

Southern African Institute of Forestry



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Delivering a professional service to forestry

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Editorial

Lessons to be learnt from the T20 World Cup

At the time of this Newsletter going to press, the T20 Cricket World Cup has entered the so-called Super 8 phase where the original twenty teams have been reduced to 8. One of the favourites namely Australia dropped out and didn't reach the last 8 but on the contrary, S.A's neighbour Zimbabwe who didn't even qualify to participate in the previous World Cup, qualified for the last 8 !

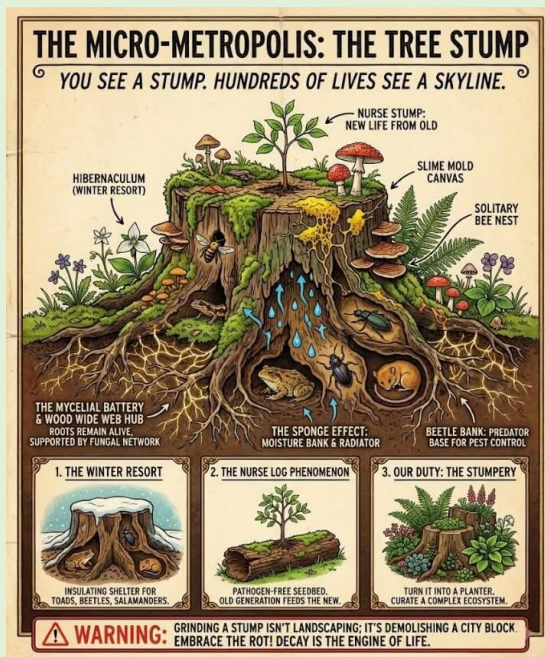
What can we learn from this :1) Never take things for granted e.g. that you will qualify by just turning up; 2) Never under-estimate the opposition 3) Never give up on your dreams.

We don't know what the outcome and final result will be, but Africa has two teams in the Super 8 play-offs and hopefully S.A. can bring back the Cup !

It is also the appropriate time to make an apology for the duplication of paragraphs in the article written by Prof. Klaus von Gadow titled "The Diepwalle Plan". The article was well received and enjoyed by our readers. Prof. Klaus, please accept my apology.

I would like to add a very interesting comment submitted by Prof. Brian Bredenkamp regarding persons involved with the Diepwalle Plan.

" The M.T. Benn listed amongst the compilers of The Diepwalle Plan (Newsletter of the S.A.I.F. Vol.7, Issue 1 of January 2026) is Magda Tulleken Benn who at the time was a twenty-year-old typist in the office of Fried von Breitenbach at the Indigenous Forest Management Section at Saasveld. She was the daughter of Henry 'Stompie' Benn and his wife Martha, née Tulleken, and was raised with her siblings on the Saasveld campus. 'Oom Stompie' was the driver/operator for Saasveld and the Groenkop State Forest, and was much loved by all, the students in particular.



It was he who drove them up the mountains on the back of a truck for practical work and to Calitzdorp, Ladismith, Oudtshoorn and Plettenberg Bay *et al* in a bus to play rugby matches.

Growing up on a campus with sixty or seventy male students made it almost inevitable that Magda would marry a forester, and the lucky one was Ben van Niekerk of the class of 1968/70. Magda is today a septuagenarian but still working. She is the administrative officer and campus manager of Stias ([Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study](#)) in Stellenbosch.”

That certainly makes interesting reading indeed ! Thanks Prof. Brian.

Focus on Forestry 2026 🌲

📅 **21–23 April 2026**

📍 **Karkloof Country Club – Howick**

FOCUS ON FORESTRY 2026
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The 9th International Scientific Conference on Hardwood Products, Stellenbosch, South Africa, 8-11 Sept 2026

The 9th International Scientific Conference on Hardwood Products (ISCHP) will be hosted by Stellenbosch University in South Africa. This will be a joint conference with the Wood Quality Modelling Working Party (IUFRO 5.01.04) where there will also be parallel sessions related to wood quality modelling. The conference will be between 8-11 September 2026.

The ISCHP conference is a well-established event where attendants will have a chance to interact with colleagues from all over the world working on hardwood products and processing research. This time ISCHP will be joined by the Wood Quality Modelling working group from IUFRO, which is an excellent fit for hardwood products research. The previous ISCHP conferences were held in Canada (2007), France (2009), USA (2011), Italy (2013), Canada (2015), Finland (2017), The Netherlands (2019), and Portugal (2024).

Keynote speakers at the event will include prof. Holger Militz (Georg-August-University, Germany), prof. Alexis Achim (Université Laval, Canada), prof. Alfredo Dias (University of Coimbra, Portugal), prof. José Nivaldo Garcia (University of Sao Paulo, Brazil), prof. Gregory Nolan (University of Tasmania, Australia) and prof. Dave Drew (Stellenbosch University). Apart from the stimulating interaction with colleagues, attendants can enjoy the scenic town Stellenbosch, surrounded by several mountain ranges and more than 200 wine estates. Early bird registration will close on 31 March 2026. South African and SADC attendants will receive a special discount.

Visit the website for more information <https://ischp26.co.za/>.

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Tree HealthNet Register for TCP and FMG-EPPI Symposia; 9-11 March, Pretoria

Dear Forestry Colleagues

Our very best wishes to you for 2026! We look forward to continue to build on our long-standing relationships to keep our forest resources productive and healthy!

This year, we will host the FMG-EPPI and TCP symposium meetings in tandem from the **9th to the 11th of March 2026**. This provides an exciting opportunity to (i) share recent achievements in tree molecular genetics and genomics research, forest health, biocontrol, data/information management and phenomics initiatives, (ii) discuss the challenges and opportunities affecting forestry, (iii) strengthen our collaboration and coordination among stakeholders and (iv) provide insights to guide future priorities and actions.

The symposia again promise to provide a vibrant and representative space for engagement. Apart from the feedback from our staff and students, we have three invited speakers; Prof Bill Hammond (University of Florida), Prof. Jim Leebens-Mack (University of Georgia) and Dr. Joey Tanney (Natural Resources Canada), as well as other international guests such as Dr Carlos Rodas and potentially Prof Jeremy Allison. We also expect representatives from collaborating research institutions around South Africa.

We encourage you to register as soon as possible at this link, and hope that you can join us for all three days in person. If not, please register to join us online. Register here:

<https://www.fabinet.up.ac.za/index.php/event/TPCP-CPHB%202026/>

Best regards

Bernard Slippers and Sanushka Naidoo

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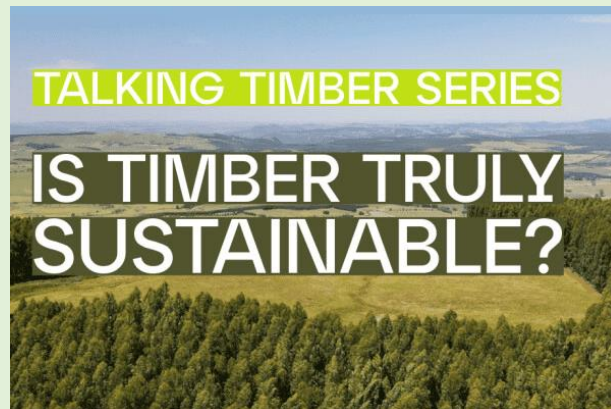
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Is Timber Truly Sustainable?

Join two of South Africa's foremost experts, **Dr David Everard**, Chairperson of the Sustainable African Forestry Assurance Scheme, and **Professor Ben du Toit**, Associate Professor at Stellenbosch University, for an informative discussion on the sustainability and renewability of timber.

Date: 12 March 2026

Time: 13:00-14:30

This webinar will explore the topic from both a local and systemic perspective, critically examining whether South African plantation forests can be considered truly sustainable and how climate change may influence forestry's long-term viability. The discussion will then extend into the built environment, unpacking what sustainability means in practice and how timber can help reduce environmental impact across the construction value chain.

You won't want to miss this.

The webinar will be recorded and added to our [YouTube playlist](#).

This webinar was made possible through the support of [Sawmilling South Africa](#), the University of Pretoria's [York Timbers Chair](#) in Wood Structural Engineering, Stellenbosch University and thewoodapp.com, in partnership with Earthworld Architects, and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition.

CPD

- For webinars before June 2025, participants can use the information provided in the [attached document](#) to retrieve their CPD certificates. For the November 2025 CPD certificates, participants should email cpd@pia.co.za.



The Rob Thompson column

The Forester's "Language of Acronym"

Having recently been involved in an FSC surveillance audit and subsequent external close out follow-up audits containing reams of technical jargon, it struck me that forestry practitioners have an inherent, little known, and incredibly unique skill set. This is seldom recognized either by self or others, but once one becomes aware of it, it is difficult to ignore, and will either amaze, fascinate, and be celebrated by the holder thereof, or drive one up the wall in a dizzy frenzy of frustration. I tend to be of the latter ilk.

Here of course I am talking about the "Language of Acronym". We, as forestry practitioners, can do our best to deviate from this 12th unofficial language, but it ultimately proves to be unavoidable and sticks to us like the "proverbial to a blanket".

Many of us studied forestry at US, whilst others went to NMU, both of course regulated by NQF standards. There we pursued BSc's or Nat Dip's either in For Sci or Nat Cons. On completion, we went in different directions. Some ending up at SAPPI, others at TWK and NCT, whilst others chose then DWAF which graduated to DAFF and then DWS with a deviation into SAFCOL. Some even ended up in MTO. Those more independent individuals consulted as SciNat's with a few adventurous souls plying their forestry skills in SARH later becoming Transnet FR. SANBI and NPB were also organisations benefiting from graduated forestry practitioners.

Typically, forestry practitioners choose harvesting or silviculture specialty fields. Focus on DBH brings the *silviculturalist* and *harvester* closer together as CF plans are structured based on the MAI and SP of the particular stand. Sometimes an STS is considered before the final decision is taken. GIS might be employed to assess the stand. This coupled to LIDAR defines the BA and SI far more congruently than the use of a PSP as was done in days of old. An economical threshold SPHa remains critical to the success of the R which is most often measured in T/Ha or M³/Ha. In the journey towards stand CF the silviculturalist will often be seen to call on supplementary expertise from ICFR, PPRI, FABI and even IUFRO.

Back at Head Office, the Finance team is monitoring

operations according to GAAP all the while overseen by FIC and FICA rules of governance. SARS ensures that the States' share of revenue is dutifully provided whilst VAT regulations ensure line-flow taxation compliance across the spectrum. Currently many CFO's are complaining about EBITDA and as forestry practitioners we are called to maximise ROI and ultimately NPAT. The NSV of the stands under our watch is accordingly critical to organizational health and CF. If our IRR is wanting, difficult and probing questions will be raised.

As foresters "sweat the production beat", forest researchers immerse themselves in field studies often involving ET measurements, LAI's and TMD's all within the RBC. Of course this is all in the best interests of SFM. Optimum SPHa against optimal SPS's will of course contribute towards YOY growth both financially and in terms of resource.

No forestry operation is possible without staff participation. We are accordingly governed by the BCEA as well as the LRA and ever more by the EEA. OHSa cannot be ignored and neither can COID because NEDLAC might then become involved. Heaven help the organisation should UIF be incorrectly calculated. We have also learned that BEE's are not insects.

Some view it as a bane and others a blessing, but FSC is here to stay and arguably provides the mainstay structure to our overall FM process. CB's have been established to create and encourage FMU's all in the interests of optimizing the SFI. Of course, there are offshoots of certification in the form of PEFC and SBP, but all have similar objectives. CW and COC that has underpinned FSC for years has been bolstered significantly by the ongoing evolution of EUDR. FSC-CW, FSC-MIX, FSC-100% are all under scrutiny during any surveillance audit as well and the 10 principles of FSC. Non-compliance in any aspect may lead to a CAR. A serious deviation increases a CAR to a MAJOR. No-one wants a CAR.

Logs entering the beneficiation chain are exposed to quality measures including MC and BD. If the logs are chipped WCM and PSD are important metrics to both supplier and client. Of course, every practitioner has forgotten at some stage or other to convert from GMT to BDT much to the chagrin of chip pile management.



Converting logs to energy involves measuring BIO WF, CHP and ASH. Optimum CV being the ultimate objective.

OK...OK, enough already! I've made myself dizzy in illustrating our unique language ability. In a previous war time era, we might have been deployed as effective enigma-deciphers! No need for fancy code breaking machines. All we would have needed to do was read any intercepted message out loud! On a more serious note, we do use a lot of acronyms and very often I get the impression that overuse thereof tends to hide the true meaning of the message being conveyed. We kill the message for sake of ease of communication. I have actually tested this contention myself, by asking two people who attended the same acronym laden discussion, to describe to me independently the take home points of the meeting. I got two different interpretations. Dependent on the gravity of the topic in question, this understanding miscue could have really serious implications.

So, start to reduce your use of acronyms ASAP people! You don't want people to LOL when you totally miss the point!

THE GATEWAY TO AFRICA'S TIMBER TRADE
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WoodEX for Africa

Showcase Your Brand Alongside the Best in the Wood Sector

Book your stand at WoodEX for Africa 2026, taking place from **9 to 11 June 2026** at Gallagher Convention Centre, Johannesburg. As the gateway into Southern Africa's trade and leading exhibition for the wood and woodworking industry, this event brings together the full value chain from raw materials to advanced machinery and finished products, all under one roof.

Fire in the Earth System Conference

FE 2026
SAVE THE DATE
5th Fire in the Earth System conference
Dates: 4-6th November 2026
Kruger Park, South-Africa
 Pre-and Post conference excursions
 (2-3/7-10th November 2026)

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Significant quotes

Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better.
 Albert Einstein

In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt.
 Margaret Atwood

For the latest Forestry News , visit the Forestry in South Africa website : <https://forestry.co.za/>

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DR RONALD HEATH

Forestry South Africa, Director of Research and Protection

Forestry Research in a SA Context:
How it is Keeping SA Forestry Globally
Competitive

FORESTRY RESEARCH



The Forestry Sector remains highly competitive locally, frequently outperforming other agri-sectors competing for the same space. What sets the Forestry Sector apart is that while it only utilises one percent of the country's surface, the Sector contributes R64 billion to the South African economy – representing 10.4% the agriculture Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 25% to agriculture employment. All while utilising only 5% of the total water used by the agri-sector.

The challenge for our Sector is remaining competitive in an international context. Currently, the South African Forestry Sector represents just over 1 % of the world's commercial forestry, a figure likely to decline with the predicted 1.8% annual growth of the international sector (Barau et al 2014), which far exceeds the expansion of the South African Forestry Sector. Added to the challenge posed by economies of scale, the South African Forestry Sector also competes with countries that enjoy extensive government support, subsidies and protectionism in the form of tariffs.

To compensate for this, the South African Forestry Sector relies on research, development and innovation to remain globally competitive and sustainable. Through strategic research partnerships, investment in high-quality science and innovation and consciously building research capacity, our Sector is able to enhance both economic performance and environmental resilience.

Sector Collaborative and Strategic R&D Integration

Through Forestry South Africa (FSA) and its structures, the Sector has been able to develop and implement strategic research focus that benefits all its members, irrespective of their diverse sizes, ranging from multi-national to corporates, timber farmers and small scale growers, and management objectives. FSA's collective research investment is therefore prioritised to ensure all timber growers benefit from the research outputs,

which focuses on both technological advancement and securing capacity. This has allowed our Sector to remain responsive and resilient in addressing new challenges or threats.

World-Class Research Institutions and Expertise

Historically, forestry research was the sole mandate of the government, through the South African Forestry Research Institute, but as the ownership environment changed there has been a marked divestment by government into forest research. Slowly but surely, all government funding ceased early 1990's until 2005. During this period, the private sector became the sole investor into forest research. It is important to note that the Sector is currently investing 1.7% of its GDP into research. This is not only more than double the country average, but even with limited government funding, forestry research remains relatively competitive with our international competitors.

This significant investment has built a wealth of internationally recognised research capacity, mainly housed at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) with some stand-alone institutes offering a very diverse set of research focus areas and subject matter. This has allowed the Sector to move from multi-disciplinary to multi-institutional research, harnessing the value of its collective and collaborative efforts that extend beyond our borders by partnering with leading international networks and collaborations.

Broader than Just Sector Collaboration

In recent years, a gradual increase in government research funding in our Sector has enabled it to harness a triple helix approach to research and innovation. Where the private sector remains the predominant funder of research but obtains additional co-funding from government that allows both the Sector's needs and national imperatives such as job creation and transformation, to be addressed. In addition, working collaboratively with HEIs, the Sector is able to utilise the wealth of post-graduate students performing excellent work under the supervision of world-renowned scientists.



This model does not only ensure a cost-effective approach to Sector competitiveness, it also contributes to a pipeline of new capacity ensuring sustainability of the research ecosystem going forward.

Sustainability and Environmental Focus

International competitiveness is not only secured through research aimed at technological advancement that results in increased yield, reduced input costs and protection of growing stock. The Sector invests significantly in ensuring environmental sustainability, directing the research focus on sustainable management practices, resource conservation, life-cycle assessment and ecosystem-level productivity. Looking forward, environmental sustainability will play an increasing role in international competitiveness as it becomes a license to operate and the access requirement to enhance international markets. It is therefore imperative to actively invest in research, development, innovation and capacity that ensures environmental sustainability remains a central pillar of South African forestry.

Take Home

South Africa, even though a small player in the international commercial Forest Sector landscape, remains globally competitive through its committed and sustained investment in forestry research, development and capacity. Through collective and collaborative interdisciplinary and inter-institutional approaches, strategic application of research funding and international partnerships that ensure the generation of world class innovations, South African forestry has created the perfect blend of academic excellence, industry investment and practical application positions. It is this that positions South African forestry as a resilient player in a truly competitive global market and notable contributor to forestry research and innovation.

Taken from Forestry South Africa

<https://www.forestrysouthafrica.co.za/2026/02/20/>



FSA Invited to Participate in Government Business Partnership Committed to inclusive growth, jobs and confidence

President Cyril Ramaphosa met with Ministers and senior business leaders under the Government Business Partnership on the 28th of January 2026, formally commencing Phase Three of the partnership with a shared commitment to placing economic growth at the centre of the partnership's work in 2026.

The meeting reviewed progress achieved during Phase Two, during which important gains were made in stabilising the energy and logistics systems. These advances, together with several other achievements, contributed to improved sentiment towards the end of 2025. Investors are increasingly responding positively to South Africa's economic trajectory and recognising policy credibility. Significant developments include South Africa's removal from the FATF grey list, a steady reduction in inflation towards the 3 per cent target, a successful and oversubscribed sovereign Eurobond issuance, a firmer Rand and an upgrade to South Africa's sovereign credit rating by S&P — the first in more than two decades.

During Phase Two, coordinated interventions and policy reform improved operational performance, particularly at Eskom. The recent commencement of the Durban Pier 2 terminal concession and the opening of the rail network to private operators further demonstrate the momentum that has been achieved. The Partnership agreed that the focus in these two areas must now shift decisively from crisis management to the urgent implementation of government's structural reform agenda.

Establishing commercially viable, competitive markets in these network industries is essential to mobilising the additional investment required for growth.

Against this backdrop, government and business agreed that the central framework for Phase Three of the Partnership will be anchored in "Inclusive Growth, Jobs and Confidence" In a rapidly changing global environment characterised by economic realignment, heightened competition for capital and increased uncertainty, the Partnership agreed that a disciplined focus on competitiveness and inclusive



Sappi earns CDP A List 2025 Recognition For Forests



Sappi's strong sustainability performance confirmed by CDP A List 2025

As expectations rise for sustainability data to be credible, comparable and usable in real-world decisions, Sappi has been recognised by CDP for the quality and maturity of its environmental disclosures.

Sappi achieved prestigious Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) 'A' score for Forests in 2025, ranking highly among nearly 20,000 companies scored.

Recognition for Sappi's ongoing progress in Climate Change (A-), Water Security (B) attained; both remain key priorities in Sappi's recently announced targets leading up to 2030.

Sappi Limited, a diversified industrial business utilising renewable resources to produce woodfibre-based products for global markets, has received an outstanding 'A' score for Forests in 2025 by CDP, a global non-profit that operates the world's leading independent environmental disclosure and scoring system for companies, capital markets, cities, states and regions to manage their environmental impacts. Sappi also received strong CDP scores for Climate Change (A-) and Water Security (B) in 2025 which reflect ongoing progress.

Achieving an 'A' demonstrates comprehensive disclosure, mature environmental governance, and meaningful progress towards environmental resilience. CDP scores are increasingly used as a stress test for whether companies' sustainability data can support investment decisions, procurement requirements and emerging regulation.

This emphasis on decision-ready data is increasingly critical as sustainability disclosures are linked to regulatory compliance, access to capital and customer requirements. Sappi's CDP performance provides external validation of its readiness to meet these evolving expectations.

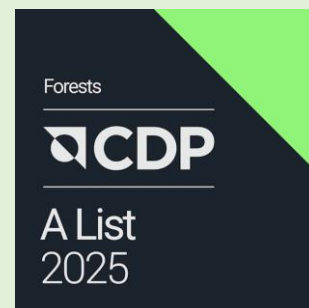
"It is difficult to overstate the immense effort and dedication that underpin this achievement," said Tracy Wessels, Group Head of Investor Relations and Sustainability, Sappi. "We're delighted to be acknowledged as a leader in corporate transparency and action on advancing deforestation-free supply chains. We continue to collaborate intensively across our value chain, driving net-positive impact across our sustainability pillars and in line with our Thrive strategy, but also in supporting our customers in meeting their ambitious sustainability goals.

Sustainable forestry is significant for its role in protecting environmental integrity, supporting social wellbeing, and enhancing long-term economic resilience. Sappi's activities range from managing its own landholdings in South Africa, to cooperating with small, local landowners, to maintaining 100% chain of custody certifications across its pulp and paper manufacturing operations. Together, these practices advance Sappi's long-standing commitment to sustainable forest management and deforestation-free supply chains, central pillars of its 2030 sustainability ambitions.

Sappi's climate strategy is focused on increasing renewable energy use, improving energy efficiency, investing in low-carbon technologies and integrating carbon considerations into capital allocation decisions. When it comes to water stewardship, Sappi actively seeks to reduce freshwater withdrawal, increase water reuse and recycling within operations, and improve the quality of water returned to the environment.

The full list of companies that made this year's CDP A List is available here: [Scores and A Lists – CDP](#).

Source: [Sappi](#)





WOOD Conference

15th Wood Conference

The 15th Wood Conference was held at the CTICC in Cape Town on Tuesday, 24 February 2026.

For 15 years, Switzerland’s Kuratle Group has provided a platform for European and South African architects, designers and engineers to build relationships, share passions and learn about the possibilities of building with engineered timber.



The CEO of the family-owned [Kuratle Group](#) is Roger Kuratle. On the Monday evening before the event, he and his father, George Kuratle, who founded the annual Wood Conference, hosted a dinner event at the Cabo Beach venue at the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town.

They welcomed the speakers, their families and partners from the two South African companies that are part of the Kuratle Group, Universal Ply and XLam.

Read about the event in the next edition of [WoodBiz Africa](#) & [SA Forestry Online](#).

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City Nature Challenge 2026



City Nature Challenge 2026

Cities around the world collaborate to share observations of nature in the 2026 City Nature Challenge.

Why participate?

There is nature all around us! Knowing what species are in our city and where they are helps us study and protect them, but the ONLY way to do that is by all of us – scientists, land managers, and the community – working together to find and document the nature in our area.

By participating in the City Nature Challenge, not only do you learn more about your local nature, but you can also make your city a better place – for you and other species!

Dates: April 24 – April 27, 2026

Taking pictures of WILD plants and animals. (Wild means that it wasn’t put there, and is not being taken care of by people.)

April 28 – May 10, 2026

Uploading observations and identifying what was found.



<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/city-nature-challenge-2026>



Agroforestry entrepreneurs: forestry fostering rural enterprises

Written By: Greg Woodbridge, CEO – MTO Group

Source: [Forestry In Focus](#)



MTO, as an integrated Forestry and Sawmilling business with very close working relationships with Government, has since inception recognised our responsibility for the upliftment of the communities in which we operate. In 2018 we rewrote our holistic transformation strategy ensuring that through every initiative we have long-term meaningful impact on all the communities we serve. Our strategy focuses on creating sustainable socio-economic and enterprise development initiatives in our business locations.

Upon commencing our holistic transformation strategy, investment was identified as a key barrier to transformation. While various sources of potential investment did exist, these did not necessarily cater for the variety in investment – scale, type, risk profile, strategic imperatives – being sought by transformation initiatives. In talking to our communities, it was clear the communities required capital for startup, facilities, infrastructure, equipment etc, however more importantly they needed business management guidance, to ensure at the start the foundation from which we built was solid. MTO provided capital with and through carefully selected partners but more importantly we continued to provide time. Time to work with the communities to ensure that the business ventures remain viable, sustainable and would for a long-time ensure the ongoing upliftment of the communities.”

From Ground Nuts to Peanuts and to Prosperity

MTO opened more than 50 hectares of Eucalyptus plantations in White River, Mpumalanga, for women from nearby villages to plant groundnuts. For the past nine years, this has been the *Siyatiphilisa Groundnut Project*. In 2021, the project grew into an income-generation programme, helping women supplement their social grants by selling their harvests. A lifeline for 122 women – many of them grandmothers heading households and raising orphaned children – it has brought skills, food security, stability and hope to a region hard hit by poverty and unemployment. The dedication and commitment of these women is admirable, considering that the eldest of the group is 90.

The project has had a huge impact in the lives of the women with testimonies including the ability to: pay for school fees, provide school uniforms; house extensions to accommodate the families; and just merely putting food on the table every day, something which some of us take for granted. When we chose food security as a focus area of intervention, we stated our strategic intent as ensuring that no child goes to bed hungry. Testimonies like the ones from the women of the Siyatiphilisa project bring hope that anything is possible.

Through a partnership with a Gauteng food consortium, Kalinda Foods, these groundnuts have been transformed into everyday products – creating a new, sustainable income stream.

We are proud to announce that in August 2025 the project reached its next chapter with the creation of Siyatiphilisa Smooth Peanut Butter, a unique brand – grown, managed and marketed by the Siyatiphilisa women themselves – taking the programme from planting to pantry. Since the launch of the peanut butter brand, the women have been inundated with orders ensuring long-term financial and social sustainability. Siyatiphilisa peanut butter has since been registered, with the relevant authorities, as a food product and will soon be available in some retail stores.

With support from the Small Enterprise Development Agency, they’ve received financial and business management training, equipping them to step forward boldly as entrepreneurs and community leaders, because the Siyatiphilisa Groundnut Project is more than farming.

It’s empowerment. It’s sustainability. It’s a future – built with one jar of peanut butter at a time.



Pesticide Options for Firebreak Maintenance: Industry Update for the 2026 Fire Season

By Jacqui Meyer,
Forestry South Africa (FSA) Timber Industry Pesticide
Working Group (TIPWG) Coordinator

Effective firebreak maintenance remains a legal obligation for forestry operations in South Africa and a cornerstone of responsible land management. In preparation for the 2026 fire season, many in the forestry industry have sought clarity on the current regulatory status of herbicides used as part of integrated fire management.

Firebreak preparation is not optional. Under the Veld and Forest Fire Act (Act 101 of 1998), landowners are required to prepare and maintain firebreaks to prevent the spread of veld fires and reduce risk to neighbouring properties, assets and lives. This obligation applies irrespective of the availability of specific tools or products.

This article provides an update on the regulatory status of herbicide options currently under review, outlines what is legally permissible at present and offers practical guidance to support compliant, risk-based decision-making across the forestry industry.

An integrated fire management approach to firebreaks

Fire management, much like Integrated Pest Management (IPM), relies on a combination of tools and approaches, rather than a single solution. Thus, when deciding upon a firebreak maintenance option the following should be considered:

- The site-specific fire hazard and risk.
- Site-specific factors which could limit firebreak maintenance, including terrain, slope & accessibility
- The environmental and social implications of both the options used for firebreak maintenance and the potential risk of a fire, if maintenance did not occur.
- Operational feasibility and cost.
- Available alternatives.
- Long-term sustainability

Herbicides have historically formed part of integrated fire management in certain contexts, particularly where slope, terrain, or access

limit the practicality of manual or mechanical methods for preparation. However, they are supporting measures, not replacements, and must be applied selectively, defensibly, and in compliance with applicable legislation.

Chemical control options operators can use at present (current legal position)

At the time of writing, glyphosate, where registered and used strictly in accordance with label instructions, remains the only herbicide legally available for firebreak or tracer belt preparation in forestry. No other herbicide products may be used for this purpose unless and until formal approval is granted. Use of any unregistered product or use outside label instructions constitutes illegal off-label use under Act 36.

It should be noted that only certain glyphosate products are registered under Act 36 for the preparation of tracer belts in forestry. While glyphosate is not ideal from an environmental perspective, it may be necessary in specific circumstances where manual or mechanical methods are operationally impractical or prohibitively expensive, and where fire risk is high.

Where glyphosate is used, certain principles remain critical and should be applied meticulously.

Alternative herbicide options under review – a regulatory update

Pelargonic acid (paraquat alternative) Pelargonic acid has been proposed as a potential alternative to paraquat for firebreak preparation. The registration process has experienced delays linked to technical requirements associated with toxicological data submission. At this stage, pelargonic acid should be regarded as a potential future option, rather than one that can be relied upon for immediate operational planning.

Glufosinate-ammonium

Glufosinate-ammonium is currently subject to the Act 36 derogation process. Both the timing and outcome of this process remain uncertain. Should a derogation be granted, strict compliance will be required as condition for use.



Approved Pesticide List (APL) update

As part of the current review cycle, work is underway to update the Approved Pesticide List (APL) to provide clearer guidance on the use of glyphosate for firebreak preparation in limited and specific circumstances. This includes identifying which glyphosate products are registered for this purpose, to support consistent interpretation and compliance across the forestry industry.

Off-label use and compliance considerations

Use of pesticides outside registered label instructions is illegal under Act 36. Off-label use introduces significant risk, including:

- Regulatory non-compliance, which may result in enforcement action by the Registrar, including penalties as provided for in the legislation.
- Increased fire risk to plantations, neighbouring properties, and human health where products are misused, misapplied, or applied outside approved label conditions.
- Potential non-conformances during Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) or Programme for the Endorsement

Practical considerations for the 2026 fire season

Considering the current regulatory and operational constraints, forestry managers and contractors are encouraged to:

- Re-evaluate firebreak placement using existing landscape features such as roads, rivers, and previously disturbed areas.
- Prioritise high-risk boundaries and areas of limited access.
- Apply integrated approaches combining manual, mechanical and (where legally permissible) herbicide methods.
- Document decision-making processes and justifications, especially when involving neighbouring properties.

Plan early to reduce last-minute compliance pressures
Closing The forestry industry continues to demonstrate a high level of responsibility and commitment to effective fire management. While regulatory processes take time, the legal obligation to prepare and maintain firebreaks remains clear. By applying a risk-based, integrated approach and operating within the bounds of current legislation, the industry can continue to protect assets, neighbouring communities and the environment, while maintaining compliance and certification integrity.

Latest Edition of WoodBiz Africa/ SA Forestry : Newsletter 55, Jan.2026



<https://www.woodbizafrica.co.za/january-2026-issue-55>

LOGGING ON

FEBRUARY 2026

In Logging-on's first issue of February, Waratah Forestry Equipment introduces their new 628HX high-capacity harvester head. It is based on the solid reputation Waratah has for building harvester heads for demanding harvesting and processing environments. Tigercat has released a convertible levelling compact mulcher carrier along with the new TCi mulching head. Caterpillar has added a joystick option to their new next generation Cat® 140 motor grader. Customers can now choose either joystick or lever/steering wheel controls. John Deere has announced the acquisition of intellectual property and related assets from Risutec Oy, a well-known Finland-based tree planting equipment manufacturing company. Finally, Kesla Oyj expands its range of small harvester cranes by introducing new, more versatile HF versions.

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The following SAIFmembers celebrate their birthdays in February



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

02 Feb	AZWIANEWI MAKATU	14 Feb	JOLANDA ROUX
03 Feb	ARTHUR DAUGHERTY	16 Feb	WAYNE JONES
03 Feb	WILLEM HOLLESTEIN	17 Feb	GAVIN SCHAFER
04 Feb	NICKY JONES	21 Feb	NIGEL PAYNE
05 Feb	ROBIN HULL	21 Feb	COLIN SMITH
05 Feb	GRAEME HARRISON	21 Feb	TIM ROSS
06 Feb	JACOB KOTZÉ	22 Feb	PHILIP DAY
08 Feb	JOHAN NEL	22 Feb	OWEN PETERSEN
09 Feb	TATENDA MAPETO	24 Feb	KYLA VAN ZYL
12 Feb	PETER KEYWORTH	25 Feb	JEREMY CARR
13 Feb	ANDREW McEWAN		



The following SAIF members will be celebrating their Birthday in March



MARCH BIRTHDAYS

02 Mar	KAREN KIRKMAN	20 Mar	IZETTE GREYLING
04 Mar	BRUCE BREEDT	21 Mar	STUART CHRISTIE
08 Mar	ALMUTH HAMMERBACHER	21 Mar	KWANELE MAPHALALA
11 Mar	DEREK MTOLO	22 Mar	NAVESH NAIDOO
12 Mar	KEITH LITTLE	23 Mar	ROGER POOLE
13 Mar	TEMBA VILANE	24 Mar	ARNULF KANZLER
17 Mar	IVAN MUIR	25 Mar	FARAI BEPETE
18 Mar	SPHIWE MFEKA	26 Mar	ANTON DE BEER
18 Mar	COERT GELDENHUYS	30 Mar	JOEL CELE
19 Mar	SPHIWE MFEKA	31 Mar	SCHALK JACOBS
20 Mar	ANDRE NEL		

The SAIF would like to wish every member who celebrated their birthday in February and, those who will celebrate their birthday in March a very Happy Birthday and congratulations with reaching another milestone.

Thank you for your continued support and God bless for the next year ahead.





The Southern African Institute of Forestry

Handbook order form

The Southern African Institute of Forestry publishes three industry specific handbooks.

I would like to order:

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Price: SAIF members: R400

Non members: R500



Fire Manager's Handbook on Veld and Forest Fires

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Non members: R400



There's Honey in the Forest

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