure 4 the trees planted in 2013 have grown well providing shade and shelter.

The second project for 2016 was the planting of a total of twenty trees representing four species, which included *Vepris lanceolate*, *Heteropyxis natalensis*, *Croton grattisimus* and *Rhus gerradii*. The trees were established at the Esigodini Education Centre near Pietermaritzburg with help of staff volunteers and Sappi (Figure 5).



Figure 3a and 3b: *Combretum kraussii* and *Searsai pendulina* at Mountain Home School.



Figure 4: First trees established in 2013 providing much needed shade.

The Esigodini Education Centre is a non-profit organization which is part of Siyabonga – Helping Hands for Africa and managed by the Education Manager Mrs Pat Kanzler.

The Centre runs an after-care programme for 120 sponsored disadvantaged children, every day. Trees were planted close to the soccer field to provide much need shade (Figure 5). Members of the Environmental Club at the Centre will be looking after the trees.



Figure 5: Mrs Pat Kanzler, students and volunteers planted twenty indigenous trees at the Esigodini Education Centre.

Forester of the Year Award/ Floating Trophy

Remember to nominate deserving people for SAIF awards. A full overview of all the awards is available at <http://saif.org.za/institute-awards/>. The SAIF awards are as follows (besides the Forester of the Year award):

- The Distinguished Forestry Award of the Southern African Institute of Forestry
- The Dedicated Service Award of the Southern African Institute of Forestry
- The Continuous Service Excellence Award to the Forestry Industry
- The Merit Award of the Southern African Institute of Forestry
- Scientific Writing Award of the Southern African Institute of Forestry

In this issue, we look at the **Forester of the Year award**, although nominations for all awards (except the scientific award) are due in March and must be submitted through the branches.

Purpose: The purpose of the award is to annually recognise individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to forestry practices, or have improved the reputation of forestry in South Africa through their individual operational actions. The award aims to recognize foresters for a specific forestry practice or action, as opposed to cumulative achievements. The award aims to recognize operational foresters whose achievements might not always be noticed at a national level, due to their lack of exposure.

Award: The award will consist of a floating trophy with a plaque on which is inscribed the name of the award winner. A certificate will also be issued to the award winner. A copy of "There is Honey in the Forest", signed by the SAIF president. Hopefully a sponsored prize, but no guarantees!

Criteria: The Award will be made for application of an economic, social or environmentally positive innovation or practice (plantation or natural forests) in the area of general forestry in Southern Africa. Examples of achievements by an individual which could be judged as outstanding, include the following areas:

- A new tool, machine or method to carry out forestry work
- Providing outstanding service to a surrounding community
- Show excellence in a particular environmental situation
- Commit an act of bravery during forestry duties
- Other specific circumstances which warrant a nomination

Number of awards: One award will be made annually.

Eligibility: The award is open to all SAIF members.

Nominations: Nominations will be considered once a year and must be put forward and motivated through the branches of the Institute or Council. Nominations must be accompanied by a proper written motivation and submitted to the Council before 31 March.

Selection: The Council will consider the submissions at its own discretion. In making its decision, Council will pay high standards and pay due attention to the peer assessments required. The voting for each ballot will be by secret ballot if necessary, and if 25% of the Council members vote against it, the award will not be made to the nominee. All discussions concerning the award will be minuted.

Presentation: The award will be presented either at the Annual General Meeting of the Institute or a branch, or at a special general meeting convened for the purpose, or at any other appropriate gathering.

The Continuous Service Excellence Award to the Forestry Industry Awarded to: Philip Croft

The award is made for the work that he has done over the past decade and a half on managing the threat of *Sirex noctilio* to Southern African pine plantations. *Sirex* is the first major insect pest to threaten South African plantations. In 2007, the threat was estimated by Forestry South Africa to have an actual impact of R150m in affected areas and a potential impact of R440m in areas not yet affected at that stage.

Philip has been the coordinator of the South African *Sirex* Control Programme since its inception in 2002. He was seconded from the then Mondi Shanduka to take on the role of coordinating the control programme on behalf of the private sector. With support from the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries this role has extended to a national level (covering both the private and public sectors). As coordinator, Philip develops and implements the annual plan of operations for the deployment of biological control agents (nematodes and *Ibalia* parasitoids) in areas where infestation occurs; assessment of the success of these agents; and monitors the occurrence of *Sirex* nationally.

In setting up and running a very efficient Control Programme today, Philip and others in the South African *Sirex* Control Programme had to adapt procedures from other countries and also develop new and innovative approaches suited for South African conditions. This includes developing Standard Operating Procedures for inoculating trees; creating and managing a chain of custody to ensure quality control is achieved; support for job creation for several contractors and their teams; developing safety standards for the field teams and setting up and overseeing the emergence cage depots. Philip has also built strong collaborative links with the University

of Pretoria who supply the biological control agents; and is a master of scheduling and logistics to ensure that the narrow window of opportunity for inoculation is utilized optimally.

Very importantly, Philip recognized the importance of ensuring a high level of awareness amongst foresters and forest owners of the threat from this pest. He has devoted a huge effort to ensuring that foresters are able to recognize the symptoms of *Sirex* infestation in their trees (proactively before the wasp arrived in the area). He has also been instrumental in training foresters and contractors in inoculation techniques and quality control and also spends time at NMMU teaching future foresters about the control programme.

This control programme has served as a case study for dealing with other pests and diseases, and made significant impacts in the development of a national forest protection strategy. Philip has contributed to the science supporting the programme through co-authorship on several research publications.

The role that Philip Croft has played, and continues to play, as coordinator of the SASCP has had a significant impact on reducing the risk from this pest and in so-doing has saved the industry many millions of Rand in potential loss of timber production. The work that Philip has done for *Sirex*, and the lessons learnt from this, provide a valuable platform for dealing with other major forest pests into the future. The SAIF strongly believe that the contribution that Philip Croft has made to the South African forest industry through his role in the SASCP deserves recognition through its award for Continuous Service Excellence.

Chaos and control

By Rob Thompson

No doubt you watched the chaotic display in Parliament during the State of the Nation Address? The only reason I mention this event, in a forestry related newsletter, is due to an interesting follow up comment made by a well-known political analyst. He stated that whilst politicians continue to focus on state funds for personal gain, a parallel “government” is likely evolving and being driven by business (large and small) and treasury. Simplistically, as I read it, people are now more than ever before, reliant on their own devices and initiative to make ends meet.

A commercial farmer, with significant area planted under timber, recently commented to me that in his opinion, the environment within which South African farmers operate, is becoming untenable. In the litany of issues he discussed with me, he highlighted a few aspects that make farming extremely challenging. The minimum wage being unaffordable to some farmers (albeit a social necessity). Lack of State support to farming in general and forestry in particular. Horrific farm murders and crime spreading in rural areas. Inefficient land reform processes and impending expropriation without compensation.

Given the SONA debacle fresh on my mind, it was at this point in the conversation that I thought he was going to tell me he was about to pack up. Far from it. He emphasized that he was not a slave to fear and emphasized that he understands that living in Africa comes with its attendant challenges. His business models would be adjusted accordingly and investments made appropriate to the agricultural risks identified. His further observation however, did allude to farmers offsetting “labour” and “ownership” aspects towards service providers more than ever before. These would include contractors on the farm (silviculture and harvesting) as well as contracted transporters.

Small scale timber growers, largely situated in the tribal community areas along the east coast, are under just as much pressure, or more, as their larger commercial farming colleagues. I deal with these small growers extensively and find them to be just as resilient and becoming more and more innovative in order to overcome obstacles. Success is critical to

these small-scale operators. A loss of a timber crop or a failed business deal could well mean starvation to a person farming on a subsistence basis.

The more one studies the innovations implemented by timber farmers (large and small) and large Corporates, the more one has to subscribe to the sentiment of the political analyst mentioned above. In our particular case, the business of forestry continues, and continues well, in the face of a lack of sound state leadership.

Forestry practice is ever evolving and adapting out of necessity, which, for those of you forestry practitioners, who may not have thought about it in the context of this discussion, is a major driver for the current industry focus on controlled wood and chain of custody certification. Just think about the dynamics of timber supply in an environment that is largely loose, uncontrolled and frequented by a multitude of producers, operators, service providers and opportunists just waiting for a chance to exploit your hard work to own gain.

Whilst most buyers or users of our timber products (local and global) demand controlled wood as a minimum assurance of good chain of supply practice, the South African forestry industry is working towards adopting the principle as a standard working protocol. Simplistically, a system that ensures that you know that the timber source is valid and legal, operators handling that legally obtained timber along the supply chain are tried and trusted and that loopholes are closed down to opportunists, provides a high measure of assurance and control within a dynamic working environment.

These few observations have certainly provided me with more confidence in the future, both from a personal and professional perspective. Chaos might well reign but it will not overcome. Our industry remains in good hands. Your hands. Innovations are constantly forthcoming to aid us over the hurdles. It is up to us to both further these innovations and perhaps implement a few more.

So SONA was positive after all!

New book: Remarkable Trees of South Africa

Where will you look for the biggest, tallest or most corpulent trees in South Africa, or trees that have witnessed major events in the country's history? These interesting specimens, and many others, are found in parks, nature reserves, on farms, on town and city streets and in private gardens – some perhaps even right on the reader's doorstep.

Remarkable Trees of South Africa journeys into the fascinating world of trees. Written in an easy, anecdotal style, the authors relate, in text and photographs, the historical, cultural and economical significance of South Africa's trees. Also included are accounts of the major tree families, as well as an overview of trees as monuments and in botanical gardens, parks and arboreta.

Now in its second edition, the text has been completely updated with additional information on Champion Trees and the authors' selection of the Big Five Trees of South Africa. Presented as a coffee-table book with full-colour photographs throughout, anyone with an interest in history and nature, South African flora in particular, will find this book an essential.

The authors are:

- Neels Esterhuysen is a forestry scientist who has had a long association with the Department of Forestry and Water Affairs. His in-depth knowledge of trees and passion for their preservation has resulted in the writing of this book.
- The late Jutta von Breitenbach was a respected figure in South African botanical circles. She was Chief Secretary of the Dendrology Society.
- Hermien Söhnge's interest in trees results from her involvement with forestry publications as a communications officer with the Department of Forestry and Water Affairs.
- Izak van der Merwe is a forestry scientist with the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries. He is the coordinator of the Champion Tree Project and a member of the Dendrological Society where he serves on the Central Committee, being responsible for the Big Tree Register.

The book costs R345.00 and is available from Briza publications at

https://www.briza.co.za/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=302

Focus on Forestry – April 2017

Early bird registrations close on 15 March. Remember to send your register now in early to qualify for the large discounts on offer. For any registration queries, please contact Nontethelelo Ramantswana at nontethelelo@cmo.co.za. For more information or to register, please see <http://www.cmo.co.za/cmo-conferencing/>.

SAIF 2017 photo competition

The popular SAIF photo competition will again be taking place in 2017. The top 13 photos will be used to compile the 2018 SAIF calendar.

The rules of the competition are as follows:

- Entry is only to paid up SAIF members.
- A maximum of three photos may be submitted per SAIF member, of which only one can be in the top three positions. The other photos may still be selected for the calendar.
- If more than one photo is submitted, each photo must be different (not variations of the same subject).
- Any forestry related photo can be entered. The photo must have some evidence of forestry (natural or plantation) in it.
- The photo must be taken in Southern Africa.
- Previously entered photos may not be used and photos may not be older than 3 years (taken before 2015).
- During judging, very low pixel resolution photos will not be selected if they cannot be used for the calendar.
- Photos must be submitted through the branches (see contact details on the website and at the end of the SAIF newsletter).
- All photos submitted to the branches will be used for the national competition. It could occur that the winning national photo did not make the top three list of the branch.
- The SAIF reserves the right to use the photographs in their marketing material and on the SAIF website.
- The closing date for the competition is 30 September 2017.
- Judging is at a national level. Each branch will select a forestry related person that has good photographic skills. These five people will each select their top 13 photos.



Photo: P Ackerman (W Cape)

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March 2017 birthdays

01-Mar	SCOTCHER J.S.B	17-Mar	MUIR I.
02-Mar	KIRKMAN K.E.	18-Mar	GELDENHUYS C.J.
02-Mar	HANS R.R.	19-Mar	KEYSER V.G.
04-Mar	EGGERS B.F.	20-Mar	NEL A.
04-Mar	BREEDT V.B.	20-Mar	GREYLING I.
08-Mar	BABALOLA F.D.	21-Mar	CHRISTIE S.I.
09-Mar	KRUGER F.J.	22-Mar	HELLBERG H.K.
12-Mar	LITTLE K.M.	23-Mar	POOLE R.J.
12-Mar	MULLER B.G.	24-Mar	KANZLER A.
13-Mar	CHIVINGE T.	26-Mar	DE BEER A.F.
13-Mar	VILANE T.C.	29-Mar	STANGER T.
15-Mar	HENDERSON I.W.	30-Mar	CELE M.J.
15-Mar	OLEN S.	31-Mar	JACOBS W.S.