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Fashion turns a new leaf!

By Hannel Ham

Handbags, shoes and general clothing items are made from wood, cotton, leather, linen, wool, silk and synthetic materials. The fashion industry places a large emphasis on recycling by using for example hessian and flour bags. Combined with interesting prints, consumers are willing to pay for these items. But what about a more natural spin on clothing?

The classic use of leaves for clothing appears in Genesis where Adam and Eve sewed clothes from fig leaves. Nowadays people use cotton primarily as a natural alternative to synthetic materials. Although cotton makes up a third of the fibre consumption in the textile industry, cotton production is labour intensive and needs a lot of chemicals and fresh water. However, hemp leaves can also be used to make clothes but in smaller quantities due to legal restrictions on its production. Another plant that has been used for centuries is the flax. The fiber, known as flax, is spun into a thread to weave a cloth known as linen.

More plants with potential are: oil palms, betelnut, sago palm, coconut, palmyra, ratan, reeds, water hyacinth, banana, jute, maranta and bullrushes. Rubber from the rubber tree is also popular for shoes and jackets, while fibers from climbing plants can be used to weave hats or shoes. Fibre from pineapple leaves can be used to create a biodegradable material with an appearance similar to canvas. When it is coated, it makes beautiful shoes and handbags. Outdoor companies are investigating the possibility of using cocona (combination of coconut fibre and volcanic materials) in manufacturing less synthetic material for sportswear. Closer to home, rayon (viscose) are made from wood pulp.

A couturier in Cameroon uses banana leaves as material to make clothes. Leaves are stripped, sorted, dried, sometimes coloured and sewed together in popular styles. Although a tiresome and timeous process, the uniqueness of the clothes is priceless. The 'material' is washable, durable and surprisingly comfortable especially during the rainy season. Although fashion houses are not interested in this unique material, the clothing line is marketed locally under the

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brand: 'Biological: something that's natural which can be worn.' But banana fibre is also considered carbon neutral with a soft texture likened to hemp and bamboo. The material is perfect for jackets, skirts and trousers.

Jewellery and skirts are often made from flowers or straw whenever marketing companies want to create a holiday or exotic feeling. We associate it with tropical destinations or surfing in Hawaii. In South Africa the Zulu beads or jewellery made from seed are very popular amongst tourist. Even bracelets manufactured from recycled paper by prisoners are sold to tourists. However, with biotechnology scientists predict new generation of genetically modified strawberry plants with lace growing from the roots. The lace can be used to weave a dress. Imagine a system where clothes could be manufactured using only water and sunlight, while generating zero waste.

The Continuous Service Excellence Award to the Forestry Industry: Dr Pierre Ackerman

Dr Pierre Ackerman receives the “continuous service excellence award to the forestry industry”, particularly for his long-time contribution as the head of the Department of Forest and Wood Science (DFWS) at Stellenbosch University. The Department of Forest and Wood Science at Stellenbosch University is one of the main institutions for the training of forest science professionals in South Africa, both undergraduate and post-graduate. Pierre joined the academic staff of Stellenbosch University in 1998 as an industry secondment to DFWS, after which he was appointed to a permanent academic position in 2003. In 2005 he took over as chairman of DFWS, a role in which he has served for over 10 years in two terms (2005 to 2011, and the second (current) from 2014 to December 2017). This is likely to be the end of his tenure, as Pierre plans to retire at the end of 2017.

DFWS at Stellenbosch has a key and pivotal role to play in maintain high standards of professionalism in forest management and research in the industry. Pierre, both as an active and high-profile academic in the department, and his position at the helm, has been enormously instrumental in not only ensuring the DFWS has maintained its high standards, but in fact increased in academic standing internationally, with an increasing level of impact and graduate success. He took over the leadership at a critical and very difficult time in the history of the DFWS. Through careful and strategic partnerships within industry, however, and good decisions in regard to adjustments to the academic program and new appointments as older staff retired, Pierre worked with academics and management within DWFS and the University to ensure that DFWS survived the difficult period it experienced, and emerged stronger. The department has thrived under his leadership and currently produces a stable flow of under and post-graduate students who are well sought-after and easily absorbed into the industry. Pierre has, through his tenure as chairman, maintained an excellent relationship with the broader forestry industry through, for instance, regular advisory committee meetings which contributed strongly to the

increased standing of the DFWS with key industrial role players. He also contributes to national dialogues by his participation in groups such as the DAFF National Forest Research Forum, and serving on advisory boards for the Institute for Commercial Forestry Research (ICFR) and the Nelson Mandela University (Saasveld Campus) Advisory Board. Pierre’s reputation as a leader in his own field of expertise (forest product supply chain management) and associated strong international networks are also of great significance to the department, enhancing academic capacity and quality. Pierre has authored over 30 peer-reviewed papers in international scientific journals and written or contributed to 12 book chapters. He also extends knowledge effectively, having written a large number (66) of popular article and research notes, allowing DFWS research and innovation to reach and benefit foresters on the ground. Pierre also maintains strong, productive relationships with scientists in his field from several countries, including Germany, Canada, USA, Finland, Norway and Australia. Built on this strong network, Pierre has been the key driver of the extremely successful “Precision Forestry” Symposia, which have been held every 3 – 4 years since the early 2000s, and has a significant role in the organization of other high profile forestry meetings, e.g. the XIV FAO Forestry World Congress.

Photo: W Cape branch chair, Dave Drew, presents Pierre with his award



IUFRO 125 Congress – Interconnecting Forests, Science and People 18 –22 September, Freiburg, Germany

By Sally Upfold – ICFR Knowledge Manager & IUFRO SA Committee Chair and International Council Member

The 125th anniversary congress celebration of IUFRO – the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations was recently held in Freiburg, Germany. Attended by 2500 delegates from around the world, this was a chance to celebrate the role of IUFRO in uniting 15 000 forest scientists from nearly 700 member organisations in 126 different countries, and promoting international co-operation in forest research. Open to all individuals and organisations dedicated to forest and forest product research, IUFRO is a global forest network which aims to advance research excellence and knowledge sharing and to foster the development of science-based solutions to forest-related challenges. for the benefit of forests and people worldwide. IUFRO comprises 9 Divisions with research groups and working parties across the full spectrum of forest research; including Silviculture; Physiology and Genetics; Forest Operations, Engineering and Management; Forest Assessment, Modeling and Management; Forest Products; Social Aspects of Forests; Forest Health; Forest Environment; and Forest Policy and Governance. South Africa has a number of IUFRO members including companies and associations, and co-ordinates its efforts through a South African IUFRO Committee. South Africa is also represented on the IUFRO International Council – the highest decision-making body in IUFRO. In addition, South Africans hold positions within IUFRO including research and working group co-ordinators. To find out how to join IUFRO – please contact IUFRO SA Committee Chair Sally Upfold (sally.upfold@icfr.ukzn.ac.za). For more on IUFRO visit www.iufro.org

A number of South Africans attended the event, representing research institutes, universities and the forestry industry, presenting papers and posters as well as chiring sessions. Of course, at the helm of the Congress was our very own Prof Mike Wingfield, current IUFRO President.

Communicating Forest Science

The theme and focus of the congress was on **Interconnecting Forests, Science and People** – a brand which has since been adopted by IUFRO as a permanent part of their organisation. The high-level presentations and papers, as well as the panel discussions and dialogues had a strong cohesion around the need for effective, relevant and transparent communication between the various stakeholder groups. A series of dialogues on *Science meets Policy*, *Science meets Business*, *Science meets Stakeholders* and *Science meets Science* talked to these, as well as to understanding the different roles of each group. Responding to global issues such as mitigating climate change, supporting escalating population numbers, contributing to rural upliftment, and aligning to sustainable development goals requires strong partnerships that enable innovation and technology development, with secure and stable funding, and that support economic growth and employment.

The need for effective communication by scientists in the future was captured in an entertaining session entitled “*Forest Facts, Feelings and Fake News*”; that explored four of Albert Einstein’s famous quotes;

- “It’s harder to crack a prejudice than an atom”
- “In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity”
- “Everything should be as simple as possible – but not simpler”
- “If you can’t explain it simply – you didn’t understand it well enough”

All of these highlighted the need for effective, planned, creative and purposeful communication, founded on solid evidence and involving active dialogue (listening and speaking).

Research Measure

Measures for research are evolving and include the traditional relevance and credibility criteria as well as legitimacy and effectiveness – all of which aim to enhance outcome and impact. Research processes should include a plan for scientific knowledge transfer with research, integration and utilization spheres, and focusing on relevance and impact for a wider group of stakeholders. The take home message and one of high relevance to the SAIF is for researchers to engage with end users from the start and understand user perspectives – “Fact is Fact but Perception is Reality”. (Cont. on page 4)

The Annual NCT SAIF Night Ride and trail

With spring in the air and a hint of a thunderstorm the annual NCT SAIF Night Ride got underway without a hitch. Over 150 participants, the highest number yet joined in on the fun, dust and feel of the country. A chilly start was eased by welcoming fires and the smell of boerewors rolls being prepared by NCT volunteers. Young and old got underway with the shrieks laughter and sounds of dread. Distances ranged from 5km to 20km with ups and downs and great sections of single track. Good lights helped to show the way along the routes of this fun but unique event. As participants finished they were met by the welcoming sound of friends and family chatting, having a well-deserved drink to celebrate the evenings efforts. Thanks goes out to the NCT organising committee, SAIF and Sponsors. See you all next year.



Welcoming fires as participants prepare for the race



Volunteers hard at work getting supper ready

IUFRO 125 Congress

Cont. from pg. 3

Aligning to SDGs

In a paper on Forestry research and the Sustainable Development Goals – researchers were challenged to “think outside the cave”, to embrace complexity and think holistically in their approaches to research, recognise links to other systems and to be socially responsible. This again emphasised the overarching congress theme of interconnectedness – a relevant and necessary message for South African forestry which is increasingly operating in a mosaic of land uses, and with water availability and environmental impact challenges.



SAIF and other upcoming events

- **SE Asia Tree Health Conference 2017.** 1 – 2 November 2017, Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia. 2017SEATH@gmail.com.

Trust

By Rob Thompson

Exposure to the negative content of the daily news these days and experience of the general declining standards of service delivery, is certainly enough to fuel scepticism in terms of the direction in which South Africa appears to be heading.

A recent family emergency, involving my very elderly mother breaking a hip and requiring an emergency paramedic-led casevac to hospital, had me rethinking my ingrained perceptions of the South African life experience!

The young paramedics on call were efficient, caring and totally professional, to the extent that they even checked up on the patient's well-being post event. From hospital receptionist through to trauma-ward duty doctors and sisters, the service delivery was top-notch and certainly matching or exceeding the hospital service perceptions created by popular hospital programme series run on TV.

Having reflected for a time on this enlightening experience, I have concluded that the fundamental core driving element resulting in the successful outcome, was trust. Everyone entrusted to do a particular job, did what was expected of them. This transcends being simply qualified to do a job. I guess it's possible to train capable people to do just about anything but trustworthiness is a trait that appears to be either inherent (or not). Being simply qualified in a profession does not necessarily make you good in that profession. The current antics of many of our politicians and corporate leaders echo this point! One may be a trained forester or farmer or researcher or contractor, but there is a road to travel to prove one's mettle as far as service delivery and trustworthiness is concerned.

The forestry supply chain is a long and complicated one. In fact, it is extremely dynamic and changes from one day to the next, dependent on the elements that are brought into play at any given time. In an ideal world timber is harvested, extracted, loaded onto vehicle and transported to mill under cover of a delivery note or transaction record where, upon receipt, the supplier is paid full dues for the product and the cycle repeats. Sadly however, this is far from an ideal world and the plethora of individuals, operators and service providers along the supply chain can create a minefield of intrigue.

A small sub-set of the supply chain dynamic entails suppliers ranging from growers to agents or sub-agents,

interacting with harvesters and transporters employing drivers, conductors and technical hands, who in turn interact with road traffic authorities and mill weighbridge staff, whilst the whole collective system is supported or underpinned by clerks, book keepers, accountants, foresters, managers, Board members, shareholders and many many others.

Now, imagine the potential repercussions should one or more of the individuals, comprising the above plethora, be less than trustworthy! Given the extent of the array of people involved, and the generally tarnished political and economic climate prevailing, it is highly likely that trust levels are not at optimum throughout which has to make us somewhat concerned. Maintaining chain of custody and controlled wood compliance is becoming an ever more challenging process, requiring ever more time and attention and systems. We can simply no longer merely assume that a load received at any mill is from legal source and that there has been absolutely no skulduggery on-route.

It is imperative that, as forest practitioners, we work hard towards building trust relationships with those with whom we interact and rely on. The harder we endorse the fact that trust is paramount, the less wriggle-room there will be for those that attempt to defy that ethic. They will be exposed and dealt with.

But why the medical analogy? Forestry is not a life or death situation. Surely all businesses experience some intrigue and allowances are made for shrinkage and loss?

The moment we adopt complacency as our ethical foundation, we relinquish our right to claim top level service provision, a clean democracy and good governance. We become part of the problem and by perpetuating complacency we compromise the livelihoods of those who deserve better. It really is a life or death situation.

I trust that this article stimulates the forestry fraternity to take a fresh view of the myriad relationships upon which reliance is placed every day. I trust that by way of own example we illustrate that there is ultimately only one way to conduct ourselves, which boils down to trustworthiness.

Let's trust each other.

Veldfire Management Programme presents fire symposium with industry stakeholders

A symposium titled “Knysna Fire – the Causes, the Fire, the Aftermath and the Future” presented by the unique Veldfire Management Programme at Nelson Mandela University, George Campus on 21 September has attracted keen interest from stakeholders.

Complementing the Veldfire Management Programme’s Academic Advisory Board meeting scheduled for the following day, the symposium featured an array of speakers who presented on the devastating Knysna fire from different professional and scientific perspectives.

Campus Principal, Prof Quinton Johnson, welcomed the delegates explaining that the university wants to play its role, along with other stakeholders, to conserve and rebuild our region – “a slice of heaven on earth”. He mentioned that as the institution which presents the only Veldfire Management Programme in the country, and with an ethos to “change the world for the better” the Nelson Mandela University choses to be part of the solution.

Knysna Mayor, Cllr Eleanore Bouw-Spies, who delivered her address via Skype, gave an overarching account of how this Category 5 Incident (most devastating) impacts on multiple levels of municipal service delivery, business, residents, animals and the environment. She emphasised the importance of collaboration and the need to now focus on the rebuilding of the town. The Garden Route Rebuild Initiative was mentioned as an example of the good work being done.

An operational overview of the origin, development and factors that had contributed to the fire (drought, strong wind and vegetation), and where the fire was extinguished, was provided by Mr Dirk Smit of the Southern Cape Fire Protection Association (SCFPA). Mr Paul Bucholz, an environmental consultant who works in close collaboration with the SCFPA, focused on the rehabilitation process which is currently underway, including measures to stabilise the soil to prevent erosion; the control of alien growth; the re-design of infrastructure (including the choice of equipment and materials to improve the fire resistance properties of dwellings).

Mr Willie Brink, Planning Officer for Mountain to Ocean Forests (MTO) provided insight into the impact of the fire on commercial plantations, primary industries in our area and companies such as PG Bison and AC Whitcher. He indicated that the impact would be felt up to 2040 by when the sector is expected to normalise.

Mr Len du Plessis, representing SANPARKS and SCFPA gave an account of the immense task that the emergency personnel and volunteers had in planning and operationalising the evacuation of people from homes, places and spaces that were in the fire line. He elaborated on the positive use of social media in this emergency context, also touching on the severe trauma and emotions experienced by all affected by the disaster. He also highlighted the impact of the disaster on the natural environment, including the damage to the soil and landscape, mitigating the effects of pollution due to damage to infrastructure, such as sewage systems; and the challenge of disposing of building rubble, including toxic elements. He touched on the fact that the fire had severely compromised the habitat of the fauna – animals, insects and birds – in the affected area and expressed the hope that the endangered butterfly species, the Brenton Blue Butterfly, which is only found in this area, has not been eradicated altogether.

Lessons and strategies from the fire prone Free State farmlands, where wildfires annually destroy about 260 000 hectares of land were shared by Mr Malcolm Procter, the Deputy Director: Regulation and Oversight of DAFF in the Free State. He elaborated on a model used in the Free State where large areas of farmland/veld are systematically demarcated into smaller zones, ending up with managed / farm units and a system guiding the “unit manager” to annually provide critical information about preventative measures that have been put in place to manage fire risk and to mitigate the effects of wildfire. A certificate of compliance issued by the Department after the relevant audits have been conducted not only serves as a means of assessing the state of readiness relating to fires, but also serves as an incentive, amongst others, for lowered insurance premium and provides some legal protection against claims after a fire.

Mr Dechlan Pillay, the Director: Early Warning and Capability Management from the National Disaster Management Centre who attended the symposium together with Deputy Director-General and Head of the Centre, Dr Mmaphaka Tau, gave a broad overview of the role of the Centre in terms of collecting data and identifying and analysing risk factors. This valuable information and data is shared with the relevant authorities locally, regionally and nationally for planning purposes and for the implementation of measures to prevent, mitigate and manage risk, including fire risk, especially with the annual fire season in mind.

Mr Tiaan Pool, Nelson Mandela University Programme Co-ordinator for the Veldfire Management and Forestry Programmes offered at the George Campus expressed his appreciation at the interest that the symposium had attracted from a broad range of industry, government, local government and community stakeholders. “The intellectual depth of the discussions and the detailed information shared at the symposium is highly valued. It also presented an excellent learning opportunity for our BTech and postgraduate students who, together with industry, are increasingly being tasked to address vexing environmental challenges,” he said. This symposium will also help to set the agenda for the 12th Veldfire Management Symposium which will hosted at the George Campus of Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University from 3 – 5 October 2018.



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October 2017 birthdays



01-Oct	JOUBERT J.H.L.	16-Oct	BOUWER F.
02-Oct	BIGGS S.	17-Oct	CRICKMAY A.G.
03-Oct	JOOSTE A.	17-Oct	SMIT D.F.R.
05-Oct	GWENDE N.	19-Oct	HILL L.A.
06-Oct	PRINS A.C.	20-Oct	MZIMELA T.
08-Oct	CONRADIE J.P.	23-Oct	ANDRAG R.H.
09-Oct	MULLER P.H.	23-Oct	KäTSCH C.
09-Oct	RAATH-BROWNIE L.	23-Oct	KAPTEIN N.D.
10-Oct	MARWICK P.C.	24-Oct	VAN ZYL S.J.
10-Oct	RUSK G.D.	26-Oct	BALLANTYNE D.
10-Oct	TSHANGISA L.I.	28-Oct	KASSIER H.W.
11-Oct	MANULULA F.	28-Oct	DU PREEZ B.
13-Oct	GOUS D.J.R.	29-Oct	NAIDOO S.
14-Oct	VERRYN S.D.	30-Oct	DU PLESSIS M.
15-Oct	SASS T.		