

A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of several tall, slender trees with dense green foliage, reaching towards a bright sky. The perspective creates a sense of height and growth.

Celebrating skills development and transformation in the Forestry sector

FP&M SETA Newsletter June 2021



Sustainable Forest Management Plays A Role In Economic Development And Poverty Alleviation

Forests have a critical role to play in economic growth. Statistics by researchers reveal that over 1 billion people live in and around forests, depending on them for fuel, food, medicine and building materials. The forest sector is also an important source of both formal and informal jobs, particularly in remote areas where there are few economic alternatives.

As one of the thirteen sub-sectors, forests can help meet the growing demands for food, fibre, biofuel, shelter, and other bio-products as the experts predict the world population is expected to increase to 9 billion people by 2050.

Forests provide jobs for more than 13 million people across the world. In addition, 300 million people live in forests, including 60 million indigenous people.

A global analysis confirmed the view that in rural areas poor households depend on forests and other natural resources more heavily for their livelihoods, than wealthy households.

Indeed, all of us use wood in our daily lives: in fact, global demand for timber products is expected to more than triple over the next three decades. They help keep our climate stable, by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen, and they regulate our water supply and improve its quality. They also provide a home to more than half of all species found on land – a rich variety of life that keeps so many natural systems running.

The important role of forests – natural and planted, in supporting rural livelihoods has been discussed by analysts for many decades. Forests provide ecosystem services that are critical to human welfare. These include:

- Protecting watersheds and reducing or slowing the amount of erosion and chemicals that reach waterways
- Serving as a buffer in natural disasters like flood and rainfalls
- Providing habitat to more than half of the world’s land-based species

That is why the FP&M SETA is proud of all of the benefits that forests can provide. Some are easy to figure out – fruits, paper and wood from trees, and so on. Others are less obvious, such as by-products that go into everyday items like medicines, cosmetics and detergents

One of the most effective and accomplished Environmentalists of all time, the late Wangari Maathai, once declared “Until you dig a hole, you plant a tree, you water it and make it survive, you haven’t done a thing...”

This month’s newsletter explores and profiles how sustainable forest management plays a central role in our future, which in turn requires the training and development of forestry professionals.

Happy reading!
Felleng Yende
CEO, FP&M SETA



The FP&M SETA Is Proud Of Its Forestry Sector Skills Development Programmes

As a natural asset for economic growth based on both enterprise and employment opportunities, the forest resources of South Africa are responsible for the country being rated third among the countries in the world with the richest biological diversity.

Norman Dlamini, a Business Development Director at Forestry South Africa; Felleng Yende, CEO of the FP&M SETA; and The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF), the custodian of South Africa’s forest resources who also drives the Forestry Sector Masterplan, have all spoken highly of how the forest sector in South Africa provides many benefits and is well positioned to contribute further to economic growth.

“We are working hard to highlight the importance of timber plantations as a resource, especially in relation to poverty alleviation and stimulation of the economy. We are excited about partnerships between the private and the public sector that have prioritised investments and more effective implementation of plans to support growth and job creation in the sector,” said Dlamini.

Ms Yende says many needs of urban and rural communities can be addressed through forestry and that is why the FP&M SETA fully participates in skills development in the sector.

Forestry South Africa, DAFF and the Forestry Sector Masterplan, list the following benefits of natural forests and woodlands and the sector’s contribution to the national economy, energy supplies and international trade:

- Forestry products contribute at least 4.5% to total manufacturing – making it among the top five sectors within manufacturing;
- Forest products contribute about R34.5 billion to the economy, or about 0, 6% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The commercial plantations produce more than 22 million cubic meters of round-wood worth an estimated R 5.1 billion annually;
- The sector is net exporter of goods worth more than R12-billion per annum whereas imports total R 10-billion;
- The sector contributes almost 25% to Agricultural Gross Domestic Product;
- 27 million people rely on medicinal plants for health care; 65% of the plants used for this purpose are forest or woodland species;
- Between 9 and 12 million people use fuelwood, wild fruits and wooden utensils obtained from forests and woodlands;
- Access to woodland resources contributes between 20% and 25% of total livelihood accruals;
- It is estimated that about 200 000 to 260 000 people are employed in the forest and wood processing industries. About 80 000 to 100 000 are forestry workers, of whom nearly 80% are in the Mpumalanga and KwaZuluNatal Provinces;
- More than 120 000 people are employed in industries which use wood as a primary input. About 40% of these are employed in sawmilling, 30% in pulp and paper manufacturing, and the balance in secondary processing;

“Until you dig a hole, you plant a tree, you water it and make it survive, you haven’t done a thing...”

Wangari Maathai

- Approximately 800,000 people operate in the craft industry, which is heavily reliant on woodland resources;
- Up to 100 000 households in South Africa engage in small-scale trade in forest products from woodlands.

- Honey production;
- Harvesting of insects, mushrooms and other edible plants;
- Grass for thatching and weaving, and for grazing cattle and
- Local craft industries.

People in rural areas use natural forests and especially woodlands for many purposes. These include:

- Timber for housing, kraals and fencing;
- Fruit as an important dietary supplement, and sap for brewing of beer and wine;
- Bark for making ropes and weaving;
- Medicinal products from bark, bulbs, leaves and roots;

“Through its many programmes, the forestry sector makes a huge contribution in the eradication of poverty. The FP&M SETA, through the forestry-sector skills development initiatives, is proud to promote employment opportunities and poverty alleviation initiatives in the sector,” said Ms Yende.



Image: SAFCA's Forestry Supervisor Development Programme Graduates

FP&M SETA Helps Grow Forestry Industry

Forestry in South Africa is an expansive industry. With 1.2 million hectares of plantation area across the country, our forestry landscape is comprised of commercial timber plantations – or tree farms – interwoven with natural spaces of unplanted land to enhance and conserve biodiversity, grasslands, wetlands and indigenous forests.

Forestry is more than the science of planting, managing and caring for timber plantations. This labour intensive industry is also about being environmentally, socially and economically responsible, which requires skilled, productive and efficient workers and supervisors and the right skills and capacity development programmes to train them.

With the view to increase quality training, upgrade skills and competencies, increase productivity and reduce risks and accidents, the South African Forestry Contractors Association (SAFCA) created the Forestry Supervisory Development Programme.

Funded by the FP&M SETA, the Forestry Supervisor

Development Programme – which focuses of both soft and technical skills and empowers Forestry Supervisors by increasing their skills, has resulted in an increase in quality management and supervision which has lead to improved productivity and health and safety in the workplace.

The two-year programme which has benefitted contractor employees, black learners, women and rural workers, covers a broad range of modules including: Business Concepts, Supervision and Communication, People Management, Training and Development, Silviculture, Herbicide Applicator, Harvesting – Short Haul and Extraction, Environmental Management and Nursery management, amongst others.

In 2020, SAFCA's contractor capacity development programmes successfully trained and empowered a total of 9564 contractors in Health and Safety, Silviculture Technical Training, Harvesting Technical Training, Machine Operators, Driver Training, Fire Protection, Supervision and Higher Education.



The Forest Sector Charter Council Indebted To FP&M SETA Support

The Forest Sector Charter Council (FSCC) has always maintained a professional and collaborative working relationship with the Fibre, Processing and Manufacturing (FP&M) SETA, particularly under the leadership of Ms Felling Yende. Ms Yende and her team has contributed expressively to the work of the Council in so many great ways.

The strategic guidance on skills development matters in Council meetings has helped us advance in achieving the common goal of meaningful transformation in the Forest sector. The FSCC is indebted to the support (both financial and non-financial) received from the FP&M Seta in particular on;

- The grant funding for the learnerships and internships that have benefited communities mainly in Mpumalanga and KwaZulu Natal.
- The partnership with the Council for the Youth Outreach Programme where the FP&M Seta provided unimaginable insight into the skills development profile within the Forestry Sector with particular emphasis on scarce and critical skills and 'hard-to-fill' vacancies.

- The interaction and advice on the plans to support the development of a module on soft, non-technical and managerial skills.

- The profiling of the Council's Executive Director, Ms Khosi Mavimbela in the FP&M Seta Women's Month initiative, not only celebrating the achievement of women in South Africa but showcasing and putting them in the limelight.

- The virtual chain saw presentation shared by the CEO herself on the first of a kind Webinar in August 2020 celebrating and acknowledging the contribution of women in the Forest sector. The additional Financial contribution to this event of R10 000.00 will go a long way in helping disadvantaged schools in forestry-based provinces.

The Council will forever be thankful to Ms Yende and the entire FP&M team. Ms Yende is highly acknowledged for leading FP&M Seta with her heart.

Makhosazane Mavimbela

Executive Director, Forest Sector Charter Council

Forestry Education Steps Into The Future With Virtual Reality Chainsaw Training



Trainee chainsaw operators are now able to use a virtual reality (VR) application to test their theoretical knowledge and hone their skill in a simulated timber plantation.

Developed by Forestry South Africa (FSA), the Fibre Processing and Manufacturing Sector Education and Training Authority (FP&M Seta) and industry partners, this solution trains chainsaw operators in a safe, simulated environment before they test their skills in this high-risk activity in timber plantations.

This innovative solution bridges the gap between the training room and the plantation and addresses the need for better quality and safer training in the industry while standardising the level of training and assessment of trainees across the country. Chainsaw operators are very important in the forestry industry and are a scarce and critical skill in South Africa.

Suitably trained chainsaw operators need to be well equipped for this hands-on role. The VR tool provides the opportunity for trainees to learn the correct chainsaw operating techniques and procedures thereby making training for chainsaw operation safer and more accessible. The app covers felling, cutting, de-branching, chainsaw maintenance and safety.

It is a cost-effective coaching medium with minimal risk, whereby trainee operators can gain a feel for their equipment thereby decreasing risk and improving efficiency and productivity of chainsaw operators.

“Besides the obvious benefits that our industry stands to gain from this project, VR is the future of skills development and training. It transports learners into the environment for which they are being trained, promotes interactivity and improves the retention of information through experience,” says Forestry South Africa’s business development director Norman Dlamini.

The VR chainsaw training solution is remarkably simple to operate – all that is needed is a dedicated computer, a VR headset, a specially adapted chainsaw with sensors and a customised mobile gazebo.

Future models of the chainsaw learning tool could include a wireless module to eliminate cables that interfere with the movement of the learner operator as well as VR gloves to improve haptic feedback from the chainsaw during operation, which will add realism to the experience, enabling trainees to sense vibrations and resistance as the chainsaw engages with the virtual tree or timber.

Images top to bottom: A learner tests out the Virtual Reality learning tool; Learners can select training modes within the application; A live view from inside the application.



The Future Of Forestry Is Female

Forestry is no longer a man’s world. Gender equality in the forest sector is taking centre stage as women are increasingly making their mark across the male-dominated industry in roles in silviculture, harvesting, environmental management, fire protection and policy-making, research amongst others.

Thanks to SHE IS FORESTRY SA – a non-profit association of South African women in the forestry sector, which has since been registered in 2021, women are increasingly being celebrated for their contribution to the sector and most importantly, they are being empowered to fulfil their collective potential in the Forestry industry.

The SHE IS FORESTRY initiative was sparked by the Women In Forestry campaign run by Forestry South Africa. It came into fruition following the first ever Women in Forestry webinar in South Africa in August 2020 which was organised by a group of individuals from the Forestry sector.

The webinar, which was hosted by NCT and opened by the Deputy Minister of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Ms Makhotso Soty and attended by over 255 participants, ignited the vision for the SHE IS Forestry Initiative and began to pave the way for gender equality and women empowerment in the forest sector.

The webinar was a massive success thanks to the support and sponsorship which was received from the entire industry and government departments in particular, Forestry South Africa, the Paper Manufacturers Association of South Africa, the FP&M SETA, Sawmilling South Africa, the South African Wood Preservers Association, the South African Utility Pole Association and the South African Pulp and Paper Industries.

Endorsed by the public and private sector, including the Department of Environment Forestry and Fisheries and the FP&M SETA, “SHE IS FORESTRY SA” will be spearheading programmes to shake off the male-only stereotype and empower women in the forest sector and entice the younger generation, particularly young women to pursue a career in forestry. This will be achieved through numerous awareness, education, upliftment and empowerment initiatives under the themes of: education and training; entrepreneurship; Celebrating, uplifting and empowering women; and Forestry Awards.

For more information on how to partner or join this group of dynamic women, please contact Ms Makhosazana Mavimbela, the Executive Director of Forest Sector Charter Council:

makhosazana@forestsectorcharter.co.za

In conversation with Michael Peter, Executive Director of Forestry South Africa



Question (Q): What excites you the most about the forestry sector?

Answer (A): The forestry and forest products Industries are the unsung support mechanisms for human existence. Forest products provide the roofs over our heads, they provide functional beauty in the form of cupboards, shelving, tables and chairs. We all use tissue, toothpaste, spectacles, low fat foods, medicines, toothbrushes, cleaning and hygiene products, cardboard packaging, books, paper etc on a daily basis. Unlike other agricultural food products, however, none of us consume forest products consciously as they don't provide pleasure when consuming them like food, or other goods do. We only miss them when they are in short supply. This was seen most vividly at the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, when parts of the world went crazy trying to stock up on toilet paper. Unless it's in short supply, no one ever thinks about toilet paper, tissues, toothpaste, the trusses in your house or most other forest products but try living one day without these products and you will quickly see how important our sector is for human existence and wellbeing.

Q: What drew you to forestry? How did you get into the industry?

A: Like many people in the Industry, I was drawn to the

outdoor nature of a career in forestry. I have always loved the outdoors and in fact my first interest, and a large part of my career, was in indigenous forests. I was pleased to learn over time, that the commercial forestry Industry and indigenous forest management are often closely intertwined, with large areas of indigenous forests, being well-managed and protected within commercial forestry areas. I have yet to meet a forester who does not appreciate the natural environment and most are extremely knowledgeable and passionate about conservation.

Q: Tell us about your relationship with the FP&M SETA.

A: We have been most fortunate as an Industry to have had a long and productive relationship with the FP&M SETA. The key to the success of any enterprise, is ensuring that the people involved are passionate about their work and this has been abundantly evident in the work of the SETA over many years. We have also been privileged to play an active role in the affairs of the SETA where FSA has been an integral part of its growth and development.

Every year we partner with the SETA to deliver high-value technical training to our Small-scale timber growers in FSA. We have trained literally thousands of growers in a range of critical skills like Firefighting, Advance

Chainsaw operation and Silviculture and Business Practice.

Over the last few years we have also partnered with the SETA in the development of a portable timber winch, which has proven most successful for supporting smaller timber growers and is gaining interest from contract harvesters too.

We also partnered with the SETA on the development of a virtual reality chainsaw training system, which is a world first and is gaining massive traction across the Industry.

Q: What have been the projects you have been most proud of during your time as CEO of FSA?

A: It's easy to become excited about the highly visible and useful projects like the timber winch and VR chainsaw training system but like our forest products, I am most pleased about the less recognised projects like the training provided to thousands of our small-scale timber growers over many years. This has had the greatest impact, on the largest number of people over the widest area of our Industry, in terms of their business abilities, profitability and their agency.

Q: What is Forestry SA's involvement in community-based forestry?

A: FSA has a long involvement with community-based forestry in South Africa, as this was initiated by the Industry itself, when large companies started joint venture outgrower schemes with communities, in traditionally managed areas of the country. Since that time FSA established a business development unit (our largest unit in FSA) which has grown in its activities and impact over the past fifteen years. Over the last decade we have been actively supporting all small-scale timber growers, including those who have entered the Sector, through land reform programmes like restitution and redistribution, to grow and sustainably manage their operations. We have also actively supported growers with sometime precarious tenure, to secure their rights to their timber, establish formal legal entities and to establish co-operatives.

Q: Forestry has changed a lot. How have you seen the industry change over the last decade?

A: The Sector has transformed itself significantly over the last decade in several ways. Firstly from the perspective of empowerment of people across all areas like ownership, management, enterprise development etc, there have been marked changes in the Sector. This can be seen in the empowerment credentials of most companies in the Sector and in the Sector's overall empowerment score changes over the past decade.

Beyond this, there has also been a tangible mindset shift from a Sector that historically has felt like it had to

defend itself against attacks from environmentalists and politicians, to one which openly admits where it needs to develop but also proudly promotes our successes in human development, environmental management, technological advancement and transformation.

Q: What are your long-term term goals for the sector and industry?

A: The Sector is planning to invest over R36bn in new capacity over the next five years, a significant part of which has already been invested. We plan to increase the supply of timber in the country to support these investments by partnering with government, communities and Labour, to recapitalise degrade State plantations and accelerate new afforestation in the country.

We also plan to have a vibrant engineered wood products sector in South Africa, like the rest of the world has, which will increase the use and demand for timber in high-quality timber-based construction.

We plan for the sector to be a much greater actor in the renewable energy and renewable chemicals and plastics sectors, as this will support the country in terms of energy security and economic growth but will also support the country's commitment to reducing emissions from fossil fuels.

Q: What would you describe as challenges for the industry?

A: The biggest challenge we face as a Sector, is increasing the supply of timber into the processing sub-sectors. This challenge is exacerbated by the poorly-managed regulatory environment in South Africa, although since forestry's inclusion in the Presidentially-led Public Private Growth Initiative, there has been progress in some areas of the water-use licencing process.

Q: What is the sector's contribution to economic development in the country?'

A: In 2019 the sector contributed over R60bn (1.9%) to South Africa's GDP and we plan to increase this to 2.5% over the next five years. We are routinely in the top five sectors for export earnings from manufacturing, which means that the current account and Rand benefit from the Sector's output.

Q: What is exciting about the future of the industry?

A: There are breakthroughs being made every day on the uses of timber and timber-based products in every facet of our lives. The planned investments into forestry and forest products production in South Africa and the drive towards producing engineered wood products are two of the most exciting developments in the Sector in more than a decade.



The Forestry Industry Making Consistent Efforts To Improve Their B-BBEE Status

B-BBEE is a South African Policy whose intention is to address the economic, social and racial inequities and imbalances. The forestry industry which is legally bound by the Amended Forest Sector Code, has continued to make remarkable efforts in transforming the socio-economic landscape of the sector.

The year 2019/2020 marks the third year since the Amended Forest Sector Codes (FSC) were introduced. In the year under review, a total of 68 valid certificates were received, which showed a decline from 70 certificates received in 2018/2019 but an improvement from the 53 valid certificates received in 2017/2018.

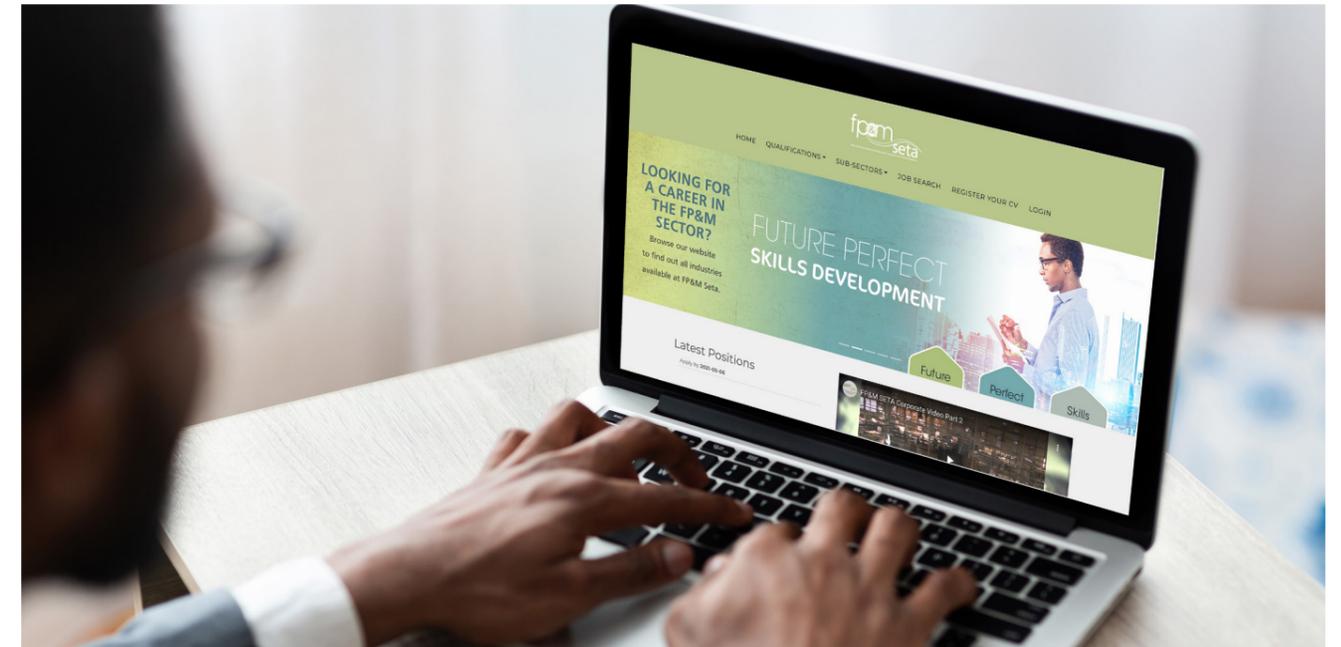
The Medium and Large Enterprises (MLEs) categorised as the ones with the highest turnover above R50 million, submitted 21 certificates, with 14 attaching the B-BBEE reports for the in-depth analysis. Qualifying Small Enterprises (QSEs) submitted 26 B-BBEE certificates with 21 affidavits (referred to as Enhanced, due to the black ownership profile of 51% and more) and five certificates (Unenhanced and mostly minority black controlled), of which three were accompanied by underlying reports. Only 21 affidavits were received from Exempted Micro

Enterprises (EMEs).

MLEs improved their rating from a level 6 previously to a level 4 and showed significant improvements in all five scorecard elements. QSEs recorded an average B-BBEE rating of Level 2. The QSE Level 2 rating is largely a result of few submissions from Unenhanced and mostly submissions of Enhanced entities that achieved mostly a Level 2 rating. Respectively EMEs received a Level 3 rating due to a high number of Level 4 certificates. The average black ownership profile across all sizes of EMEs is above 30% (the industry target) and 10% for black women ownership.

The Forestry Industry is credited for its unwavering efforts to improve their B-BBEE performance in particular in the Enterprise and Supplier Development, Ownership and Socio- Economic Development elements. Evidently so, most of large and medium-sized companies achieved over 80% of the target for the Enterprise and Supplier Development element. This effort is laudable and it is hoped it will encourage all obligated reporting entities to continue to prioritise B-BBEE implementation and reporting.

FP&M Seta Career Portal Provides Unparalleled Access To Information On Professional Development



The powerful, interactive portal, is a new world of opportunities and a bridge between employers and learners in the FP&M SETA industries.

“The career portal provides unparalleled access to information to support continuing professional development and act as a one-stop shop for enhancing employees and graduates with knowledge, skills and abilities. There is no doubt that the portal will ensure local talent is groomed for future leadership roles,” said Ms Felleng Yende, CEO of the FP&M SETA.

“The portal is a learning management tool which provides employees and graduates with up to date

information on skills development, but also allow everyone to actively engage with the FP&M SETA.

Using this platform, stakeholders and employers can post their vacancies and training opportunities and find suitably skilled candidates with the click of a button.

For learners, the career portal is an empowering career development tool which they can use to not only explore the different career paths across the FP&M sub-sectors, but also upload their curriculum vitae and apply for opportunities including work-integrated learning, internships, apprenticeships, learnerships and bursaries.

Register on the career portal today.

COVID-19 Update



Getting The COVID-19 Vaccine

Vaccines train our immune system to recognise the targeted virus and create antibodies to fight off the disease without getting the disease itself. After vaccination, the body is ready to fight the virus if it is later exposed to it, thereby preventing illness.

Available clinical trials have shown COVID-19 vaccines to be safe and highly effective at preventing severe disease. Given how new COVID-19 is, researchers are still looking into how long a vaccinated person is likely to be protected from infection, and whether vaccinated people can still transmit the virus to others.

As the vaccine rollout expands, WHO will continue to monitor the data

alongside regulatory authorities.

Safe and effective vaccines are making a significant contribution to preventing severe disease and death from COVID-19. As vaccines are rolling out and immunity is building, it is important to continue to follow all of the recommended measures that reduce the spread of SARS-CoV-2. This includes physically distancing yourself from others; wearing a mask, especially in crowded and poorly ventilated settings; cleaning your hands frequently; covering any cough or sneeze in your bent elbow; and opening windows when indoors.

Source: Article courtesy of World Health Organisation. www.who.int

