

FORESTRY IN Focus

ISSUE 022 - APRIL TO JUNE 2026



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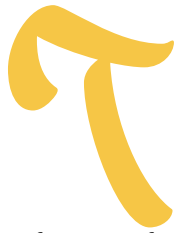


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CHOOSING RESILIENCE OVER RETREAT



he second quarter of 2026 has tested the Forestry Sector's resilience on multiple fronts. Just as we had finally secured a face-to-face meeting with the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, a Cabinet reshuffle saw the portfolio change hands once again. For a Sector that depends on continuity and long-term policy relationships, this churn at the political level certainly is keeping us on our toes. FSA, working closely with our members, will continue with the planning for the Sector's ministerial meeting and will keep you updated.

Globally, conditions have offered little relief with international timber markets remaining depressed, a reminder that South African forestry does not operate in isolation but is deeply exposed to global pricing pressures, politics and world views. Closer to home, climate volatility continues to reshape risk, while pest and disease pressures demand ever-greater vigilance and investment in biosecurity.

Yet amid these challenges, this quarter's FSA AGM, covered in detail in this issue, reaffirmed a Sector defined by resilience rather than retreat. This edition

also brings you articles that cover everything from Sector investment, corporate citizenship, environmental stewardship, education and innovation and the potential to make a difference to the conservation of our national bird. Together, these stories capture a diverse, multidisciplinary Sector, invested in South Africa and the creation of a greener tomorrow.

Dr Ronald Heath
Director Research and Protection



SOUTH AFRICAN FORESTRY AT A CROSSROADS: RESILIENCE, REFORM AND A SECTOR READY TO RISE

BY DR RONALD HEATH, FSA DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH AND PROTECTION

South Africa's Forestry Sector arrived at the 2026 Forestry South Africa (FSA) Annual General Meeting (AGM) with a hard-earned sense of realism. The past year has been marked by global volatility, domestic policy uncertainty and intensifying pressures from climate, security and logistical challenges. Yet what emerged from the AGM was not a narrative of strain, but one of resilient momentum. Across keynote addresses, leadership reflections and industry updates, the Sector presented itself as both grounded and forward-looking. It is fair to say that the South African Forestry Sector is a community that understands the weight of its challenges but is equally alert to

the opportunities unfolding around it.

The global backdrop remains complex, with oil price spikes linked to conflict in the Middle East having pushed up costs across the value chain, while shifting geopolitical dynamics continue to reshape trade flows. Although

many South African industries are exposed to the turbulence of US-related trade tensions, forestry is somewhat insulated by its limited direct reliance on the American market. There are opportunities on offer with the expansion of BRICS (already representing around 41% of global GDP), offering long-



term promise for new markets, diversified partnerships and a broader economic horizon.

Domestically, the Sector has had to navigate its own structural constraints. A decade-long impasse on water-use licences, persistent rail and port inefficiencies, energy instability, regulatory backlogs and the growing threat of illegal mining and rural violence, have all weighed heavily on operations. Yet, as FSA Executive Director Michael Peter emphasised, the past year has also delivered meaningful breakthroughs. These have been driven by sustained industry advocacy, strengthened partnerships with government and a renewed willingness across departments to recognise forestry's strategic importance.

Peter highlighted the scale of recent investment as a sign of confidence in the Sector's long-term trajectory. Over the past six years, forestry companies have collectively invested R38 billion, a commitment that speaks to enduring demand for wood-based products and the Sector's ability to generate stable returns. The Industry has also made strides in developing its future workforce, placing 133 previously unemployed forestry graduates through FSA's employment programme, enabled through more than R20 million from the FP&M Seta.

Perhaps most striking has been the progress made through government partnerships. After years of frustration, the deadlock on water-use licences has finally been resolved, unlocking new afforestation opportunities. Energy reforms have opened the door



for forestry companies to invest in renewable generation and contribute to the country's energy security for the first time. Transnet has entered new collaborations to recapitalise rail rolling stock and port infrastructure, while visa reforms have eased access to international skills essential for plant maintenance and investment projects. Support from the Department of Transport for Performance-Based Standard vehicles promises to reduce truck numbers and logistic costs. The promise of additional provincial roads serving forestry operations is set to improve long-term road quality. Nearly R1 billion in empowerment funding has been channelled into black-owned forestry enterprises, while SAPS and SANDF have stepped up efforts to combat illegal mining and violence in forestry regions. Even the long-standing backlog in agrichemical registrations, a threat to international certification, has

been tackled by the Department of Agriculture with the deployment of 27 private-sector experts. Signifying a lot for the Forestry Sector to celebrate.

These reforms have unfolded alongside a major structural shift in logistics. For the first time, 11 private train operators have been granted access to the national rail network. Ports and rail reform will inevitably move more slowly than energy reform, given the capital and complexity involved, but the direction of travel is unmistakably positive. Forestry continues to play a central role in the National Logistics Crisis Committee, Operation Vulindlela, the National Planning Commission and other presidency-level structures, ensuring the Sector's voice is present where national decisions are shaped.

Against this backdrop of reform and renewal, political economist JP Landman delivered a keynote

that blended clarity and cautious optimism. Known for his unsettling accuracy in forecasting South Africa's political and economic shifts, Landman argued that the country is in a period of messy but meaningful transition. The formation of the Government of National Unity, he suggests, has introduced friction but also forced collaboration and policy continuity, a development that matters deeply for long-term industries such as Forestry. For Landman, the real story lies not in the headlines but in the underlying trends, which point towards gradual strengthening rather than decline.

For a Sector that plans in decades rather than quarters, this perspective resonates strongly. Forestry depends on policy predictability and economic resilience. Landman's analysis suggested that they are slowly improving. His message was not one of blind optimism, but of informed confidence: South Africa is moving, sometimes haltingly, in the right direction and forestry is well-positioned to benefit from the shifts underway.



If Landman provided the macro-lens, Dr Kabir Peerbhay, Sappi's Principal Research Officer, delivered the technological one. His presentation on the Sappi drone programme was nothing short of transformational, revealing a Sector that has moved far beyond traditional methods, embracing unmanned aerial vehicles, AI-driven analytics and real-time data as essential tools of modern forestry. What once seemed essential has now

become an embedded practice, supporting silvicultural audits, stock measurements, fire-risk assessments, disaster mapping, security surveillance and environmental compliance.

Peerbhay explained how the shift from visual line-of-sight to beyond-visual-line-of-sight operations mirrors the broader evolution of forestry itself, with the industry no longer constrained by what the human eye can see or what manual methods can deliver. Equipped with survey-grade sensors, LiDAR, thermal cameras, gas detectors and live-streaming capabilities, drones now provide high-resolution, near-real-time intelligence that is reshaping decision-making across the value chain.

He covered AI-powered analytics and how they are unlocking insights that were previously impossible, detecting seedlings in complex ground conditions, identifying grazing damage, assessing residues and supporting breeding trials with remarkable accuracy. Fire management



has been revolutionised, with thermal sensors detecting hotspots invisible to ground crews. Environmental monitoring has entered a new phase, with drones mapping fugitive gas emissions and identifying leaks in mill infrastructure. Even security operations have been transformed, with drones enabling safer, more effective monitoring of illegal mining and nighttime activity.

Peerbhay's message was clear: UAV technology is no longer optional. It is foundational to productivity, risk management, environmental stewardship and global competitiveness. For a Sector facing climate volatility, rising costs and increasing scrutiny, drones offer not just better data but a fundamentally new way of seeing and managing South Africa's forests.

Bringing these threads together, FSA Chair and Sappi Forests

Vice-President Duane Roothman offered a reflection grounded in the character of the Sector itself. He describes a year of turmoil, but also one that has reaffirmed forestry's defining quality of resilience, adaptability and collaboration. "We are anchored in the earth," he said, making it clear that the Industry's strength lies not only in its technical capabilities but in its power: their ability to work together, to question what they do and why, and to hold fast to the principles and values that have carried the Sector through turbulent times.

He urged the Industry to focus on its successes rather than its frustrations, to build on the relationships that have delivered progress and to embrace the partnerships that define the shared landscape of forestry, agriculture and rural development. Roothman spoke of the importance of intergenerational leadership,

celebrating emerging talent capable of navigating both technical complexity and South Africa's diverse social fabric. His closing sentiment captured the spirit of the AGM: "Talk less, do more and collaborate relentlessly."

Taken together, the 2026 FSA AGM painted a picture of a Sector at a crossroads, challenged, certainly, but far from overwhelmed. It is a Sector confronting global volatility while finding new markets, navigating domestic constraints while unlocking reforms, rooted in tradition while embracing technology and facing climate and security risks while innovating faster than ever. Every message, from Landman's macro-analysis to Peerbhay's technological vision, from Peter's reform-driven progress report to Roothman's call for principled collaboration, was consistent: South African forestry is not waiting for the future, it is actively shaping it."



FROM THE EXECUTIVE'S DESK

BY MICHAEL PETER, FSA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

April to June 2026 can be considered a quarter of fast-moving developments, which have kept Forestry South Africa busy conducting high-level engagements on multiple fronts: from Cabinet changes to Masterplan negotiations.

ROELF MEYER APPOINTED SA AMBASSADOR TO THE US - 15 APRIL

FSA congratulated Mr Roelf Meyer on his appointment as South Africa's ambassador to the US, noting his strong record through the PPGI and Operation Vulindlela years and his potential to reset SA-US diplomatic relations.

MINISTER STEENHUISEN INTERVENES AT THE REGISTRAR'S OFFICE - 22 APRIL

Following Croplife SA's court victory and FSA's appeals, the Minister announced 27 external experts to clear the backlog of over 3,000 outstanding agricultural applications, including forestry-relevant applications.

NEW WHITE PAPER ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT - 7 MAY

A draft White Paper proposing single-tier municipalities, mandatory intergovernmental cooperation and stronger accountability was welcomed by FSA, which will make a formal submission.

FIRST PRIVATE TRAIN OPERATING COMPANIES ANNOUNCED - 12 MAY

Minister Creecy confirmed 11 companies set to move 24 million tons of freight annually from April 2027, boosting export capacity for SA produce.

MASTERPLAN CRISIS AND MINISTERIAL ENGAGEMENT - 27 MAY AND 12 JUNE

Sustained pressure by FSA regarding Masterplan failures led to a Parliamentary Portfolio Committee presentation attended by Minister Aucamp. Parliamentarians asked several insightful and hard-hitting questions both of Industry and, more importantly, the DFFE, and while they expressed satisfaction with industry responses, there was major dissatisfaction with several of the responses by the DDG for Forestry and the Deputy Minister. Following this, FSA was contacted on 12 June by Minister Aucamp's Special Advisor, Mr Donal Grant. Both the Minister and Mr Grant have expressed their disappointment with the Masterplan failures over the past six years, and they have undertaken to investigate and hold those responsible to account. The Minister committed to visit the industry and to address the systemic issues

that need unlocking if substantial socioeconomic benefits are to be seen for workers, timber growers and local communities.

CABINET RESHUFFLE: MINISTER-ELECT DAVID MAYNIER - 17 JUNE

While the timing of the Democratic Alliance Cabinet shift was less than ideal, with Minister Aucamp having just committed to meeting the Sector, FSA welcomes the appointment of Minister-elect Mr Maynier. Fortunately, Mr Maynier is already familiar with the Sector's concerns as he was present during the Portfolio Committee presentation. We intend to continue with the Ministerial visit preparations, with the intention of engaging with, and welcoming, Minister Maynier.





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an industry that creates rural employment and opportunities.



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SUPPORT

a sector providing renewable, recyclable and sustainable alternatives to fossil fuels.



UNCOVER

natural spaces for recreation and conservation within the forestry landscape.

FIVE YOUNG VOICES SHAPING THE FUTURE OF SOUTH AFRICAN FORESTRY

This Youth Day, FSA invited South Africa's forestry students to share their stories through the #SAForestryYouth Instagram competition. The response was both inspiring and a powerful reminder that the next generation is arriving fuelled by unbridled enthusiasm and passion for the Forestry Sector.

MEET THE NEXT GENERATION

There is a quiet revolution happening in South African forestry, and it looks like this: a young woman from a rural KwaZulu-Natal community who grew up watching her mother work the plantations and who is now planting her own future in silviculture. A young man who grew up beside the plantations of a small village and discovered that sustainable forest management was where science met soul. And a student who opened her university admission letter expecting to read "Forensic Science" and whose life changed completely when he found "Forestry" instead.

These are just some of the stories from a generation who have discovered forestry on their own terms, and they are enthusiastic about what they have found.

SENAMILE AMAHLE BHENGU DIPLOMA IN FORESTRY, NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY (GEORGE CAMPUS) | YEAR 2

Senamile's path into forestry was shaped by community and a pivotal moment at a Sappi careers expo in 2022. Hearing Noncedo Ngubane, a woman from her own community, a fellow alumna of Mpolweni Secondary School, speak about her forestry career was transformative. "Seeing someone with a similar background succeed gave me the confidence to believe in myself," she says.

Now completing her experiential training with Siyanqoba Forestry Solutions in Howick, where she planted with semi-mechanised machinery for the first time and helped rehabilitate land damaged by the 2024 Gilboa Farm wildfire. Senamile has experienced forestry at its most real, firefighting after a prescribed burn spread faster than expected. Of that moment, she reflects: "This experience taught me the importance of teamwork, quick decision-making and following safe firefighting procedures."

Her ambition is to specialise in silviculture and to give something back. "I hope to give back



to communities by creating awareness about the importance of forests," she says. "Forests play a vital role in conserving biodiversity, protecting water resources and reducing carbon dioxide through carbon sequestration." Raised by a single mother who worked in forestry without the opportunity to study, Senamile carries that legacy forward with intention: "Through my education, I feel I am carrying her dream forward while creating my own."

**SIYABONGA KEVIN
MOKOENA
DIPLOMA IN FORESTRY,
NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY
(GEORGE CAMPUS) | YEAR 3
(FINAL YEAR)**

Siyabonga grew up in a small village surrounded by plantations, so for him, forestry was not an abstract career choice; it was the landscape he came from. "I appreciate how the trees contribute to the environment," he says.

His experiential training at MTO North confirmed what he had begun to understand in the classroom, that forestry is more than timber production, it is an intricate system balancing mechanisation, science, conservation and people. "I was surprised by how much knowledge on mechanised machines was given to us, only to be then exposed to more than 50% of semi-mechanised operations," he reflects, a lesson in humility that the industry extends well beyond its equipment.

Siyabonga hopes to work in fire management on graduation, contributing to protection practices that safeguard both people and plantation. I want more people to realise that "forestry is not just about cutting trees" he says. "It is about sustainability, conservation and supporting livelihoods. It is an intricate system that requires a deep understanding of how trees behave under certain conditions and how to adapt to different changes and impacts."



**SURPRISE NDLOVU
BSC FORESTRY, UNIVERSITY OF
MPUMALANGA | YEAR 3**

Of all the origin stories in this cohort, Surprise Ndlovu's may be the most memorable. She applied to university believing she had chosen Forensic Science, but when her admission letter arrived, it read: Bachelor of Science in Forestry. "Forestry? When did I apply for forestry?" she laughs. But as Surprise explains, curiosity won "those few minutes of research changed everything."

Looking back, the journey makes perfect sense. As a schoolgirl, Surprise was repeatedly selected for environmental and biodiversity camps in Sabie, where she was exposed to forests, conservation and wildlife. Her church life took

her hiking and camping. "Without even knowing it, I was falling in love with the very environment that forestry is built around." Surprise is drawn to the field's technological dimension, the innovative engineering and remote sensing that is shaping forestry and sees the industry as anything but outdated. "Forestry today involves drones, satellite data, GIS, remote sensing, advanced machinery and scientific research. It is a field where technology, environmental management and problem-solving come together."

Her advice to young people, "sometimes the career you never planned for turns out to be exactly where you are meant to be."



RETHABILE NKHAPHE FORESTRY, NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY | YEAR 1

For Rethabile Nkhaphe, forestry is rooted in a passion for nature, sustainability and opening doors for communities who may not yet know the Sector exists. Coming from a small town in the Free State where forests of any sort are rare, she was drawn to the idea of bringing forestry programmes and opportunities to people who are unfamiliar with them.

Now a first-year student at Nelson Mandela University, Rethabile has found forestry to be broader than expected. She was surprised to encounter forestry engineering and inspired by how the field connects planting, soil, climate and sustainability. Silviculture has been a particular highlight, especially learning how soil can act as a carbon sink and help reduce the impacts of global warming.

Her interest lies especially in the conservation and outdoor sides of forestry, where hands-on work helps protect land and natural resources. A fire management field trip also left a lasting impression, showing her how fire can affect forests and soil in both harmful and beneficial ways.

Looking ahead, Rethabile hopes to become a forestry research scientist, exploring the impact forestry has on climate and finding new ways to improve environmental outcomes. Her advice to anyone considering the field is heartfelt, "pour yourself into it, because forestry is about believing in the green economy and choosing to fight for the future".



MSIZI KHANYILE BSC FORESTRY, SPRINGFIELD RESEARCH UNIVERSITY | YEAR 2

Msizi Khanyile, provides an international perspective. For him, forestry brings together his passion for the environment, his interest in science and technology and his desire to make a positive contribution to the future. Now in his second year of a BSc Forestry at Springfield Research University, Eswatini, he says his choice was shaped by a concern for climate change and a belief that forests play a vital role in supporting people, wildlife and the planet.

What has surprised him most is how broad the Sector is. Forestry, he has discovered, is not only about planting trees; it also involves economics, engineering, technology, biodiversity, climate change and community development. His favourite parts of the course so far have been

silviculture and forest engineering, where science meets practical fieldwork.

Msizi is especially drawn to the way modern technology is transforming forestry. He hopes to work in forest planning and management, using tools such as GIS, remote sensing and digital mapping to monitor forest resources, support better decision-making and strengthen sustainable forest management.

His message to young people is clear, "if you enjoy nature, science, problem-solving and making a positive difference, forestry is an excellent career". It is, he says, "a modern sector that uses drones, GIS, remote sensing and research to solve real-world environmental challenges while helping to build a more sustainable future".





NATURE'S ARSENAL: DR MIKE MORRIS AND THE QUIET BIOCONTROL REVOLUTION

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR MIKE MORRIS

The Andermatt Plant Health Products (APHP) research base at Petrus Stroom is in a natural break between forestry climbing the slopes above and agriculture stretching below. It is a fitting location for a man who has spent his career working in the space between nature and agriculture, asking whether the two need to be at odds at all.

Dr Mike Morris did not set out to become one of South Africa's leading and most recognised biological scientists. In the 1970s, a

chance observation changed everything. An insect found smothered in fungus on a golf course sparked a question, for both Mike and his supervisor at the time, which was simple and radical: could this be useful as a pest control alternative?

Seeking answers, Mike's supervisor directed him to a professor at Stellenbosch University. The professor introduced him to a recently published book, "The use of microbes in biological control", one of the first of its kind, and provided the honest appraisal that this emerging field was too new for

them to teach Mike directly, suggesting instead that he drew inspiration for his master's from the book. Mike did exactly that and a lifelong career was born, with Mike invited to join a team of entomologists working on the biocontrol of invasive weeds. Over a course of 19 years he introduced numerous fungal pathogens into South Africa to help control several invasive weeds, including the gall-rust fungus on the Port Jackson Willow, and also registered two of the early bioherbicides, "Stumpout" and "Hakatak".



BEDROOM LAB TO SWISS PARTNERSHIP

The early years of turning scientific curiosity into commercial reality were characteristically unglamorous. It was a soil organism, a naturally occurring fungus, that became the first venture into commercialising biocontrol. Seeking a partner, Mike met with Professor Mark Laing, who alongside a number of his students had been studying this fungus and was looking for a partner to commercialise it. Mike visited him and over a cup of coffee Plant Health Products was formed.

PHP's first laboratory was a converted child's bedroom, the occupant duly evicted, but it worked and mass production of PHP's first fungal biocontrol agents followed. The company moved to Nottingham Road, where a converted shed became PHP's next home and slowly, steadily, the company expanded, until in 2011 Madumbi Sustainable Agriculture took over the marketing of PHP products.

In 2013, Mike and Mark were invited to Switzerland to meet with Andermatt, one of Europe's leading biocontrol companies. Andermatt recognised in PHP a shared philosophy, backstory, work ethic and conviction that biocontrol is the future of sustainable plant production and protection. Unsurprisingly, they offered to buy a stake in the company, catapulting PHP into the spotlight as part of a globally recognised biocontrol brand. In 2021, PHP adopted the Andermatt brand, changing its name to Andermatt PHP (APHP).

ECO-T: A PRODUCT LEADING THE WAY

One of APHP's flagship products, Eco-T, has become an industry staple, and with good reason. Derived from *Trichoderma harzianum*, a naturally occurring soil-borne fungus found in rhizospheres, it operates through multiple complementary mechanisms that both stimulate plant growth and suppress disease.

Trichoderma colonises plant root systems and surrounding soil,

where it competes aggressively with pathogens for resources and space. It produces enzymes that degrade the cell walls of harmful fungi, a process known as mycoparasitism (Vinale et al., 2008). Simultaneously, it induces systemic resilience in the host plant, effectively priming its immune response against future disease pressure. Beyond disease suppression, *Trichoderma* solubilises soil minerals, produces phytohormones and releases volatile organic compounds that directly promote root development, germination and overall plant vigour (Hermosa et al., 2012). The result is not just a biopesticide, but a biostimulant, working at the soil-plant interface to restore and enhance the natural complex that supports healthy growth.

THE BIGGER PICTURE AND BIOCONTROL'S MOMENT

The context in which APHP operates has never been more favourable, or urgent. Society is increasingly aware of the risks posed by synthetic pesticides and





as a result regulatory frameworks globally are tightening. Environmental stewardship is no longer a niche concern but a commercial imperative, with soil health becoming perhaps the defining agricultural crisis of the age with estimates suggesting the world is losing topsoil at a rate that, if unchecked, threatens the productivity of vast swathes of farmland within generations.

Biocontrol addresses this crisis at its root, literally, rather than working against nature's biology, it works with it. It restores and reinforces the microbial community in the soil rather than depleting it. As Mike explains, we should think of it less as a pesticide and more as a probiotic, not eradicating pests, but reducing their pressure, rebuilding the natural biota and restoring the nutrient cycles that healthy crops depend on. It is a low

dose, integrated approach that takes time to establish but offers something synthetic chemistry fundamentally cannot, resilience built into the system itself.

The challenge is that biocontrol adoption demands a shift in thinking. Biocontrol is not a silver bullet. It does not deliver the immediate, visible knockdown of a synthetic pesticide application. Timing is critical, applications must align with pest life cycles, not fight against them. Formulation stability remains a challenge, with cold-chain requirements limiting accessibility in many contexts.

BRAZIL SHOWS WHAT IS POSSIBLE

The global benchmark for biocontrol adoption is Brazil, with an estimated 55% of cultivated land now using some form of biological input (Embrapa, 2024). This has not happened by

accident, Government policies and incentives including tax breaks and research funding have actively promoted biological products. This, alongside stricter regulations on chemical pesticides, have encouraged farmers towards more sustainable alternatives. Recent regulatory advances have also significantly facilitated the registration and commercialisation process for biopesticides and, as a result, this market was projected to exceed 2.9 billion US dollars by 2023.

The adoption of biocontrol in South Africa currently presents a stark contrast to Brazil, where the registration system for all products can be costly, slow and at times, unpredictable. Trials conducted elsewhere are increasingly not accepted and as a result the more expensive regulatory processes of Europe are favoured. However, this makes investment into small South African markets, like forestry, nearly impossible to justify.

The current registration bottleneck is not merely inconvenient; it is a genuine barrier to biocontrol development and for the Forestry Sector this could spell disaster. Wattle rust is an ongoing challenge for Acacia growers across the country and with the impending removal of the few chemical products used to treat this, due to shifting legislation, there is real urgency to find a biological solution. However, market scale may not justify the investment required to register a biocontrol solution under current rules.

WHAT THE FORESTRY SECTOR CAN DO

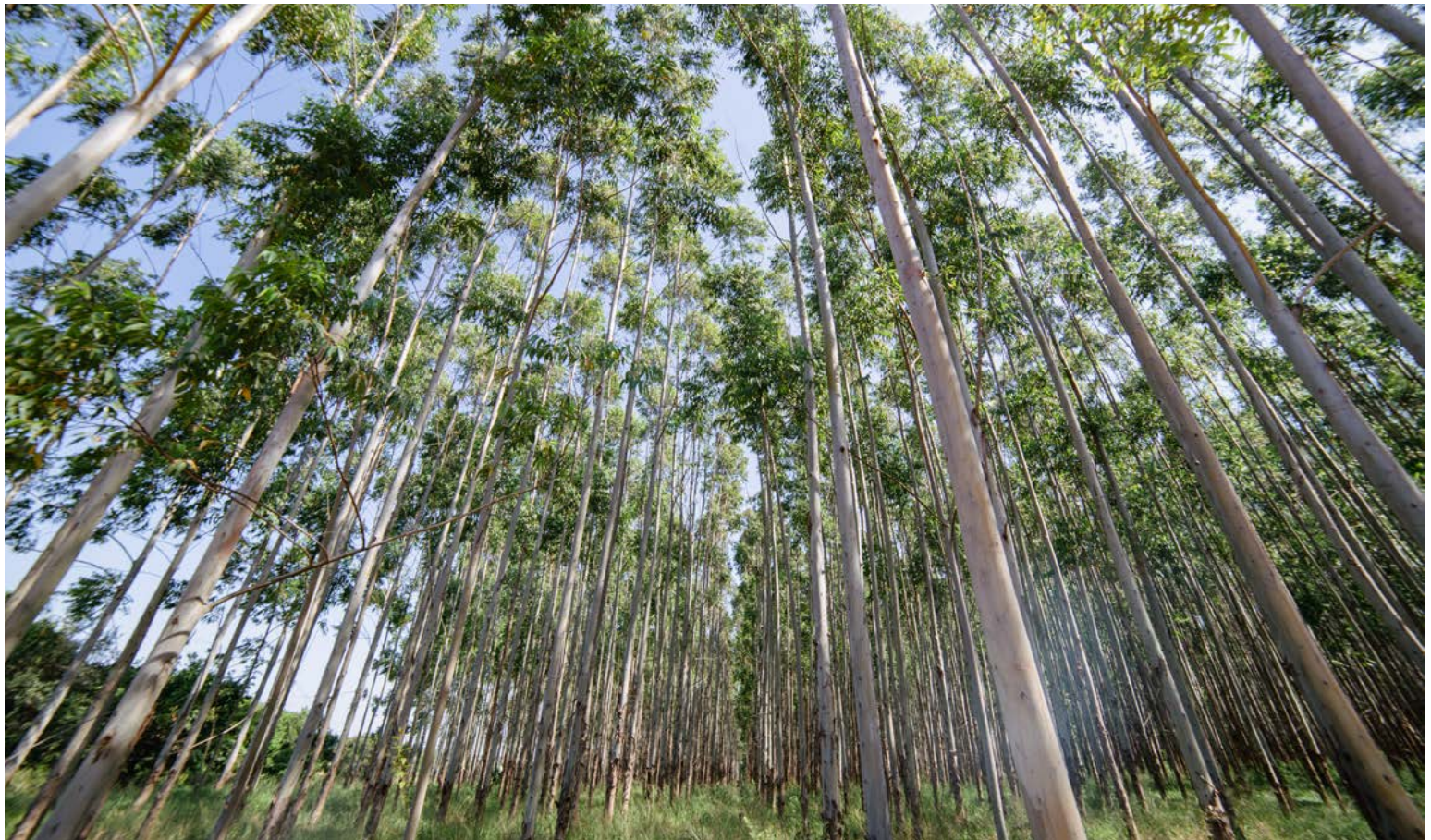
Forestry has, to date, been slower than agriculture in adopting biocontrol, in part due to our reliance on conventional pesticides but conditions are shifting. Regulatory pressure, public perception and genuine scientific progress mean the window of opportunity is opening. But seizing it will require something more than waiting for better products to appear. It will need targeted collaboration with shared goals, requiring academia, industry and manufacturers working in genuine alignment. Research must be designed not only to answer scientific questions but to produce results that can be realistically applied at scale. There is no value

in trials that could never be financially or practically rolled out. Planning must begin with the end in mind, to achieve a product that works in a laboratory, a production facility and also on a hillside in a commercial plantation or nursery.

Dr Mike Morris has spent more than four decades trusting that the right and the pragmatic path eventually become one. That conviction, formed over a fungus-covered insect on a golf course, confirmed in countless laboratory studies, field trials and farms over the years, may yet prove to be the most important contribution he makes, as he has shown that biology was always on our side, it just needed someone patient enough to listen.

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ESCALATION TO EDUCATION: WHY STAYING CONNECTED MATTERS

BY JACQUI MEYER, TIPWG COORDINATOR



One of the greatest benefits industry collaborations brings is that we don't have to solve the same problem twice.

Recently, TIPWG was contacted regarding a dispute that had escalated between a pesticide supplier and a forestry contractor concerning pesticide expiry dates. As frustrations grew, the matter was eventually raised with CropLife South Africa, resulting in an irate phone call to the TIPWG Team.

Fortunately, through discussions with all parties involved, it became apparent that the issue wasn't one of negligence or non-compliance, but rather a communication breakdown and a misunderstanding regarding the interpretation of the legislation on pesticide expiry dates.

What made the situation particularly interesting was that TIPWG had recently addressed this very topic following a certification audit finding elsewhere in the industry. Questions raised during that audit had highlighted uncertainty around expiry dates and product stewardship requirements. In response, TIPWG had already developed guidance and awareness material to assist members and their contractors.

The incident, therefore, reinforced an important lesson: having information available is only part of the solution; ensuring that the information reaches the people who need it is equally important.

While forestry companies may be TIPWG members, operational decisions are often implemented by supervisors, contractors, distributors and service providers. If important guidance does

not reach these stakeholders, misunderstandings can occur despite the availability of clear industry information.

This is one of the reasons why TIPWG encourages companies to not only to make use of the resources available on the website, but to also actively disseminate relevant information throughout their organisations and supply chains. We also encourage contractors, service providers and other interested parties to subscribe to the TIPWG mailing list to ensure they receive industry updates directly.

Importantly, situations such as these provide valuable feedback to TIPWG. Every query, audit finding, request for clarification or industry concern helps us identify where additional guidance, training, webinars or resources may be required. Many members



will be familiar with contacting TIPWG following an audit finding to seek clarification on industry requirements, interpretation of standards or practical implementation of best practices. These discussions not only assist individual companies but often result in resources that benefit the broader Forestry Sector.

This collaborative approach is one of TIPWG's greatest strengths. The Industry's guidelines, stewardship initiatives, webinars and technical resources are developed through shared experience and collective learning. In many respects, they represent the Forestry Sector's agreed minimum standard for responsible pesticide management.

When organisations actively engage with these resources and share them throughout their businesses, they reduce risk, improve consistency and strengthen compliance across the Sector. Equally, when challenges arise, they provide an opportunity to identify gaps, improve communication and develop better solutions for everyone.

The recent expiry-date misunderstanding serves as a timely reminder that industry standards are not created by documents alone. They are created through participation, communication and a willingness to learn from one another.

If you are not already receiving TIPWG communications, we encourage you to subscribe via the TIPWG website. If your organisation is already a member receiving our communications, consider whether

important updates, guidance documents and webinar recordings are reaching everyone who needs them, including contractors, supervisors and operational staff.

Sometimes, the most valuable lesson from a challenge is not the problem itself, but what it teaches us about communicating better as an Industry.



DRAINAGE 101: KEEPING FORESTRY ROADS AND CATCHMENTS ON TRACK

Forestry South Africa's (FSA) Environmental Management Committee (EMC) hosted its latest webinar on 'Managing

Water Flow and Drainage within Forestry Landholdings', bringing together forestry road specialists, environmental managers and leading researchers to unpack why drainage management is critical to maintain good road networks, and to prevent erosion from commercial compartments and sedimentation of conservation areas.

DRAINAGE: REASONS AND EFFECTS OF POOR INSTALLATIONS

Geoff Hurd, a Forestry Road Specialist at CMO, opened proceedings with a sombre reminder that *"forestry roads are under more scrutiny than ever, as poor drainage drives sedimentation, erosion and lost access"*. Throughout Session One, Geoff took attendees through the three non-negotiables of good drainage design: keeping the road out of the water, keeping the water out of the road, and getting water away from the road. Beyond imparting his wisdom, he provided the webinar participants with a practical toolbox of tips and techniques when it comes to



camber, side drains, mitre drains, culverts and stream crossings.

What made Geoff's talk so refreshing was his bluntness about failure points, be it blocked culverts, collapsing banks or poor maintenance. He also reinforced the message that the outlets, wherever water finally leaves a drain, are consistently the most vulnerable part of any system, for the erosion risk of both drainage structures and soil resources in commercial compartments. The highest risk is in the first year after construction, during periods of high rainfall, and when there is harvesting and transport traffic.

So when the three coincide, be prepared for the perfect storm.

Geoff's presentation is a must for anyone involved with forestry roads, with his final words becoming the mantra for many who joined the webinar, *"no road is better than its drainage"*.

Watch Geoff's presentation in full: EMC Drainage Webinar - Geoff Hurd - Drainage: Reasons and Effects of Poor Drainage.

LESSONS FROM THE FIELD: APPLIED RESEARCH AND CASE STUDIES

Professor Bruce Talbot and MSc student Philisiwe Sithole of

Stellenbosch University's Forest Operations group followed Geoff, presenting their research on 'Managing Waterflow and Drainage within Forestry Landscapes.' Funded through the Forestry Sector Innovation Fund, Bruce's project looks at a micro-catchment approach to understanding, quantifying and monitoring soil loss. Using a network of sediment traps and erosion pins, as well as unmanned LiDAR surveys and RUSLE-based modelling, the team is building a clearer, more cost-effective picture of where sediment comes from and how confidently we can measure it. It is a timely reminder that good drainage starts with good soil science.

To watch Bruce and Philisiwe's presentation in full: EMC Drainage Webinar: Bruce Talbot and Philisiwe Sithole - Why Soil Science is so Vital.

Mondi's Dr Brent Corcoran and Sifiso Kunene rounded off the session by zooming back out to the landscape scale. Brent's



framing was simple but pointed, demonstrating that erosion and sedimentation sit at the top of the operational risk register, and that it's not only a roads problem. Compartments, as well as roads, intercept and concentrate the natural waterflow pathways. For example, where a harvesting extraction route sits directly beneath a road culvert outlet, the result is a sharp spike in volume and velocity and much higher risk of erosion.

Brent linked this back to Bruce's soil loss equation, warning that with climate change delivering fewer, more intense rainfall events, soil cover is the one variable land managers must control to avoid both gradual soil loss over time, and serious erosion and sedimentation events. Brent noted best practice requirements for the Forestry Sector, including phasing harvest block sizes to manage slope length and peak runoff, clear contractor standards for roads and stream crossings, and root-cause investigation on every erosion incident to feed back into a continuous improvement cycle.

Sifiso Kunene then brought the discussion down to implementation, introducing Mondi's long-standing road optimisation programme aimed at reducing road density and realigning roads away from steep slopes, as well as sensitive areas and other problem areas. Engineering design (alignment, slope and culvert spacing) is checked against flow models in consultation with specialists, including how their network



interacts with public road drainage. Maintenance has shifted from a time-based to a productivity-based approach, helping stretch limited budgets further. Annual refresher training for foresters, road contractors and the environmental team is integral to ensuring alignment on standards, as *"one blocked culvert puts pressure on every structure downstream."*

Both Brent and Sifiso closed with the same underlying message: roads and stream crossings matter, but they're only one part of an integrated catchment-level approach that must weigh roads management, harvesting activities, residue management and weed control against each other, not in isolation.

To watch Brent and Sifiso's presentation, click here: [EMC Drainage Webinar - Brent Corcoran and Sifiso Kunene](#)

MOVING FORWARD

Taken together, the three sessions offer far more than a single afternoon's viewing; they amount to a genuinely practical masterclass in drainage management, from the fundamentals of a well-placed mitre drain right through to catchment-level decision-making. With each presentation now available to watch in full on FSA's website, the webinar is a training resource providing invaluable practical advice for foresters and road contractors brushing up on the basics, and equally useful for students and early-career practitioners building their understanding of how water, soil and timber production all interact on the ground. In an industry where, as Geoff Hurd put it, *"no road is better than its drainage"*, having this expertise just a click away is a resource well worth returning to.

"It has only been a couple of weeks since the Drainage Webinar, and already I have seen its advice in action in Merensky's plantation. One of our Plantation Managers quoted Geoff's 'drainage, drainage, drainage' when assessing a small erosion scar, taking me to address the drainage at the head of the scar as Geoff suggested, which I found really encouraging. Then, in another plantation I saw a TLB in action which was very useful for creating side drains, something the foresters there had always thought was a no-go ahead of the webinar. It's really good to see the positive uptake of the advice and practical applications imparted during these EMC seminars." - Hamish Whyte, Technical Services and Environmental Manager, Merensky Timbers

The next EMC webinars will be a series on biodiversity; more information to come shortly.



UNDERSTANDING SILVICULTURE TECHNOLOGY: PLANTATION FORESTRY IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

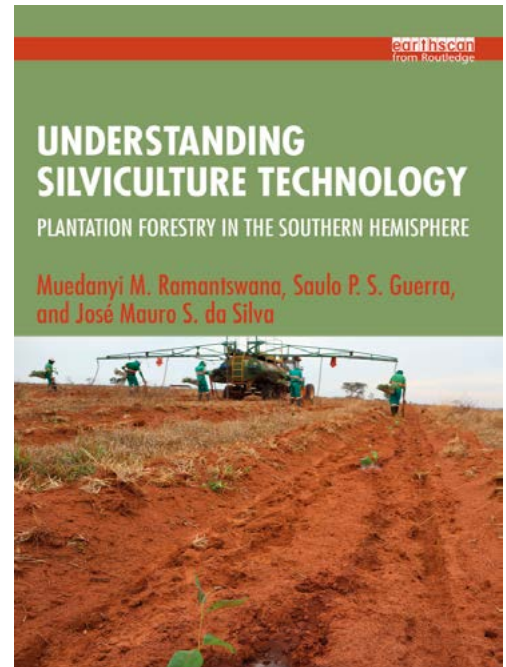
INTERVIEW WITH DR MUEDANYI RAMANTSWANA, NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY

Technological advances are reshaping the Forestry Sector at a pace, and South African companies are under real pressure to reduce costs and improve efficiency across the forestry value chain. Competing in an international market means being innovative, adopting

value-adding technologies and staying current with the latest developments across productivity, quality and accreditation.

"I never cease to be amazed at how quickly technology evolves once a niche has been found," says Dr Muedanyi Ramantswana, Senior Lecturer at Nelson Mandela University. *"Take UAVs as an example. Initially limited to assessments and monitoring through aerial photography, they are now embedded across entire operations, from weed control, pest control and fire protection through to precision mapping, remote sensing and comprehensive work planning and management. In a very short time, they have become integral to modern forestry."*

The challenge, he points out, is keeping pace with that rate of change and adopting technology that supports your economic, environmental and social



dynamics. While completing his PhD in 2018, Dr Ramantswana identified a knowledge gap in the market for a textbook covering the shift from predominantly manual silviculture operations in South Africa to those incorporating semi and fully mechanised technologies. There was a clear need for a teaching resource that could guide undergraduates and postgraduates through this evolution and give them a firm grounding in the technologies powering South Africa's modern Forestry Industry.



His intended audience extends beyond the lecture theatre. *"I see it as a practical handbook for those already working in the Sector too, whether that is forestry practitioners, researchers, contractors or foresters on the ground. People who may have exposure to certain silviculture technologies but lack familiarity with the full range being used across an entire operation."*

Dr Ramantswana collaborated with Professor Saulo Guerra from São Paulo State University (UNESP) and Professor Jose Mauro da Silva of the Federal University of São Carlos in Brazil on what became a five-year project. *"Brazil is widely regarded as a leader in plantation forestry technology adoption and application, partly because of the scale at which it operates, which drives constant innovation. My co-authors also saw the need for a single textbook that traced this evolution, hence we collaborated and gave readers a solid understanding of the technologies being adopted in silviculture from the perspectives of both South Africa and Brazil."*

Published in March 2026 by Taylor Francis, the book runs to six chapters. Following an introductory chapter, Chapter Two examines technological innovations changing the propagation and growing of plants in nurseries. *"I was particularly fascinated with the early emergence of automation and robotics for identifying, picking and planting cuttings on containerised trays, and big data applications for improving input materials (e.g. water, fertiliser) efficiency, both have the potential to truly transform this part of the forestry value chain."*

Chapters Three and Four cover the establishment and re-establishment of planted compartments, from site preparation to pruning. *"Over the years, we have seen the adoption of technologies such as mulchers for residue management, pitting machines for the preparation of a planting position, tractor-based rigs for planting and weeding. One area where a surprisingly large technology gap remains is pruning, so it will be interesting to watch how that develops over the next decade."* The chapter also addresses technologies available for the management of pests and diseases as well as fire protection and prevention, where advances are saving money, preventing losses and preserving infrastructure and lives.

Chapter Five looks in greater detail at key technological developments in silviculture, mapping the key drivers and trends. *"What struck me was how technology has influenced not just the machines and materials we use, but also the significant advancements in precision technologies to support*





machine operators perform work more effectively. The potential of AI, deep learning and machine learning is something we have barely begun to tap, and both could be significant gamechangers for the Sector if properly integrated. Chapter Five is the one I am most proud of. It pulls everything together, setting out where we are now and where we are headed."

Chapter 6 examines the relationship between silviculture and harvesting, with particular focus on how the even aged

silvicultural system is impacted by activities performed across the value chain. Re-establishment and tending activities affect harvesting operations, and vice versa. The chapter describes these impacts and interventions.

Dr Ramantswana's enthusiasm for both the Industry and his students comes through clearly. "If you do what you love, you never have to work a day in your life. This project has taken five years, but I have enjoyed every moment because it brings together my passion for teaching and research. I have a real

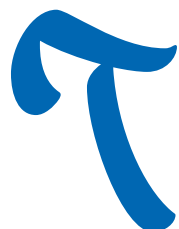
opportunity to make a difference to young people who will be the future of this Sector, and I take that seriously. I hope the textbook serves as an accessible and lasting gateway into the technological advances shaping forestry today and in the years ahead." Dr Ramantswana is thankful to the Nelson Mandela University and all forestry stakeholders who have contributed in various ways to the compilation of this book.

To order your copy, follow the link or QR code: Understanding Silviculture Technology - Routledge



PLANTED IN TIME

BY GIOVANNI SALE, HEAD OF SUSTAINABILITY, SAPPI SOUTHERN AFRICA



he forests Giovanni Sale helped map as a young planner in the mid-1990s are mature now.

When he joined Sappi in 1995, straight out of university, his focus was on planning – tracking growth, recording harvests and ensuring that what was taken from the land never exceeded what it could grow back in a year. It was work defined by long horizons, where decisions made on paper would take decades to fully reveal their impact.

Nearly 30 years on, Giovanni is now Head of Sustainability for Sappi Southern Africa. His journey between those two points reflects the broader evolution of forestry itself – from manual systems and paper maps to data-led decision-making, advanced genetic research and a far more expansive understanding of what sustainability really means.

Early in his career, Giovanni was part of the team that introduced Geographic Information Systems (GIS) into Sappi's forestry operations. It marked a fundamental shift: transforming static maps into dynamic datasets capable of guiding long-term decisions about planting, harvesting and land use. His work soon expanded into research and development, exploring how different tree species perform across South Africa's varied

climates, how to manage pests and diseases, and how to grow trees resilient to a changing environment.

South African forestry, Giovanni explains, is closer to farming than to the management of natural forests seen in parts of Europe or North America. Plantations are established on former grassland or agricultural land, and every decision – from genetics to spacing to rotation length – carries long-term consequences.

"You're always working with time," he says. "And you don't get quick feedback."

After spending time in forest fire insurance, where he deepened his understanding of climate risk, recovery and rehabilitation, Giovanni returned to Sappi to lead national planning, research and nursery operations. At one point, he oversaw the production of more than 54 million seedlings a year, modernising nursery systems that would underpin the company's future forests. Alongside that technical work ran another, less visible outcome: the development of young foresters and scientists, many of whom have since grown into senior roles of their own.

Today, Giovanni's role brings those threads together – at the intersection of environmental stewardship, climate resilience and social impact. The forests remain central to that work, but they are now part of a much broader system that includes the people and places surrounding Sappi's operations.

"In South Africa, forestry doesn't exist in isolation," Giovanni says. "Our operations sit within rural landscapes, alongside communities who depend on the same land. Sustainability only works if those communities are thriving too."





Rather than treating sustainability as a collection of stand-alone initiatives, Sappi's approach is rooted in long-term partnerships that blend ecological outcomes with social progress – creating shared value for people and the environment.

Across the business, this approach takes many forms –

from supporting local enterprise development to enabling small-scale growers to enter forestry value chains, investing in skills and food security, and working to protect biodiversity while respecting cultural customs and knowledge (see infographic).

"You don't always see the impact immediately," he says. "But if you get the fundamentals right – the science, the relationships, the trust – things start to grow."

At Sappi, those fundamentals now shape work that reaches beyond the forest itself – into water, carbon, manufacturing and

communities. As climate pressures intensify and expectations continue to evolve, the focus is on building systems that can bend without breaking and adapt without losing their roots. Because in sustainability, as in forestry, the most meaningful progress is designed long before it's visible.



CONSERVING SOUTH AFRICA'S CRANES: WHERE EVERY COUNT MATTERS

BY DR LARA JORDAN FULLER, ENDANGERED WILDLIFE TRUST

The last three decades have seen significant advances in crane conservation across South Africa. Central to this has been the partnership between the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) and the International Crane Foundation (ICF), alongside provincial nature conservation authorities, corporate companies such as forestry, Eskom, private landowners and NPO's. It has been two decades since the last National Crane Census, conducted annually between 1998 and 2006 by citizen scientists

across the country, to estimate population sizes and monitor the distribution of the three crane species: Blue, Wattled and Grey Crowned Cranes. The data collected not only provided conservation agencies with the data needed to coordinate conservation efforts, but it also demonstrated the power of public participation in conservation.

Since the last National Crane Census, the EWT/ICF has been conducting localised aerial surveys to monitor known crane populations predominantly in KwaZulu-Natal. These have

yielded a mixed bag of results, with Blue Cranes being uplisted to vulnerable after significant population declines in the Western Cape; while Wattled Cranes have been downlisted to Endangered after increases in the KwaZulu-Natal population. All three populations appear to be declining in Mpumalanga with some suggesting the increases seen in KwaZulu-Natal is a result of cranes relocating rather than populations increasing. Along the same vein, Blue Cranes are becoming a regular sighting in the Karoo which could suggest the population decline witnessed in the Western





In partnership
with



HELP US COUNT CRANES

National Crane Census | **24–27 July 2026**



Send your crane count to:

+27 60 086 9053 (or scan the QR code) ✉ cranecensus@ewt.org



Species



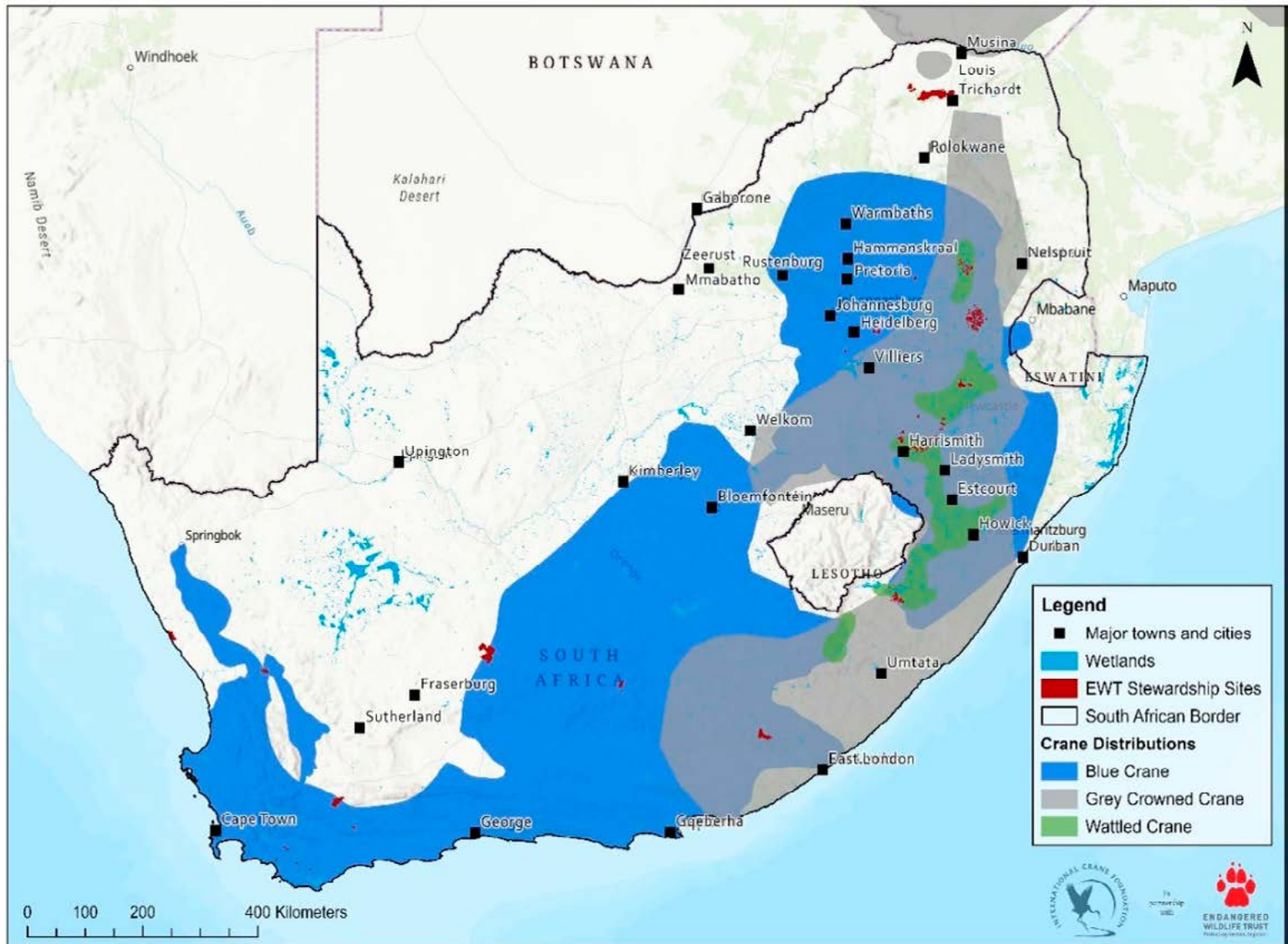
Location



Estimated number and any other information

Your information will help support crane conservation
and your details and location will remain private.

Every count matters.



Cape is the result of a relocation westward.

With the localised surveys uncovering more questions than answers, especially when it comes to the reclassification of South Africa's cranes, twenty years after the last National survey, the EWT/ICF is calling on citizen scientists once more. The EWT/ICF hope that through a National Census they will be able to verify whether the observed changes in crane populations witnessed in localised EWT/ICF surveys are representative of what is happening nationally.

This time the census will be conducted via WhatsApp, rather than paper census surveys, to make it easier than ever for people across the country to participate. Only by working together with all manner of landowners, will the EWT be able to collect the breadth of crane data they need to better understand population and dispersal trends and ensure meaningful conservation action.

The National Census will be conducted between the 24th and 27th of July 2026, with EWT asking everyone, particularly landowners, to conduct surveys

on their property. The information they are looking for is the species and number of birds sighted and the GPS location of the sighting, all of this can be submitted via the WhatsApp crane hotline – which will be circulated shortly.

There is currently so much we don't know about South Africa's cranes, but together we can change this.

The global survival of this species is 100% South Africa's responsibility. We need to better understand how they are adapting to habitat change and where conservation measures are needed



Table One: Overview of Crane Status in South Africa

	Wattled Crane	Grey Crowned Crane	Blue Crane
Status	South Africa - Endangered Downlisted in 2025 from Critically Endangered	In South Africa – Stable Globally - Endangered	Vulnerable Uplisted in 2025
Location	Primarily KwaZulu-Natal; Mpumalanga has a small population (4 pairs)	KwaZulu-Natal, there is stable growth; in other provinces, not enough is known.	Endemic to South Africa, primarily in the Western Cape. Possibly expanding into the Karoo.
Population	288 individuals	7,000 individuals	30,000 individuals (39% decline since 2010)
Conservation Action	Better understanding of their distribution to support future range expansion and ensure conservation success	Better understand the distribution outside KwaZulu-Natal, and whether expected declines are a reality. Determine where conservation efforts need to be directed to address this	The global survival of this species is 100% South Africa's responsibility. We need to understand better how they are adapting to habitat change and where conservation measures are needed



DISPOSAL OF EMPTY PESTICIDE CONTAINERS: A SHARED INDUSTRY RESPONSIBILITY

BY ROGER POOLE, TIPWG CHEMICAL LIAISON OFFICER

 In South Africa, pesticide stewardship does not end once the product has been applied. The responsible disposal of empty pesticide containers, used for both agriculture and forestry, forms a critical part of legal compliance, environmental protection, worker safety, and certification requirements.

Despite clear legislation, established recycling collection systems, and readily available guidance, reports of non-compliance relating to pesticide container disposal continue to emerge. This is

concerning because container management is one of the areas where compliance is both achievable and relatively straightforward when the correct systems are implemented.

This is why, as TIPWG (Timber Industry Pesticide Working Group) we would like to remind all pesticide users that proper disposal is not optional. It is a legal and environmental responsibility shared by every pesticide user, i.e., applicator, distributor, and manufacturer.

WHY PROPER DISPOSAL MATTERS

Empty pesticide containers that are improperly handled can create significant environmental and human health risks.

Residues left in containers may contaminate soil and water resources, expose workers and communities to hazardous chemical substances, and contribute to illegal re-use of containers for food, water, or household storage.

In addition to the environmental implications, poor container management can result in:

- Non-compliance with legislation

- Certification risks (including negative audit findings and non-compliance to FSC and PEFC/SAFAS requirements)
- Reputational damage
- Unsafe working conditions

South Africa's Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) regulations have further strengthened the importance of proper container management and recycling within the agricultural and forestry sectors. These regulations support structured recovery and recycling programmes for eligible pesticide containers.

IT IS THE USER'S RESPONSIBILITY, NOT THE DISTRIBUTOR'S

One of the most important misconceptions to address is the belief that pesticide distributors or suppliers are automatically responsible for collecting or disposing of empty pesticide containers. They are not. While some companies may have voluntary agreements or collection arrangements in place with suppliers or service providers, these are additional support mechanisms and not legal obligations placed on distributors. The responsibility for the correct management, storage, preparation, and disposal of empty pesticide containers remains with the



pesticide user or holder of the waste until it has been handed over to an approved collector or recycler. This means the forester, nursery manager, and/ or contractor responsible for pesticide usage must ensure that:

- Containers are correctly rinsed
- Containers are rendered unusable, i.e., punctured
- Containers are safely stored
- Containers are sent to approved recyclers or collection depots
- Appropriate records are maintained

TRIPLE RINSING IS NON-NEGOTIABLE

Before disposal or recycling, pesticide containers must be properly triple-rinsed immediately after emptying. Triple rinsing is essential because it:

- Removes residual pesticide from the container
- Reduces environmental contamination risks
- Allows the rinse water to be used as part of the spray mixture
- Ensures the container is deemed clean and safe for recycling

A correctly triple-rinsed container should contain negligible chemical residue. The general process includes:

- Empty the container completely into the spray tank.
- Fill the container approximately one-quarter full with clean water.
- Replace the lid and shake thoroughly.
- Pour the rinse water into the spray tank.
- Repeat this process three times.

Once triple rinsed, containers must be punctured or crushed to prevent re-use. Importantly, containers that have not been triple rinsed will not be accepted by certified recyclers.

STORAGE AND TIMELY RECYCLING

After triple rinsing and puncturing, containers should be:

- Stored in a secure designated area
- Protected from rain and environmental exposure
- Kept away from incompatible materials
- Prevented from becoming a secondary contamination source

Containers should not accumulate on site. Recycling or collection should occur within a reasonable and timely period as part of an active waste management programme. Industry members must work with approved collection and recycling companies, including certified recyclers registered through CropLife South Africa container management programmes.

Useful resources include:

- TIPWG Disposal Guidance
- CropLife SA Container Management
- CropLife SA Certified Recyclers

RECORD KEEPING IS ESSENTIAL

Container disposal records form an important part of both legal compliance and certification auditing requirements. Operations should maintain:

- Waste disposal registers
- Records of quantities disposed of
- Dates of collection or recycling
- Copies of recycler certificates, receipts, or collection confirmations
- Details of the approved recycler or collector used

These records help demonstrate due diligence and provide traceability during audits or inspections.

FERTILISER BAGS AND CONTAINERS: CURRENT POSITION

It is important to note that, at present, fertiliser bags and containers are not included under the current pesticide EPR regulations. However, this does not remove the responsibility to manage fertiliser-related waste responsibly in accordance with broader waste management and environmental obligations.

TIPWG urges industry members to closely monitor regulatory developments, as this area may evolve in the future.

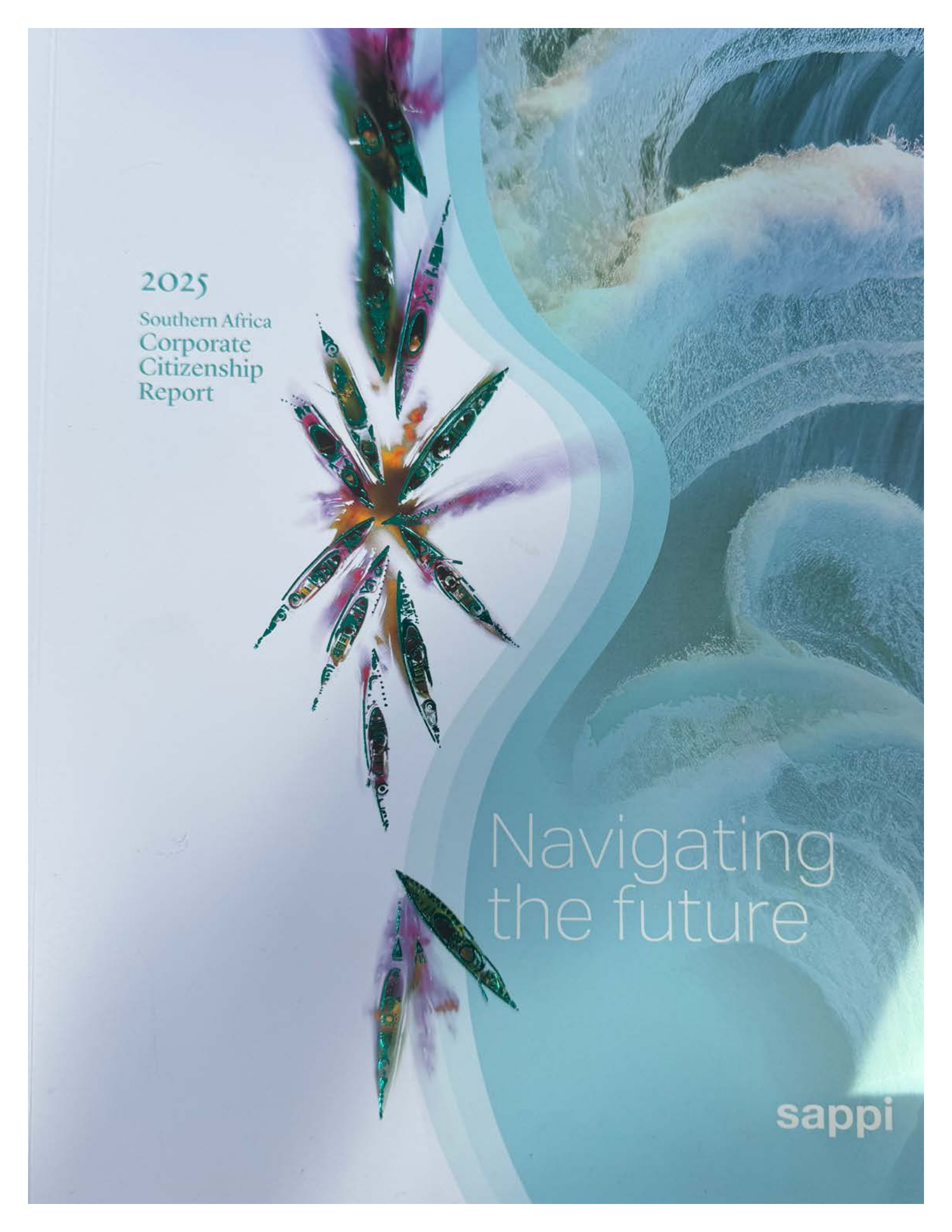
STEWARDSHIP IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

The forestry and agricultural sectors have made significant progress in improving pesticide stewardship, environmental monitoring, and certification alignment. Proper container management forms a simple but essential part of that broader stewardship responsibility. The systems, guidance documents, recyclers, and industry support structures already exist.

Compliance in this area is achievable. What is needed now is consistent implementation.

Additional guidance on developing and supporting container management programmes can also be found in the TIPWG Pesticide Monitoring and Management Guideline.

Ultimately, responsible container disposal is not simply about compliance; it reflects an industry's commitment to environmental protection, worker safety, responsible pesticide use, and sustainable forestry practices.



2025

Southern Africa
Corporate
Citizenship
Report

Navigating
the future

sappi

NAVIGATING THE FUTURE: SAPPI SOUTHERN AFRICA'S SUSTAINABILITY JOURNEY

Every sustainability journey begins with a non-negotiable truth: without sustainability, there is no future. For Sappi Southern Africa, this is not only about long-term business success—it is about ensuring that communities thrive and progress continues. The path is complex and unpredictable, as markets shift, technologies evolve, and communities face pressures that demand resilience, foresight, and the ability to adapt.

OUR JOURNEY AND THEME

Our sustainability journey has been defined by both challenge and

opportunity: balancing economic growth with environmental responsibility, while harnessing innovation, renewable resources, and partnerships. Like mariners of centuries past, who relied on courage and rudimentary maps, we too must be skilled navigators. Today, our instruments are far more advanced and we use data, science, technology, and innovation to guide our way, yet storms can still unsettle even the best-prepared voyage. This year's Corporate Citizenship Report, Navigating the Future, situates our journey within a continuum, and as we enter our

90th year, it highlights how we are backed by decades of progress, the milestones we have achieved along the way and looking forward to exciting new horizons ahead.

BUILDING ON GLOBAL STANDARDS

Our journey was formalised in 2008 when we adopted the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), a framework endorsed by the United Nations. This gave us an international benchmark for non-financial reporting and aligned us with world-class standards. In 2011, we began reporting separately on our South African operations, maintaining transparency at





Explore

Rooted in renewable woodfibre, our business advances climate action by creating sustainable solutions while safeguarding the ecosystems that sustain us. We explore ever more responsible ways forward, guiding progress towards futures resilient to change and rich in possibility.

the global level while allowing a deeper regional focus. Later, we renamed this the Corporate Citizenship Report, recognising that our role extends beyond business metrics to the impact we have on society. Our approach has always been anchored in the three Ps: Prosperity, People, and Planet, complemented by Principles of inclusivity, integrity, transparency, and accountability.

OUR SDG PRIORITIES

As a global company, we adopted seven core UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) where we felt we could make the greatest impact. In South Africa, however, we recognised the need to go further, adding two additional SDGs that speak directly to our local context. Together, these nine goals form the backbone of our sustainability strategy.

Because our operations depend on energy and water, SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) are central. We prioritise responsible water use, community access, and

energy efficiency, while steadily increasing our self-sufficiency and renewable energy footprint. SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) is equally fundamental, reflecting our commitment to safe, fair, and inclusive employment. As a company rooted in woodfibre, SDG 15 (Life on Land) is pivotal. Sustainable forestry, biodiversity protection, and ecosystem conservation are not optional: they are the foundation of our future.

Linked to this is SDG 13 (Climate Action), where our research into resilient trees, emission reduction, and climate adaptation ensures we are preparing for decades ahead. And because no company can tackle sustainability challenges alone, SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) underscores our collaborative approach with government, industry, academia, and communities. These partnerships extend beyond climate action to embrace inclusive solutions, working with stakeholders to restore inequities, strengthen rural landscapes where we operate as an anchor tenant,

and bring balance through shared purpose.

What makes SSA distinctive is our ability to champion SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). By using every part of the tree, harvested responsibly and replanted to ensure continuity, we minimise waste and innovate new uses for by-products. This circular approach allows us to replace fossil-based products with renewable alternatives, ensuring that sustainability is embedded in everything we make.

In South Africa, we also recognise the urgency of SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 4 (Quality Education) and added these as additional priority SDGs. Through our enterprise supplier development programme— of which Sappi Khulisa has endured for over four decades— we have supported more than 4,000 small growers and 1,000 adjacent suppliers, procuring over R4 billion since 1995. This initiative provides meaningful access to the forestry value chain and uplifts rural communities. On

education, we address inequities from early childhood development through to skills training, bursaries, and community programmes.

ALIGNING WITH NATIONAL PRIORITIES

Our focus on the SDGs aligns directly with South Africa's national agenda. In the 2026 State of the Nation Address, government reaffirmed the Just Transition as a cornerstone of policy—ensuring renewable energy is about fairness, jobs, and inclusion. At SSA, we embrace this mandate by expanding renewable energy use and generating our own energy through woodfibre, contributing to a transition that is both low-carbon and equitable. As Giovanni Sale, Head of Sustainability at SSA, notes: "Our journey is not only about business success. It is about contributing to a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable future for all."

DELIVERING IMPACT

Even as we celebrate progress, we acknowledge the costs of production and drive innovation to do better. We are reducing water use, becoming more energy self-sufficient, repurposing waste, and creating products that not only return safely to nature but also serve consumers in everyday life. Forestry is an industry of long cycles. Trees take years to mature, and our research must anticipate conditions decades ahead—whether drought, fire, floods, pests, or disease. It is, in many ways, like turning a large tanker at sea: progress is steady but requires foresight, patience, and resilience. At the same time, markets demand agility, with consumers seeking new products and solutions now. Balancing these realities against South Africa's socioeconomic backdrop, where volatility, inequality, and infrastructure gaps

persist, requires us to think beyond our own operations.

"Sustainability is not about certainty—it is about courage, foresight, and the collective will to navigate complexity. With our people, resilience, and focus on sustainable forestry, Sappi Southern Africa is delivering solutions that matter for customers, communities, and the planet," commented Giovanni.

This year's Corporate Citizenship Report highlights outstanding examples from our journey, including milestones achieved, challenges faced, and opportunities we are embracing as we step into our 90th year. We invite you to delve into the report, explore the detail behind our commitments, and see how Sappi Southern Africa is navigating the future with clarity, responsibility, and resolve.





MEMBER'S ARTICLE

PG BISON COMMISSIONS NEW MFB PRESS AT UGIE STRENGTHENING SUPPLY ACROSS AFRICA



n 19 June 2026, PG Bison achieved a significant milestone with the production of the first board from its

newly commissioned Melamine Faced Board (MFB) press at its Ugie manufacturing site in the Eastern Cape. This brings the company's total installed MFB capacity to eight presses.

The new Ugie press was commissioned twelve days ahead of schedule and forms part of PG Bison's broader objective to expand local manufacturing capacity, improve operational flexibility and strengthen supply assurance for customers across South Africa and the African continent.

Another MFB press is scheduled for commissioning in the first half of 2027 at PG Bison's Mkhondo manufacturing site, which, together with the new Ugie MFB press, will meaningfully increase PG Bison's upgrading capacity and support

its commitment to inspiring and enabling beautiful spaces.

Following the successful launch of PG Bison's Gallery 5 range in late 2025, demand for PG Bison's decorative product portfolio has continued to grow. The added upgrading capacity will support improved availability of key PG Bison products, including BisonLam, MelaWood, MelaWood SupaTexture and the new Monteo+ range, which is important ahead of the upcoming peak trading period. By increasing capacity at this time, PG Bison is strengthening local supply chains and supporting customers with trend-leading, high quality, locally manufactured decorative panel products.

The new Ugie MFB press also supports the objectives of the South African Furniture Industry Master Plan and the Forestry Master Plan by enabling greater localisation, improving the competitiveness of the local value chains and reducing reliance on imported products.

Gerhard Victor, CEO of PG Bison, said that this latest investment reflects the company's confidence in the growth it is experiencing across South Africa and other African markets.

"Our ongoing investments demonstrate our commitment to South Africa's economy, localisation and job creation," said Victor. "By commissioning this new MFB press at Ugie, we are strengthening our ability to meet growing demand with high-quality, locally manufactured products. This expansion also supports our broader African growth ambitions and aligns with the objectives of the African Continental Free Trade Area by encouraging regional trade and reducing dependency on non-African imports."

Our investments are about building for the future," added Victor. "The new Ugie MFB press ensures that PG Bison continues to support its customers, the industry and the wider African market with locally manufactured, high-quality decorative panel products."



TIPWG FEATURE

TIP-BITS

BY ROGER POOLE, TIPWG AGRO-CHEMICAL LIAISON

US FOREST SERVICE DOUBLES DOWN ON GLYPHOSATE

A 2026 executive order has directed the US government to boost domestic glyphosate production, framing the herbicide as a matter of national security even as Bayer faces tens of thousands of cancer-related lawsuits and a proposed \$7.25 billion settlement. A Mother Jones/

Centre for Investigation reporting probe also found that forestry is now glyphosate's fastest-growing use sector in the US, with applications quadrupling in California forests over 20 years.

With a Supreme Court ruling on pesticide-label liability pending, South African foresters using glyphosate for site preparation and weed control should watch this closely. Global litigation trends often precede tighter local registration scrutiny and shifts in international buyer expectations.

EU NEONICOTINOID RESIDUE RULES TIGHTEN FURTHER

From 7 March 2026, EU maximum residue levels for clothianidin and thiamethoxam took effect, reinforcing the bloc's near-total ban on these pollinator-harming insecticides, including on imported products. Read more here: Challenging compliance: New EU maximum residue levels for two pesticides that are harmful to bees take effect - Lexology

To avoid trade friction with the EU, South African exporters of timber need to confirm chemical inputs align with these tightened tolerable levels.

SHOULD THE EU STOP EXPORTS OF BANNED PESTICIDES?

Paraquat is once again in the headlines for still being manufactured and exported by some of the 70 countries that have banned it. This perceived double standard has been raised primarily by environmental and civil society groups across the globe, as well as in South Africa; their main concern – “Why is a banned product in the EU still being manufactured and exported by the EU and sold in South Africa. While paraquat is no longer used in forestry, it will be interesting to watch how this unfolds.

COMPLIANCE CAPACITY IS THE NEW CURRENCY

Whether it's Act 36 digitisation, PCO competency, or FSC's hazardous pesticide rules, the common thread is documentation and demonstrable stewardship and not just product choice. Our advice is that forestry companies, big and small, should be investing in PCO training and recordkeeping systems as the most defensible way to stay ahead of both regulatory and certification audits.

