

WoodBiz/Africa SA Forestry

MARCH 2026
ISSUE 57

Engineered & Structural Timber
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Ryan Neumann +27 72 708 9091

John du Toit +27 82 373 3768

Craig van Dijk +27 82 928 7641

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WoodBizAfrica SA Forestry

EDITOR

Joy Crane

T: (+27) 082 330 0777

E: joy@woodbizafrica.co.za

CORRESPONDENTS

Chris Chapman

T: (+27) 082 8993086

E: chris@safeforestryonline.co.za

Justin Nyakudanga

E: nyakudanga.justin@gmail.com

ADVERTISING & ACCOUNTS

Mickey Petersen

T: (+27) 082 3210371

E: mickey@woodbizafrica.co.za

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Craig Patterson

E: craigpmd@gmail.com

SOCIAL MEDIA & WEBSITES

Jay Cupido

E: joy@koebanimedia.co.za

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A SHOW, A DEBATE, AND A METAL THAT'S MAKING HEADLINES

This issue is largely dedicated to previewing the technology on display at Focus on Forestry 2026. To our readers in the wood processing and engineered timber sectors, we apologise for the skew. But we'd encourage you to look at it differently: this is your chance to understand the origins and real costs of the raw material that keeps your operation running.

If you're attending the show, you'll find this copy in your goody bag. Read the machine write-ups, listen to the presenters and sponsors, then go and probe the exhibitors. That's what Focus is for.

Beyond the harvest, this issue touches on the glyphosate debate. Jacqui Meyer of Forestry South Africa's TIPWG puts it plainly: the question is not *where we can use glyphosate*. But *where do we need to?* Jacqui says there is no new or blanket approval of glyphosate for firebreak preparation. Where effective firebreak preparation systems are already in place, there is no technical or compliance-based reason to switch to glyphosate.

We also bring good news from the Furniture Industry Masterplan, and an introduction to Fort Cox and its Department of Forestry and Agriculture.

Inathi Kwezi, an advanced forestry diploma student at the institute, sent us her fascinating research into mycorrhizal fungi.

THE BLADE ON YOUR SAW IS CAUGHT IN A TRADE WAR

Here's something that should concern every sawmiller and woodworker on the continent. Robert Welsh, a Durban-based saw blade specialist, recently pointed out that tungsten carbide, the material used to tip and retip circular saw blades, has risen from around US\$300 per MTU (10kg) at the start of 2025 to US\$2,525/MTU by March 2026. Seven to eight times more expensive in just over a year. Converted to rands, that's approaching R5,000 per kilogram. In China, the product is reportedly already at US\$400/kg.

The cause? China controls over 80% of the global tungsten supply and tightened export controls in early 2025. Add surging defence demand (tungsten is in armour-piercing ammunition), and you have a perfect storm hitting your workshop floor.

There's much more to unpack here. Watch for our saw doctoring feature in the next issue.



Joy Crane

Editor

joy@woodbizafrica.co.za

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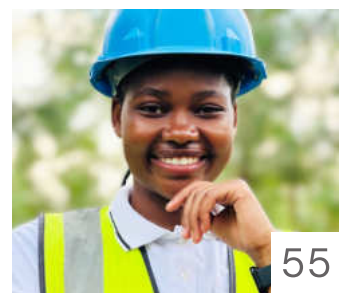
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Where do we need glyphosate?

The Timber Industry Pesticide Working Group (TIPWG) has issued a guidance note clarifying the use of glyphosate for firebreak preparation.

Jacqui Meyer, TIPWG's Coordinator, says there has not been a new or blanket approval of glyphosate for firebreak preparation. Instead, glyphosate should be regarded as a risk-informed, constrained option to be used only where justified.

"It is important to emphasise that glyphosate is not the only registered herbicide but has emerged as the most appropriate option under current conditions, based on comparative risk, not preference", she says.

The current position reflects: existing registrations under Act 36 of 1947, where certain glyphosate products include vegetation management uses that may extend to firebreak preparation, where explicitly stated on the label, and a risk-based evaluation of available registered herbicides, which has identified glyphosate as the least harmful option within the current set of legally registered products for this specific use case.

TIPWG's guidance note provides key considerations for the forestry industry.

1 COMPLIANCE REMAINS NON-NEGOTIABLE

Use outside of label instructions remains illegal under Act 36.

Glyphosate may only be used:

- where the specific product label permits the use, and
- strictly in accordance with label instructions (rates, application method, buffers, etc.).

2 GLYPHOSATE IS NOT A DEFAULT SOLUTION

The identification of glyphosate as the least harmful option does not mean that chemical control should replace current manual or mechanical firebreak preparation methods.

Where effective firebreak preparation systems are already in place, there is no technical or compliance-based reason to switch to glyphosate use. The current stance should be seen as enabling a compliant option where no viable alternative exists, not advocating a shift towards chemical control".

3 FIREBREAKS REPRESENT A HIGH-EXPOSURE ENVIRONMENT

Firebreaks are usually:

- located on slopes or areas prone to runoff,
- in proximity to watercourses, and
- accessible to workers and, in some cases, the public.

As a result, product selection must consider exposure risk, not only hazard classification.

4 GLYPHOSATE IS NOT A DIRECT REPLACEMENT FOR PARAQUAT OR GLUFOSINATE-AMMONIUM

It is important to recognise that glyphosate differs fundamentally from both paraquat and glufosinate-ammonium in terms of behaviour and risk profile. Glyphosate should not be treated as a like-for-like substitute for either paraquat or glufosinate-ammonium. Its use should be carefully considered in relation to site conditions and firebreak objectives because:

- Glyphosate is systemic, resulting in complete plant kill, whereas paraquat and glufosinate-ammonium act primarily as contact herbicides (with glufosinate having limited translocation).
- The systemic action of glyphosate may lead to increased bare soil exposure, particularly in firebreak strips.

- In certain conditions, this can contribute to erosion and runoff risk, especially on slopes or in areas with higher rainfall.

5 USE MUST BE TARGETED AND JUSTIFIED

Avoid using the chemical routinely without a clear justification. Where glyphosate is used, it should be:

- site-specific,
- risk-assessed, and
- applied in a targeted manner, for example, for tracer lines rather than blanket application, where appropriate.

6 INTEGRATED FIREBREAK MANAGEMENT REMAINS BEST PRACTICE

Firebreak preparation should continue to follow an integrated management approach, with manual and mechanical methods as the primary tools and chemical use supplementary, applied only where necessary.

7 STATUS OF ALTERNATIVE PRODUCTS

Contact, non-residual herbicides like pelargonic acid-based products are a more suitable option for firebreak preparation; however:

- they are not yet registered for this use in South Africa, and
- cannot currently be relied upon operationally.

Similarly, the status of other products, such as glufosinate-ammonium, remains uncertain and subject to regulatory approval.

THE KEY QUESTION

Meyer says, the key question is "Where do we need glyphosate?" It is not "Where can we use glyphosate?"

TIPWG is part of Forestry South Africa (FSA) and promotes

responsible and effective use of pesticides in South African commercial timber plantations. It supports the industry by clarifying legal and certification requirements and promoting risk-based, context-appropriate decision-making. 🌿

Source: Jacqui Meyer and
<https://www.tipwg.co.za/>

TIPWG links industry, researchers, regulators, and certification bodies to prioritise research and anticipate changes. This aids forestry in contributing to regulation updates. Reputational risk is a major concern; losing trust can result in market exclusion and financial setbacks, making science-based decisions essential. TIPWG transforms complex research into practical solutions through articles, summaries, webinars, guidance, SOPs, checklists, podcasts, and training resources.

FORESTRY

STIHL marks 100 years globally and 30 years in South Africa with renewed local investment

When STIHL marks one hundred years in business, it does so from a position few in the forestry equipment sector can match: a century shaped by engineering innovation and long-term relationships with professional users.

Founded in 1926 by Andreas Stihl in Germany, the company's roots are deeply embedded in forestry. The invention of portable chainsaws transformed timber harvesting, and over the years, STIHL has grown into a comprehensive range of outdoor power tools. Today, the brand has a presence in over 160 countries, supported by a robust, independent dealer network that remains a core part of its business.

SOUTH AFRICAN FOOTPRINT

That dealer-driven approach has defined STIHL's journey in South Africa since its establishment in November 1996, marking its first sales and marketing subsidiary on the African continent. Opened by Hans Peter Stihl, the operation has grown into a key supplier to the country's forestry, agricultural and landscaping sectors.

Over three decades, STIHL South Africa, first under the leadership of Dave Hutton and now with his son,



Hayden Hutton and Dr. Nikolas Stihl at the official opening of the new STIHL SA premises.



STIHL SA's staff celebrating the 30th year of the company.

Hayden Hutton as Managing Director, has built a reputation for product quality and consistent support for its dealer network and end users. This approach has underpinned its steady growth in a competitive market.

RENEWED MOMENTUM

The importance of the South African market was underscored by a recent visit from Nikolas Stihl, who officially opened the company's new premises and engaged with local dealers and staff.

His visit links the group's global centenary celebrations with a new phase of investment and confidence in the South African operation, reinforcing the country's role within the broader STIHL network.

RESILIENCE AFTER DISRUPTION

The new facility replaces premises lost during the unrest of 2022—an event that affected many businesses across the country. STIHL South Africa resumed operations within weeks, demonstrating the strength of its internal systems and the commitment of its team.

Four years later, the business is once again on track for record sales.

"Our focus remains on providing premium products, reliable service, and sustainable growth for the South African market," says Hayden, highlighting the role of strong dealer partnerships and customer loyalty in that recovery.

MS 500i CENTENNIAL EDITION

The centenary is also being marked through product innovation, a theme that has defined STIHL since its earliest days. The introduction of the MS 500i Centennial Edition reflects the company's engineering heritage and its continued technological progress.

As the first chainsaw with electronically controlled fuel injection, the model delivers high performance and efficiency, key attributes for professional forestry applications.

SUSTAINABILITY

For Nikolas, the milestone is about more than technology. His message





The opening of the new STIHL premises in SA coincides with the centenary of STIHL in Germany.

during the visit emphasised forestry's long-term perspective and the importance of sustainability.

"Coming from forestry, we have always understood that true success is measured over generations, not financial quarters", he noted. "Those who work in and with nature understand that many of their efforts will not serve their own gain but are made for the benefit of the next generation".



Dave Hutton.



Dr Nikolas Stihl addressing the STIHL SA staff.

LONGTERM VIEW

As STIHL approaches its second century, its South African operation reflects a proven formula: continuous investment, strong local partnerships, and the ability to adapt to challenging conditions. "South Africa is an important part of the STIHL family", Nikolas remarked.

Hayden agreed, saying, "We thank our loyal customers who have been part of our expansion throughout southern Africa over the past 30 years. We look forward to the future with confidence". 🌱



**STIHL****100**
YEARS

STIHL MS 363 CHAINSAW: A CUT ABOVE THE REST

The STIHL MS 363 is a new lightweight petrol chainsaw suitable for professional forestry work, with an impressive power-to-weight ratio that is the best in its class. It delivers high performance while keeping fuel consumption low and features our renowned STIHL Elasto Start, which makes starting the chainsaw easier, as well as a single-lever control that allows you to manage all functions with just one hand!

Additional features include a decompression valve, an anti-vibration system for reduced fatigue during extended use, and side-mounted chain tensioning for safe and simple adjustments. The tool-free tank caps ensure quick and easy opening and closing, while the optimised grip ergonomics improve comfort and control during use.



SERVICE KIT 14

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Discover our range of specialised tools engineered to tackle demanding forestry tasks under the toughest conditions and see how STIHL solutions can help you navigate the operational and environmental realities of modern forestry.

21-23 APRIL | KARKLOOF COUNTRY CLUB NEAR HOWICK, KWAZULU-NATAL

STIHL FOR LIFE.
GERMAN ENGINEERING SINCE 1926.



The Log Max E6 head is becoming a preferred solution in Eucalyptus plantations.

Afrequip drives forestry performance through partnership and precision

In the demanding, ever-evolving landscape of Southern Africa's forestry sector, operational efficiency, reliability, and strong technical support are essential. AfrEquip, a specialist supplier and support partner, has spent over two decades refining its role within the industry.



A productive partnership of a TCi Harvester fitted with a LogMax head and the TCi Forwarder.

Established in 2005, AfrEquip has built a reputation as a key player in mechanised forestry, supporting harvesting, extraction, and processing operations across South Africa. It is aligned with globally recognised equipment manufacturers while keeping a distinctly local, customer-focused approach.

SPECIALIST PARTNERSHIPS

At the core of AfrEquip's success lies the deliberate strategy of partnering exclusively with suppliers rooted within the forestry industry. This ensures that every piece of equipment in its portfolio is purpose-built, field-tested, and optimised for real-world forestry conditions.

From the first contact with a standing tree to final biomass processing, AfrEquip's equipment offering spans the entire value chain. Their harvesting solutions are led by industry-renowned Log Max heads, particularly the E6 model, which has become a preferred solution in eucalyptus plantations across Southern Africa.

Complementing this are a range of pine-specific heads, including the high-capacity 10 000XT for large

timber, the popular 7000C and 7000XT heads, and compact units suited for thinning operations.

In full-tree-length harvesting systems, TCi equipment plays a pivotal role, offering versatile solutions including disc saws, bunching shears, and directional felling heads. Both full-tree-length specific heads and the Log Max harvesting heads are mounted on robust TCi carriers designed for durability and productivity in challenging terrain.

PRODUCTIVITY VALUE CHAIN

AfrEquip's portfolio extends well beyond harvesting heads. In addition to the range of Log Max heads available, it includes:

- Purpose-built carriers such as the popular levelling TCi LH822E, capable of handling clearfell and thinning applications.
- High-capacity skidders, including the TCi 620H four- and 625H six-wheel drive models engineered for maximum extraction efficiency.
- Forwarders tailored for large-scale timber movement and confined thinning operations, in the form of their TCi 1075C and 1055C units.
- Specialised solutions like TimberMAX winches, enabling

operations on steep slopes where conventional machinery cannot perform

- Post-harvest equipment, including TCi M726G mulchers for land preparation, and a variety of Morbark grinders and chippers for biomass processing

This integrated approach allows forestry contractors and companies to achieve a lower cost per ton, an increasingly critical metric in a competitive, cost-sensitive industry.

SUPPORT IS THE DIFFERENTIATOR

While premium equipment is essential, AfrEquip's true competitive edge lies in its support network. By expanding its footprint with larger, improved facilities over the years to accommodate increased demand, and now running from five strategically found branches in Pietermaritzburg, KwaMbonambi, Ugie, Mkhondo, and Mbombela, the company reflects a commitment to customer support by ensuring proximity to key forestry regions.

Each branch is equipped with fast-moving parts tailored to local operational needs, while the central



AfrEquip recommends the levelling TCi LH822E for clearfell and thinning applications.

hub maintains a comprehensive inventory. With over R53 million parts holding across its key branches, AfrEquip is positioned to minimise downtime and keep operations running.

Equally important is its investment in people. A fleet of mobile, manufacturer-accredited technicians operates nationwide, delivering on-site servicing and repairs. Continuous training from original equipment manufacturers ensures that technical teams stay at the forefront of evolving technologies.

CUSTOMER-CENTRIC

Operating in Africa presents unique logistical and operational challenges, including remote locations, demanding terrain, and infrastructure limitations.

AfrEquip has responded with systems designed to bring support closer to the customer, reducing travel time, operational delays, and overall costs. This proximity-based model, combined with a philosophy of collaboration between supplier, dealer, and customer, fosters a

partnership-driven environment. The goal is to maximise productivity while maintaining reliability and cost efficiency.

PERFORMANCE CULTURE

Underlying AfrEquip's operational model is a culture rooted in urgency and performance. As captured in a well-known analogy often referenced within the company, survival and

success depend on constant movement and improvement. This mindset translates into proactively ensuring that machines are running, support is accessible, and customers are still competitive in a fast-paced industry.

LOOKING AHEAD

As the forestry sector continues to evolve, driven by sustainability



The high capacity TCi 620H four-wheel drive grapple skidder in action.



AfrEquip supplies the Morbark range of grinders and chippers for biomass processing.

demands, technological advancement, and economic pressures, companies like AfrEquip will play an increasingly critical role. By combining world-class equipment

with local expertise and robust support systems, AfrEquip keeps pace with industry demands while actively shaping the future of forestry operations in Southern Africa.

In a business where downtime is costly and efficiency is everything, AfrEquip's integrated approach positions it as a strategic partner in productivity. 🌲



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Vacsol Azure reconfirms its Global GreenTagCert status

Arxada is pleased to announce that its Vacsol Azure wood preservative has successfully achieved Global GreenTag re-certification, which provides specifiers, architects, and builders in the construction industry with assurance that the product complies with internationally recognised environmental and health standards.



Vacsol Azure protects timber.

J du Plessis, Senior Regional Sales Manager at Arxada's South African Timber Protection division, says the reaffirmation is significant because Global GreenTag certification is an important level of assurance for customers and the timber sector.

"With so many environmental claims in the marketplace, it can be difficult to know which products genuinely meet recognised standards. Independent certification helps bridge that trust gap. Maintaining Global GreenTag certification demonstrates that Vacsol Azure

continues to deliver the environmental assurance and performance required for construction timber applications", comments Du Plessis.

WHAT IS VACSOL AZURE?

Vacsol Azure is a metal-free light organic solvent wood preservative designed to protect timber against fungal decay and insect attack. When applied, it enables construction timber to achieve long-term durability while maintaining the natural performance advantages of wood as a renewable building material.

For builders, timber treaters, architects and specifiers, the certification provides reassurance that timber products treated with Vacsol Azure meet recognised environmental benchmarks while delivering proven performance in structural and construction applications.

Arxada's own testing determined that the risk associated with Vacsol Azure is acceptable throughout the product life cycle. Yet, the company once again sought external verification to strengthen its marketing claims.

Silently PROTECTING construction timbers

Vacsol®
AZURE®

- ✓ **Next generation**
Treated wood is certified “GreenRate™ Tier Level C” under the Global GreenTag^{Cert™} Scheme*.
- ✓ **Long lasting timbers**
Treated wood is protected against fungal and insect attack.
- ✓ **Trusted brand**
Vacsol® Azure® has achieved a solid track record of proven performance excellence.

W: www.tanalised.co.za
E: wood.sa@arxada.com

*Global GreenTag^{Cert™} Scheme, Licence number ARC: MA01: 2025: GR
Use wood preservatives safely. Always read the label and the product
information before use. Vacsol® Azure® is manufactured by Arxada,
t/a Arch Wood Protection (SA) (Pty) Ltd.



arxada

GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL SA

The Green Building Council of South Africa (GBCSA) GreenRate Level C certification provides independent verification that Vacsol Azure supports responsible and sustainable timber use in construction. The Global GreenTag play an important role in helping identify products that meet recognised sustainability standards.

"Ethics and transparency are core values at Arxada, and having our marketing and risk-mitigation claims externally verified reflects our commitment to sustainability. We are proud to have our environmental leadership in wood treatment recognised and to have our brand associated with Global GreenTag," he explains.

WHAT IS THE GLOBAL GREENTAG?

The GBCSA awarded Vacsol Azure the GreenRate Level C classification under the Global GreenTag Product Certification Standard scheme. This confirms that Vacsol Azure remains compliant with the Global GreenTag standard and is valid through December 2026.

Global GreenTag GreenRate certification is based on a scientific assessment using a whole-of-sustainability product assessment process that evaluates products against strict environmental, health and corporate responsibility criteria. The scheme is recognised by leading green building programmes worldwide, including the GBCSA, and assures construction professionals and consumers that products meet recognised environmental standards.

Dr Nana Bortsie-Aryee, Program Director of Global GreenTag International and the Global GreenTagCert certification system, explains that "Global GreenTagCert provides independent, transparent and science-based verification of product attributes against defined environmental, health and corporate responsibility criteria".

She continues, "This helps reduce the risk of greenwashing in the market and supports more informed, confident product selection in the



Vacsol Azure is GBCSA certified.

built environment. Manufacturers like Arxada play an important role in advancing transparency by ensuring their product claims are independently verified and clearly communicated."

RE-CERTIFICATION COMMITMENT

Du Plessis highlighted the internal efforts that supported the successful recertification.

"We acknowledge the significant efforts of Denise Conradie, the Quality and Technical Manager at Arxada's South African Timber Protection division, in coordinating the re-certification process. Her dedication ensured that all requirements were met and submitted on time, allowing Vacsol Azure to retain its GreenTag certification status".

CUSTOMER CONFIRMATION

Vacsol Azure customers have welcomed the continued certification.

"Independent certifications like Global GreenTag help us demonstrate that our timber treated with Vacsol Azure meets recognised environmental criteria while still delivering durability and performance. It also reinforces trust in the sustainability claims of treated timber. This is critical to the industry's



JJ du Plessis.

reputation and the credibility of our business," says Arnold Rossouw of Houteniqua Treatment Services.

RESPONSIBLE MATERIAL CHOICE

Looking ahead, the role of certified wood protection solutions will remain vital to promoting the long-term use of timber in construction. Through ongoing innovation and compliance with recognised certification schemes, Arxada continues to support the timber industry with technologies that safeguard wood and align with shifting sustainability expectations.

Du Plessis says, "Arxada's heritage runs 120 years deep, and our dedicated global in-house research and development teams continuously assess how our protection technologies can be enhanced to make and confirm the durability of wood as a sustainable resource".

Arxada has a global operating presence, with the widest range of bioactives and registrations worldwide across 32 countries, 26 manufacturing sites, 17 R&D centres, and employing more than 3,800 people. 🌱

PROMOTING THE USE OF PRESERVATIVE TREATED TIMBER



PROMOTING TREATED TIMBER PRODUCED BY SAWPA MEMBERS

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H4 – **High Hazard**: Outside in ground

H5 – **High Hazard**: Outside in contact with heavy wet soil or in fresh water

H6 – **High Hazard**: Prolonged immersion in sea water



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ANY ASPECT RELATED
TO TREATED TIMBER PRODUCTS AND THE CORRECT
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admin@sawpa.co.za

www.sawpa.co.za



John Deere H-Series Forwarders redefine productivity

The forestry industry is under increasing pressure to do more with less: less fuel, less downtime, and tighter margins. John Deere's new-generation H-Series Forwarders represent a shift in how foresters and contractors can optimise their operations.



The 2010H Forwarder has a rotating and levelling cab that turns 290 degrees for clear views of the boom movements and the surrounding area.

While the G-Series set a strong benchmark in mechanised harvesting, the H-Series offers a straightforward yet effective value driver: move more timber in fewer trips. For a contractor, this translates directly into a lower cost per cubic metre.

BIGGER LOADS, FEWER CYCLES

The 2010H Forwarder is rated at a 20-ton load capacity, while the 2510H

steps up to a 25-ton capacity. This increase in class size for the large H-Series forwarders offers 25% more load capacity alongside lower fuel consumption per harvested cubic metre, a critical metric for contractors operating on tight margins.

FUEL EFFICIENCY PROTECTS MARGINS

Fuel is one of the largest operational expenses in forestry. The H-Series addresses this with:

- Optimised hydraulic systems that deliver more power with less energy loss
- Balanced engine performance for better fuel efficiency
- Reduced fuel consumption per harvested cubic metre

Financially, even a 5–10% reduction in fuel use across a fleet can save thousands of litres annually, leading to significant cost reductions over the machine's lifespan and a lower carbon



The 2010H has larger fluid tanks and improved diagnostics to optimise uptime.

footprint. On driving performance, the 2510H benefits from a twin-motor driveline, delivering up to ~50% faster drive speeds in off-road gear, which is a major plus when moving heavy loads across skid trails and forest roads. For Africa, where access and haul distances often vary widely from steep plantation slopes to long haul outs, the enhanced speed and capacity combine to improve tonnes/hour and reduce cycles.

BOOMS AND PRECISION

Both models can be equipped with the new F9 and F10 boom systems,

delivering extended reach (up to 10.2m or 10.7m, depending on the configuration) and enhanced lift/slew torque.

In South African plantation environments, this longer reach means fewer repositioning events and better use of space. The stronger boom muscle also means large stems can be handled more safely and promptly, a key advantage when logging large-diameter eucalyptus or hardwood stands.

Operational benefits enable faster loading and stacking, handling more timber per cycle, and reducing

repositioning time. The result is a smoother, faster workflow that helps contractors harvest more timber in less time with greater consistency.

STABILITY = PRODUCTIVITY

The H-Series introduces systems that directly address the terrain variations in plantations:

- New Active Frame Lock / Cylinder Frame Lock systems
- Improved stability when working on slopes or carrying full loads

These new and improved features enhance machine stability, reduce

machine stress and wear, ensure safer operations, and increase uptime in difficult environments. In practical terms, this means more productive hours per day, regardless of terrain.

PRECISION FORESTRY

One of the most significant leaps in the H-Series is digital integration. For contractors, this moves operations from reactive to proactive and optimised. The features include:

- Operation centre allowing for real-time tracking and control of unexpected downtime. It is possible to analyse productivity trends across operators and machines. The business owner can make data-driven decisions.
- Intelligent Boom Control (IBC 3.0) is standard on the forwarders, enabling automatic boom return, transport mode switching and precision controls which reduce operator fatigue and cycle times.

OPERATOR COMFORT & CABIN DESIGN

A productive machine depends on a productive operator. John Deere has placed operator well-being at the heart of the H Series design. This is an essential consideration in Africa, where long shifts, noise, dust, and heat are part of daily operations.

The rotating and levelling cabin offers superior visibility on slopes, while the new cabin design reduces noise, improves climate control, and enhances ergonomics. Features such as wireless phone charging, a lunch-tray table, a premium audio system, and configurable joysticks underscore the commitment to a “joy of work” experience in tough forestry environments.

The Intelligent Cabin Key adds operator-specific settings and remote-start convenience, too. For African dealers and contractors, emphasising operator comfort can help attract and retain skilled operators, making it a competitive differentiator.

In a skills-constrained environment, these changes reduce fatigue over long shifts, provide faster learning curves for new operators and more consistent output across crews.



Standard Intelligent Boom Control (IBC) 3.0 makes load handling more efficient and boosts productivity. With IBC activated, a single button press enables a range of intuitive functions.

SERVICEABILITY

Serviceability is likewise improved: modular components, centralised service points, easily accessible fill points, and extended service intervals (up to 1,000-hour service intervals under certain contracts) help minimise downtime and reduce total cost of ownership.

AFRICAN MARKET RELEVANCE

For African operations where remote locations and harsh conditions are common, these features translate into operational resilience.

- **Hardwood and exotic plantations:** Across South Africa and neighbouring regions, plantations of eucalyptus, pine, wattle, and indigenous hardwoods are common. The increased boom reach and load space options (e.g., the 2510H offers load space up to 8.5 m²) mean a better fit for large stems and forest logistics typical of hardwood markets.
- **Steep terrain and remote roads:** Many African logging sites involve

significant slopes, poor roads, and long haul-outs. The frame-lock stability system, enhanced tractive force, and rotating/levelling cabin enable safer and more efficient operation in these conditions.

- **Productivity pressure and cost control:** With rising fuel, labour and haulage costs, operators require more output per shift. The 25% increase in load capacity and faster drive speeds directly address cost per ton-kilometre.
- **After sales and support:** John Deere's presence in Africa (via regional offices, dealer networks, parts supply) means these machines are backed by local service and OEM-branded parts.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

The real value of the H-Series is not in any single feature; it's in how everything works together. The John Deere 2010H and 2510H forwarders represent a step-change in performance and optimisation for medium-to-large scale forestry contractors in Africa. 🌲

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JOHN DEERE

The Chain of Custody communication gap in South Africa

South Africa's commercial plantation forests are mostly FSC certified. That's not a small thing. It represents a significant and ongoing investment by forest managers in responsible practice, and it's reflected in the cost of the logs leaving those plantations. For foresters, that commitment is well understood. The problem is what happens to it further down the chain.

VALUE THAT NEEDS TO TRAVEL

For sawmillers, the issue is straightforward. Certified logs arrive at the mill carrying a status that has real commercial value for domestic green building projects, in export markets, and increasingly in retail supply chains where procurement teams are asking for documentation, not just assurances.

But without FSC Chain of Custody certification at the mill, that status doesn't survive processing. The material's certified origin is effectively lost the moment the log is broken down, and no FSC claim can be passed on to the customer.

Chain of Custody is the mechanism that keeps certified material's value intact through transformation from log to sawn timber, from sawn timber to engineered product, from component to finished piece. For sawmillers and mass timber producers already working with certified input material, the question worth asking is whether the premium embedded in that material is being recovered commercially or quietly disappearing at the point of processing.

WHERE THE UPTAKE IS LAGGING

The honest answer is that awareness and uptake have been slow in parts of the industry that stand to benefit most. Architects, specifiers, developers, and furniture manufacturers are slowly coming to terms with what Chain of Custody means for them in practice.

Organisations like the South African Furniture Initiative (SAFI) and the Green Building Council of South Africa (GBCSA) are now actively working to close that gap, which is welcome. Still, it takes time to shift procurement habits and specification practices that have been in place for years.

Speaking at the Wood Conference in Cape Town in February, Richard Ferguson of FSC Southern Africa highlighted a practical point for those working in construction and development: FSC Project Certification offers a route that doesn't require a permanent Chain of Custody system. A developer or project team can certify a single build sourcing FSC-certified materials for that project and make a verifiable responsible sourcing claim against it, without the overhead of ongoing annual certification.

For architects and project managers already navigating green building rating tools, it integrates reasonably cleanly into processes they're already running. It's a lower barrier than many assume.

THE COST QUESTION

For boutique furniture makers and small-to-medium manufacturers with export ambitions, the picture is more complicated, and it's worth being direct about it. FSC Chain of Custody certification involves annual audits, and for smaller operations, those costs are real. The audit fees, administrative burden, and time are not trivial; the cost-benefit calculation may not stack up unless

local demand for sustainably grown and sourced products increases or export volumes justify it.

That tension is genuine, and SAFI, Forestry South Africa (FSA), Sawmilling South Africa (SSA), the Paper and Pulp Manufacturers (Pamsa) and the FSC are aware of it. The FSC is always ready to explore options, as its group certification schemes for small growers demonstrate.

For manufacturers who are already exporting or actively pursuing export markets, particularly into Europe, the requirements for verified responsible sourcing are tightening. The EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) is the clearest recent signal of that direction, and getting the basics right now is considerably easier than catching up with it later.

THE PUBLIC SIDE

For readers of this magazine, none of the above is particularly new territory. But the industry faces a broader communication challenge that sits underneath all of it. There is a persistent disconnect between public demand for wood products, their perceptions of plantation forestry, and the prices they are prepared to pay.

That uneasiness is largely built on misunderstanding about plantation forestry, about carbon, about what sustainable forest management means for biodiversity. It is aggravated by the availability of wet-off saw timber and illegally "treated" poles and timber, mostly sourced

from stolen trees. These factors have real consequences for how the sector is perceived and how confidently consumers and specifiers engage with timber as a material.

Foresters, sawmillers, mass timber producers, and woodworkers are well-

placed to address this, but it requires a deliberate effort to engage with consumers. The case for certified timber needs to be made at the point of sale, in project documentation, and in one-on-one conversations with clients and specifiers. 🌲

Source: The original press release was supplied by Benjamin Rafemoyo, FSC Southern Africa Market Development Officer. Joy Crane revised and added to it, and errors are unintentional.

New IFSS for natural forests in South Africa

FSC released the new Interim Forest Stewardship Standard (IFSS) for South Africa, effective from July 1, 2027.

It applies to all forest management units, including Small- or Low-Intensity Managed Forests (SLIMFs) and Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs).

As sustainable forest products and responsible practices gain interest, IFSS offers communities, businesses, and the alien-invasive plants-clearing industry a clear path to FSC certification and market access.

South Africa's natural evergreen forests cover about 5% of the land. Dry woodlands and savannahs, vital for biodiversity, climate resilience, and livelihoods, often go unrecognised. Evergreen forests boost tourism and conservation, while savannah woodlands support subsistence and ecosystem services despite extensive land conversion.

Managing invasive species has spurred new business models around renewable energy from biomass, charcoal, and firewood. Responsible timber practices are vital for

reducing emissions and conserving biodiversity.

The IFSS promotes sustainability and access to higher-value markets through an inclusive development process involving diverse stakeholders and public consultation, with minimal adaptations for practicality and impact. It supports climate and development priorities by fostering green jobs, rural development, and sustainable resource use, aligning with initiatives like AFR100 to restore degraded landscapes. 🌲

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FOREST STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL®

Why the Hitachi BX100 Backhoe Loader is a true timberland asset

Forestry is a tough job. Mud, slopes, stumps, water crossings, and long hours in remote areas quickly reveal weaknesses. Downtime under these conditions is frustrating and costly. Machines must be versatile, robust, and efficient enough to keep operating expenses manageable.

The Hitachi BX100 Backhoe Loader from Hitachi Construction Machinery is traditionally associated with the construction sector, but in plantations it is a versatile, multi-purpose workhorse. For operators working in plantations, performing firebreak maintenance, or developing access roads, the BX100 provides an effective solution that combines digging, loading, grading, and material handling in a single machine.

POWER MATCHES TERRAIN

At the core of the BX100 is a Cummins 99 HP (74 kW) turbocharged diesel engine designed for reliable torque delivery across different load conditions. In tough ground conditions, torque is more important than maximum speed. Whether breaking through compacted soil for culvert installation or lifting wet clay and root mass, strong low-end performance maintains productivity.

With an operating weight of approximately 8,600–8,800 kg, the BX100 strikes a balanced profile. It is heavy enough to provide stability during excavation and loading yet compact enough to manoeuvre along narrow trails and confined corridors without excessive ground disturbance.

The drivetrain and hydraulic systems are tuned for smooth, responsive control, particularly valuable when operating on slopes or near sensitive areas such as streams and drainage lines.

DIGGING DEPTH AND REACH

Forestry infrastructure projects often involve trenching for drainage, installing culverts, preparing irrigation channels, or repairing washaways after heavy rains. The BX100's backhoe configuration offers a maximum digging depth of over 4.7 metres (depending on specification), providing more than sufficient reach for most site requirements.

Backhoe bucket options range from 0,18 m³ to 0,30 m³. Narrower buckets support precision trenching and pipe installation, while larger options handle stump removal and bulk excavation. This flexibility allows operators to match the attachment to the task without compromising efficiency.

At the front, the 1,1m³ standard loader bucket or the 1,0 m³ six-in-one loader bucket enhances versatility. It supports the loading of soil, gravel, bark, slash, and biomass, and is also effective for grading and shaping access roads.

ONE MACHINE, MULTIPLE ROLES

A backhoe loader in forestry operations can perform several tasks without mobilising multiple units:

- Access road construction and maintenance The BX100 handles drain excavation, camber shaping, gravel spreading, and debris clearance in tight spaces where larger machines can't operate.
- Firebreak development and fuel reduction It builds containment lines, removes surface fuel, and reshapes terrain efficiently, with

quick material removal thanks to its loader and backhoe.

- Water management and culvert installation Its reach and lift strength make it ideal for trenching, culvert placement, and controlled backfilling to ensure reliable road drainage.
- Stump and root removal The BX100's backhoe loosens roots, and the loader clears stumps and debris after harvesting for site preparation.

BUILT FOR DEMANDING CONDITIONS

The BX100 is engineered with reinforced structural components and robust welding processes designed to withstand rocks, roots, vibration, and repeated impact.

A heavy-duty front axle and undercarriage components provide stability when travelling over uneven terrain. Adequate ground clearance reduces the risk of underbody damage when working in forestry conditions.

The BX100 incorporates accessible service points and a simplified maintenance layout, enabling routine inspections and servicing to be carried out efficiently. Less downtime directly enhances productivity and lifecycle value.

OPERATOR COMFORT

Operator safety and ability to see the entire work area are essential. Fatigue and discomfort are productivity and safety risks. The BX100's ROPS/FOPS-certified cab offers protection when working in areas with falling debris or uneven terrain.

BUILT FOR THE WOODS

Why the **Hitachi BX100 Backhoe Loader** Is a True Timberland Asset

Forestry is not gentle work. Mud, slopes, stumps and long operating hours demand more than standard performance.



The **Hitachi BX100 Backhoe Loader** delivers dependable torque, balanced stability and multi-functional capability supporting:

- Access road construction and maintenance
- Firebreak development
- Drainage and culvert installation
- Stump and root removal

With responsive hydraulics, reinforced structural components and simplified service access, the **BX100** is engineered to perform where productivity cannot be compromised.

Large glass panels and a well-designed cab layout provide clear visibility of both loader and backhoe work zones. Ergonomic joystick controls enable precise modulation of movements, especially when operating near trees or installed infrastructure.

Climate control improves operator comfort in hot, dusty conditions or cooler high-altitude regions. Less fatigue helps maintain consistent performance throughout the day.

EFFICIENT HYDRAULICS & COST MANAGEMENT

Forestry operations require constant adaptation with work cycles shifting between tasks such as trenching, loading and repositioning.

The BX100's optimised hydraulic flow minimises wasted energy supporting better fuel efficiency. This is particularly important for contractors who manage fleets, as it helps maintain control over fuel usage.

Additionally, controlled fuel consumption and extended service intervals result in predictable operating costs, making the BX100 a practical choice for ongoing forestry operations.

A PRACTICAL OWNERSHIP SOLUTION

Margins in land management and harvesting are often tight. Equipment must justify its investment through performance, durability, and lifecycle efficiency. The BX100's multi-function capability reduces the need for

multiple support machines on medium-scale projects.

By consolidating excavation, loading, and grading into one unit, operators can simplify fleet composition, reduce transport requirements, and streamline training. The result is lower complexity and improved cost control across projects.

MORE THAN A CONSTRUCTION MACHINE

Although classified as a backhoe loader, the BX100 demonstrates clear value beyond traditional construction duties. It is equally capable of shaping a firebreak, installing drainage infrastructure, clearing stumps, or loading biomass. 🌳



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Welverdiend Forestry opts for TimberPro

A highly experienced Mpumalanga-based forestry contractor has taken delivery of a TimberPro harvesting and forwarding system to boost productivity on a pine-harvesting contract for Sappi Forests.



The TimberPro harvester fitted with an SP head and the TimberPro Forwarder are a purpose-matched harvesting team.

It has been acquired by the contractor, JC Potgieter of Welverdiend Forestry, specifically for harvesting pine on the steeper slopes of Rooihoogte plantation, situated between Carolina and Badplaas in Mpumalanga.

The TimberPro harvester is a TL735D tracked and levelling harvester equipped with an SP761 LF head. The harvester is paired with a TimberPro 840D wheeled forwarder, which can retrieve timber from steep-slope compartments. The machines were delivered to Welverdiend in

January by the South African TimberPro distributor, Logmech. The Logmech team spent a few days at Rooihoogte familiarising the Welverdiend team with the new equipment, so they could hit the ground running.

JC, son of Jaco Potgieter, who established Welverdiend Forestry way back in 1998, says he's very happy with TimberPro's performance so far. He uses an excavator-based harvester on flat terrain and the TimberPro machines on steeper slopes and for harvesting large trees,

which is where the TimberPros come into their own.

SERVICE & BACKUP

Welverdiend Forestry has had a long association with Logmech, dating back to their use of Swedish-manufactured SP harvesting heads around 2010.

Service and support were a major factor in their decision to choose the TimberPro machines for the pine harvesting contract. "We're very happy with the service and back-up we get from Logmech; we've had a lot



An operator can safely extract timber on steep slopes.

of equipment through them", says JC. "Their Technical Manager, Ryan Chase, is world-class; they really look after us".

MATCHING PARTS

The TimberPro machines are more than up to the task, especially on tough terrain. They are purpose-built, rugged, powerful and versatile. The harvester and forwarder are almost identical machines from the swing bearing up, meaning that you only need one set of spare parts and components for both machines. They are both powered by Cummins engines.

The harvester has dedicated pumps for all the basic functions, so there is no lag time when you engage the head, and head speed remains

constant. Ryan says it has "unmatched levelling capability".

FORWARDER

The forwarder cab rotates 360 degrees, so the operator is always facing the task, a major advantage when retrieving and loading logs all around the machine. It also has gravity-defying capability on very steep slopes. This was effectively demonstrated at a Logmech field day in the Midlands in 2024, when attendees, mainly forestry contractors, witnessed a TimberPro forwarder safely bring a large load of logs down an extremely steep slope onto the roadside.

JC was one of those contractors, and he was sufficiently impressed

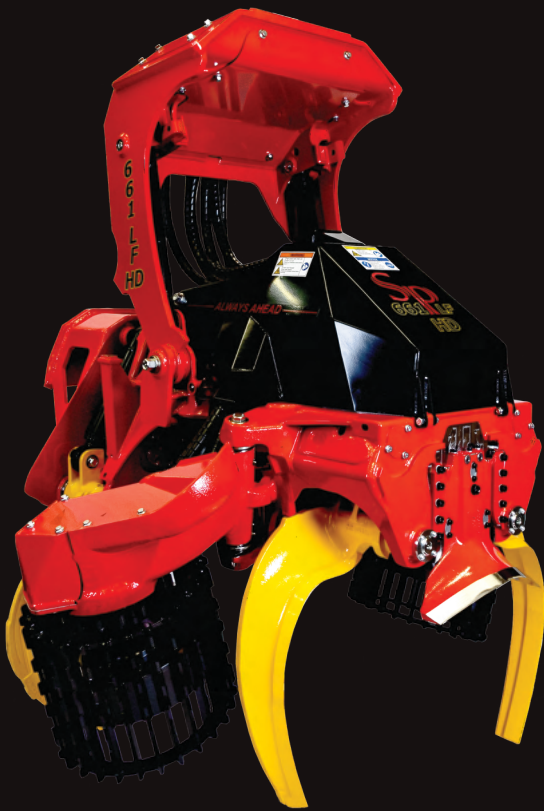
with the forwarder's performance to invest in one for his own operation. It has the power and the balance, and three different driving modes which enable the operator to maintain control of the machine and the load on extreme slopes.

"You can load 22 tons and go down a 50% slope safely", said JC.

He said his operators took only a couple of days to get used to the TimberPro machines – now they don't want to operate anything else.

SP HEADS

The Logmech team has played a key role in the development and refinement of these heads over many years, and it is known for its reliability and unmatched productivity. When it



SP 661LF

The SP Maskiner 661LF HD is the solution to South Africa's single pass harvesting. With an upgraded tilt frame, larger pins and a stronger chassis, the 661LX HD is a purpose built head for track based machines.

SP 591 LX G4

The 591LX covers a wide range of felling applications, from first thinning's all the way to clear felling.

Primarily designed for the South African eucalyptus industry, it works just as well in the pine application, with exceptional up time and durability.



TIMBERPRO 840D

The Timberpro 840D is a purpose built forwarder for the forestry industry, that needs to move timber quickly.

This impressive machine can work either as a self-loading machine, or can be converted into a wheel harvester, in a matter of a few minutes. The continuous rotating upper structure, means that the machine can load from any direction, and more importantly, reduces operator fatigue, due to the continuous rotating upper structure.



ENQUIRIES

Leon: 062 455 9207 | leon@logmech.co.za
 Tickey: 060 753 9085 | tickey@logmech.co.za
 Ryan: 064 880 6436 | technical@logmech.co.za
 Logmech office: 035 640 0014

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came to selecting a harvesting head, pairing the TimberPro TL735D harvester with a Swedish-made SP head was a logical decision, given the SPs' proven service record in South African conditions.

The heads now come equipped with Dasa 7, the latest-generation control system offering lightning-fast reaction times, robust modules, and a user-friendly interface.

Dasa 7 comes in two versions: wireless or wired. The radio module in the wireless version is installed in both the cab and the harvester head, allowing for intelligent, real-time link selection. This means no manual adjustments, no lag, and no risk of communication loss, even in areas with high signal interference.

By replacing cables with a high-speed, ultra-reliable radio link, Dasa Wireless 1 delivers seamless, interference-free communication, even in the most demanding conditions.

DEALER SUPPORT

The Logmech team is based in Zululand, from where they can provide effective backup and support for both TimberPro and SP equipment. They have many years of experience in forestry operations and know the equipment they distribute inside out. They also carry a comprehensive inventory of spares and components.

"We've got enough spares at Logmech to almost build an entire machine", comments Ryan.

Logmech also distributes a range of grabs that they developed in partnership with an international manufacturer.

There is a growing number of TimberPro machines operating in South Africa that have been tried and tested under a variety of South African conditions. The SP heads are also widely used on both purpose-built harvesters and excavator-based machines. 📶

For more info about TimberPro, SP heads, and Logmech grabs contact Ryan Chase on 064-8806436, technical@logmech.co.za or Leon van Eeden on 082-4559207, leon@logmech.co.za



The TL735D harvester and SP head are a productive combination.



The TimberPro forwarder in action.



The SP heads are equipped with Dasa 7 the latest generation control system available wireless or wired.

Kalfass delivers fourth sorting and stacking system to French sawmill Dubot

The French sawmill, Dubot Bois & Scieries, has strengthened its long-standing partnership with German equipment supplier Kalfass, commissioning a new sorting and stacking system at its Saint Avit operation. The investment marks the fourth installation supplied by Kalfass to the company over more than 25 years.



Celebrating the fourth Kalfass system at Dubot Sawmill are, from left: Guillaume Cedan and Florian Baudron from Dubot with Kalfass Managing Director Hans Haist and representative Jonathan Bleesz (Pic by Holzkurier).

The sawmill processes around 140,000m³ of softwood annually, with Douglas fir accounting for roughly half of the volume. Dubot's Technical Director, Florian Baudron, says the wetmill's flexibility is key to its product lines.

"When using the three saw lines that include circular saw technology and log band saws, we can process almost all log diameters harvested from the forest", Baudron explains.

This allows the plant to handle logs ranging from 10cm to 100cm in diameter, and from 2m to 9.5m in length.

BOTTLENECK

The latest upgrade was driven by the need to improve throughput and product quality. The previous sorting line behind the circular saw had become a bottleneck, limited by only 12 sorting boxes.

"Our system behind the circular saw line was becoming outdated. We also only had 12 boxes for sorting, which limited the performance of the saw line," says Baudron. "For this reason, we decided to invest in a new sorting and stacking system. We also knew that Kalfass would be able to rebuild the new main product line in place of the old one".

Kalfass was selected for its long relationship with the family-owned



The 22 boxes in the new sorting plant prevent bottlenecks (Pic by Kallfass).

business and its ability to execute the upgrade within the existing footprint. As part of the project, a Microtec wane scanner and a new trimmer were integrated to improve grading accuracy and finishing quality.

Installation began in June 2024, and the new system was operational by the end of October. During the transition, production continued at reduced capacity using an existing side-board sorting line.

AUTOMATED INFEED AND GRADING

The new installation handles main products directly from the transverse outfeed of the saw line. It is designed for timber lengths between 2.5m and 7.3m, with a maximum cross-section of 63mm x 260mm. Production Manager Guillaume Cedan notes the system's robustness: "We have also tested 100mm x 260mm, which works without any problems thanks to the robust engineering".

At the front of the line, a TongLoader feeds material onto an

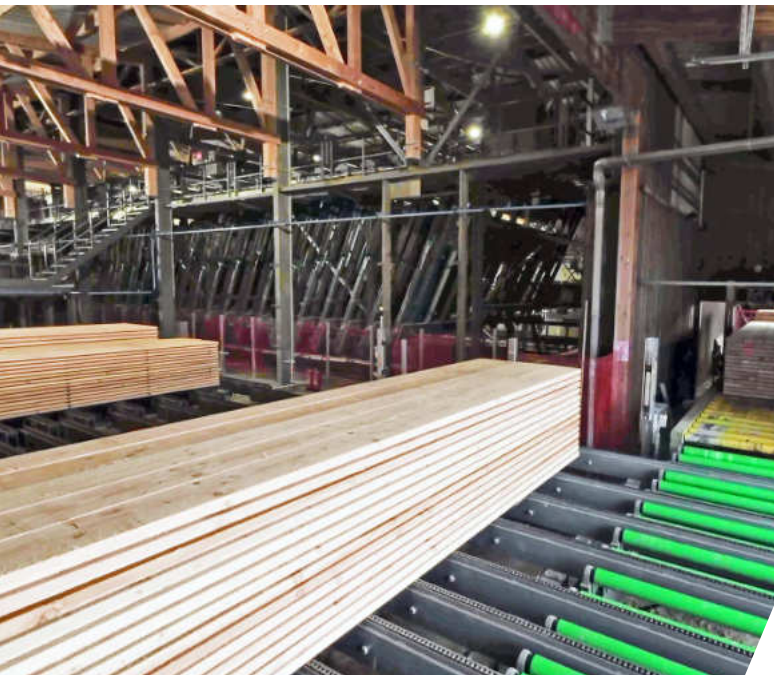
assessment conveyor at up to 80 pieces per minute. It is a specialised high-speed feeding machine with mechanical claws (tongs) that grab individual boards and control the

infeed, enabling accurate sorting, grading, marking, and trimming.

Kallfass introduced an updated operator interface. Managing Director Hans Haist explains: "Unlike before,



An employee inspects both sides of the timber using the assessment chain conveyor and enters the quality on the touchscreen (Pic by Holzkurier).



The stacking system is housed in a new hall parallel to the box-sorting system. The picture shows the generously dimensioned package chain conveyor (Pic by Kallfass).

when employees manually graded the quality of the boards and activated a button to adjust the timber, we have now provided a touch screen interface. Now, the operator can easily determine the quality”.

The conveyor enables inspection on both faces of the timber, reflecting Dubot's focus on high-grade output.

SCANNING AND TRIMMING

Boards then pass through the wane scanner, with trimming carried out as required using a multi-saw trimmer equipped with ten saw units. From there, material is directed into one of 22 new sorting boxes, nearly doubling the previous capacity. The sorting section was integrated into the existing building, while a new adjacent hall was constructed to house the stacking line.

STACKING AND OPTIMISING

Once sorted, timber is discharged onto a longitudinal conveyor and transferred via transport trolley to the new stacking area. There, a step separator and unscrambler prepare the material for layer formation, before a multiple cross-cut saw optimises board lengths.

Jonathan Bleesz, who represents Kallfass in France through VBI, explains: “The cross-cut saw is equipped with five saw aggregates, four of which can be positioned automatically”.

The stacking system operates at up to ten layers per minute and includes eight stick magazines for automated layer separation. Finished packs are conveyed to a cross transfer where they are either removed by forklift or directed to an existing strapping line, now fully integrated into the control system.

“This area is now fully automated; employee involvement is unnecessary, and wood package data transfers automatically to the strapping system,” says Haist. 📦

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NCT Richards Bay rebuilds with Bell after massive fire

Described as “a multi-billion-rand catastrophe”, the September 2023 at the NCT mill in Richards Bay destroyed tonnes of wood chips and round logs, damaged the wattle and Eucalyptus chip lines, and equipment, including a Bell L1506 wheeled loader, an old Bell Haulage Tractor and logger, and a tracked Kobelco Excavator with a timber grab that had been purchased four years earlier.



Bell supplied the Kobelco SK260LC-10 excavator fitted with a MT1000 timber grab.

NCT began replacing the burnt-out equipment once the insurance claim was paid out. The new fleet includes a JCB 436 Wheel Loader, a JCB 155HD Skid Steer and a wheeled Kobelco SK260LC-10 Excavator fitted with an MT1000 Timber Grab, all supplied by Bell Equipment Empangeni.

NCT Plant Manager, Charles Atkins, had spoken to others about wheeled loaders and was advised that JCB was the way to go. The JCB 436ZX, with an operating weight of 14,564 kg, 132kW of power, and a net torque of 786 Nm at 1,300 rpm, is proving to be a sound choice. Fitted with a larger bucket, it's

used for cleaning around the plant, moving chips, and loading biomass onto side-tippers for return to NCT growers as mulch.

The JCB 155HD Skid Steer, with its 2,990 kg operating weight, 42kW of power and 192 Nm of gross torque, is ideal for general housekeeping duties in the yard, where it can manoeuvre into tight spots inaccessible to other types of equipment.

NCT currently has one tracked, and two wheeled Kobelco SK260LC-10s fitted with MT1000 Timbers Grabs to offload the timber trucks.

Ryno explains that NCT opted for a wheeled undercarriage on the latest

machine so it could move between the two wood-chipping plants for greater efficiency and resource use. The cab was also raised by 500mm to improve visibility, allowing operators to see over stockpiles, which can be up to 6m high.

Charles comments: “Other than a small radiator leak, we haven't had any issues in the six years that we've owned Kobelco Excavators. They are really good machines and are basic and easy to work on.” NCT is also pleased with the average fuel economy of 11-12 litres per hour.

Charles is also enjoying Kobelco's Komex and JCB's LiveLink telematics



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BELL



The wheeled machines move between NCT's two wood chipping plants.

systems, particularly the feature that alerts him when a machine is due for service. While build quality and machine performance are important, Charles says customer support also influenced their choice of machines.

"It's all to do with service. If I phone, I want service, and that's what I get with Bell Equipment. I have three or four people that I can

call if we have an issue, and one of them is bound to answer and jump, no matter what time of day or night."

Apart from the latest wheeled Kobelco, which has a three-year service plan, all the other equipment will be serviced by Bell during the standard warranty period. Thereafter, they will be maintained by NCT's own mechanic. Other Bell-

supplied machines in the fleet include five old Bell Haulage Tractors and two A-series and one F-series Bell Loggers, all fitted with longer booms for improved reach

NCT's Richards Bay operation has relied on Bell equipment for over 25 years. With a new chipping mill and upgraded equipment, NCT is set to remain operational for many more years. 🌳

NEW APPOINTMENT

New MD for CBC

Coega Biomass Centre (CBC) has appointed Vernon Slack as its new Managing Director, effective April 1, 2026. The appointment marks an important step as CBC enters its next phase of growth and operational improvement.

In 2026, CBC plans to scale production to 80,000 tons while

further enhancing product quality through the introduction of new technologies, including a dry hammer mill. To support this process, CBC is strengthening its governance model. The founding shareholders will step back from day-to-day operations, with Vernon assuming operational leadership of the company. 🌳



Bell water tankers inform NCT's new fire station capacity

Throughout history, fires have caused widespread devastation and loss. In late September 2023, the NCT Forestry Co-operative Limited (NCT) mill in Richards Bay experienced this firsthand when strong winds, low humidity, and high temperatures combined to create ideal conditions for a fire that raged for more than ten days.

The community and industry rallied immediately, with assistance provided by, among others, uMhlathuze Municipality, Transnet, Mondi, South32, Sappi, the Zululand and KwaZulu-Natal Fire Protection Associations (FPA), helicopters from Working on Fire, Leomat Construction, and Bell Equipment, which sent two 38,000 litre Bell Water Tankers.

"We thank our Bell Sales Representative, Haig Thompson, and

the Bell team for those Bell Water Tankers. They made a huge difference. In fact, we've planned our new fire reticulation system based on the volume of water that those two machines threw", says Ryno Martyn, NCT Operations Manager, Richards Bay.

Dr Antonio Ciolli, who holds a PhD in fire engineering, has taken NCT's fire preparedness to the next level with a new fire plan. In the event of a fire, based on NCT's fuel loads, the plant

needs to be able to deliver 7,400 litres of water per minute for six hours without relying on the municipal water supply. "That's just under 2,5 million litres of water that we need to keep on the front at any one stage", explains Ryno.

To achieve this, NCT Richards Bay now has its own fire station and has installed a 200mm ring main pipeline around the property, with pumps and a pump station capable of delivering around 9 bar pressure.



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Bell Equipment Sales Representative, Haig Thompson, with NCT Plant Manager, Charles Atkins, and NCT Operations Manager, Richards Bay, Ryno Martyns, discuss the firefighting equipment in NCT's new fire station.

"We can release the same amount of water as the Bell water tankers using water cannons fixed to a Toyota Land Cruiser that can go anywhere. The water cannons discharge over 7,500 litres of water per minute and can reach up to 70 metres. These ideas came from lessons learned during the fire, making the new system more practical and effective".

DESTRUCTION

From a business perspective, Ryno recalls: "The worst part about the fire was that the market had just started to come right and we had increased our chipping rate. Then, suddenly, the Chinese market dipped, and they decided to slow everything down. They didn't cancel vessels, but by slowing everything down, we started to build up stock. That morning at

4am, we had just finished loading the first of four vessels due to arrive over the next two weeks. We had the fire that afternoon and had to turn the other three vessels away. That was terrible".

RECOVERY

Due to the investigations and the December holiday season, NCT only really got going in January 2024. Ryno said: "In January, I met with a company in Worcester, Western Cape that produces biofuel products. We realised that they couldn't produce a paper-quality chip, but we could certainly produce a biofuel-quality chip, so we hired the company to come and chip for us from February 2024.

"We've got two long-standing contracts with Japan for biofuel products, so this was at least

something that we could help our customers with, because it's important to remember that we're a co-operative and a priority for us is to help keep our timber farmers turning over some timber. When we first started, we were only going to process about 75,000 tonnes, but by the time the machine left in June 2025, we'd done about 230,000 tonnes, and had loaded five vessels".

The two chipping plants – Bay Fibre and Richards Bay Wood Chips (RBWC) – had to be rebuilt from scratch. BayFibre, which chips predominantly wattle, was chipping as a going concern by November 2024, and by June 2025, the two plants were chipping a combined volume of 3,000t of timber per day, just shy of the 4,000 tonnes per day they were chipping before the fire. 🙌

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Smart Scale verification with Calibration Gauge

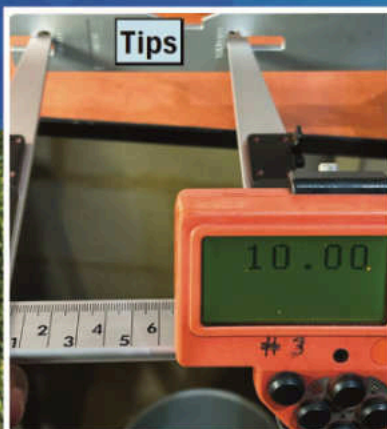
- 1 Check Battery condition of both Terminal & Smart Scale
- 2 Calibrate the Smart Scale
- 3 Install or Hold Calibration Gauge for easy verification

Verify accuracy of caliper as follows:

- Put left jaw TIP in slot "0"
- Put right jaw TIP in slot "100mm" and verify correctness
- Push jaws to MIDDLE of jaw length. Verify
- Push jaws to near END of jaw length. Verify
- Repeat above as required for 200mm/300mm/350mm/500mm

If any reading is not within your requirement, check the following:

- Both batteries are fully charged
- Terminal is engaging the two positioning pins on the SS and firmly locked in position. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT OTHERWISE THE TERMINAL CANNOT READ THE SS
- Repeat the calibration process
- Close the jaws and check for: Crookedness, right angles and no-wear of Aluminium jaws



Open the jaws slightly and move the righthand jaw (moving jaw) left and right to verify for any play. If there is any play, tighten the two screws very slightly at a time until smooth but rattle free movement is attained. Requires a 2.0mm Allan key (supplied).

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SA's URUS Tightline TL3021 winch-assist powers steep-slope harvesting

Nine months into full operation in Mondi's Greytown, KwaZulu-Natal plantations, the URUS TL3021 Winch Assist mounted on a Hitachi Zaxis 350 excavator base is tethering a Ponsse Bison forwarder and transforming steep-slope harvesting.

A report by Urus Equipment



The URUS TL3021 mounted on a Hitachi 350 base in action.



The URUS TL3021 mounted on a Sany excavator winch assisting a TCi Harvester.



Cintasign forestry harvesting contractors has deployed a Hitachi 350 excavator fitted with the URUS TL3021 for steep-slope logging in KZN.

The Urus system is a proudly South African innovation. The highly manoeuvrable Bison with a machine weight of 22,000 kg and payload capacity of 16,000 kg, confidently handles combined loads of up to 38 tons on slopes of up to 100%. This is the kind of challenging terrain that previously restricted mechanised harvesting in South Africa.

CINTASIGN FORESTRY CONTRACTORS

The milestone deployment is the responsibility of the Cintasign forestry team, a progressive mechanised contractor operating in KwaZulu-Natal. We are grateful to Quinton Preen, one of the shareholders at Cintasign and his seasoned team for placing their trust in our technology. Their unwavering commitment to safety and minimal environmental impact has been the perfect partnership for proving the URUS TL3021's real-world value.



The Sany-URUS combo winch assisting a John Deere harvester.

A special tribute goes to Technical Operations Manager Nitesh Govender, who oversaw the meticulous fitment and system integration in close collaboration with the Hitachi Construction South Africa team of Marius Fourie and Morne Van Wyk.

The day-to-day operations are conducted under the watchful eye of Jason Menell, who has been instrumental in getting the system operating, along with Barbara Smith and Natalie Crouch, who manage Cintasign's operational health and safety. Their professionalism and attention to detail ensured a flawless commissioning and continue to drive daily success.

UNIQUELY SOUTH AFRICAN

The URUS TL3021 is designed and built in South Africa and is a point of immense pride for us at Urus Equipment.

Our heritage stretches back to 1966, when we began solving steep-slope forestry challenges with robust engineered Universal Rigging Under

Skyline cable-yarding systems. Fast-forward to the introduction of the Shovel Yarder in 2005, and we are proud of our "winching heritage", having produced over 500 yarders operating worldwide.

We have always focused on durable, operator-friendly equipment tailored to South African conditions. The TL3021 is the latest chapter in that story: The only winch-assist systems developed and manufactured entirely on home soil and now performing reliably on three continents.

The unit's steep-slope credentials shine through in every detail. A powerful 21-ton line pull, 500m operating range and 25/28mm wire rope provide the muscle needed for tethered forwarders and skidders. The innovative 90-degree swivel pulley enables smooth roadside stacking. At the same time, the purpose-built snatch block system keeps the winch unit clear of hot decking areas during tight-binding operations, critical for safety and productivity in confined plantation layouts.

For South African forestry, where much of the resource sits on steep terrain, winch-assist technology is essential.

The Cintasign harvesting team's success in Mondi's Greytown operations proves that locally developed solutions can meet the highest international standards while delivering the safety, efficiency, and environmental care our industry demands.

We at Urus Equipment salute progressive teams like Cintasign for their vision and partnership. Their continued support inspires us to keep innovating, proving once again that proudly South African engineering can compete and win on the global stage.

All our machines are proudly built and assembled at our facility in Johannesburg. Beware of any lookalikes. Log and Load Pty Ltd is the sole owner of the Hin-Tech & URUS Equipment brands. 🇿🇦

More info: www.urus-equipment.com

Sawmilling in the shadow of the Drakensberg

With its Wood-Mizer log processing line, New Heights Sawmill is situated at the foot of South Africa's most extensive mountain range, the stunning Drakensberg, which in English means "dragon" mountain.



Despite its remote location, slick logistics to and from the mill ensure no delay in production.

The farm and sawmill, operating as New Heights, are located near Elliott in the Eastern Cape province. Their enterprises reflect John and Fiona Schenk's enduring passion for the land, nature, and timber. John's father and uncle were already milling timber in the 1950s near Alice, approximately 350km southwest of Khowa (Elliott), where New Heights Sawmill is based.

"My Dad, who owned a trading store in Alice, sawed timber with portable sawmills. He regularly spoke about trees with diameters of 1,5m, reminisces John.

The Schenk clan's continuing involvement with timber remains true. Schenk Enterprises, a vertically integrated timber processing group with broad interests across the forestry value chain, is part of it, and

so is New Heights Sawmill. John's role as a contractor for Mondi, where he cut fire-damaged logs from the company's commercial forestry operations in the area, was a stepping stone to New Heights Sawmill. When the contract ended in 2012, John and Fiona used the opportunity to buy land and build a sawmill.

BUILDING A SAWMILL

"The period between starting the sawmill and where it is now was bumpy," John says. "Securing a steady log supply into the mill was the first challenge".

He harvested poplar trees from riparian areas to supplement log supplies before signing supply agreements with commercial tree growers. Despite ongoing log supply challenges, New Heights has enough

log reserves to produce 61m³ of sawn material daily.

Log diameters in the wetmill include C and D-Class (260–340+ mm), with a sprinkling of B-Class logs (190–230mm).

The capacity needed to produce these volumes also grew over time. Sawmilling equipment from Wood-Mizer now forms the backbone of the operation.

BUILDING VOLUMES WITH WOOD-MIZER

New Heights is remarkable for several reasons.

Although the mill is remote, slick logistics ensure that logs move in and finished products move out without any hitch. The polished logistics are even more striking when it's considered that the mill takes in



Sawn products including 120,000 pallets go to markets across South Africa.

100 logs per day and regularly moves out 120,000 pallets.

The line configuration at New Heights is also unique. It has two log-in feeds that combine to deliver one- and two-face logs to a Wood-Mizer HR700 4-head resaw.

The first infeed takes logs into a Wood-Mizer HR500 single-head resaw to produce one open face, while the second infeed goes to a Wood-Mizer LX450 that squares the log on two sides.

The slabs with wane that exit the resaw then feed to a Linck multi-rip to produce blocks and boards, with sideboards from each primary

breakdown point passing through a recovery line consisting of a Wood-Mizer EG800 and a double-head resaw.

The bulk of the sawn product goes into New Heights' pallet manufacturing process, with the rest of the sawn output going to manufacturers in the Western Cape and elsewhere in the country.

EXPORT PALLET MARKET

John is optimistic about the future. He notes that while agriculture has encountered significant challenges, their operation has managed to stay

steady by integrating timber production with agricultural activities. In addition, they are increasing their drying capacity, which will enable them to enter the profitable pallet export market.

Pallets intended for export must meet the strict phytosanitary standards set by the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation. One of the most effective ways to achieve compliance is through heat treatment or kiln drying of the timber used in pallet manufacturing. 🌳



Fiona and John Schenk of New Heights farm and sawmill.



Part of the Wood-Mizer line at New Heights Sawmill.

SOMETHING BIG IS COMING

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You've trusted **Ponsse** for decades.
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Now, we're bringing something new to the industry –
something designed to push performance further
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But you'll feel it the moment it arrives.



The ABC of biomass recycling

Africa Biomass Company (ABC) understands the operational challenges of wood recycling and, since 2004, has been at the forefront of developments in biomass recycling and a market-leading equipment supplier and contractor to the forestry and agriculture industries.

ABC has state-of-the-art facilities to service, repair and rebuild equipment of any brand and size. It operates in all nine provinces of South Africa and across the border, into Sub-Saharan Africa, including Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania, Kenya, and Nigeria.

BADGER, BANDIT, SERRAT

Badger Biomass Equipment is a brand created by ABC and is designed and built at the company's manufacturing facility. ABC is the authorised dealer for the Bandit Industries woodchippers in Africa. It adapts Bandit's chippers to local circumstances, and some models have up to 55% local content. ABC has been the sole agent for Serrat mulchers since 2021 and provides all sales and technical backup.

BADGER BIOSHEAR 250

The Bioshear is a rugged, efficient tree-cutting attachment designed for 8-13 T excavators.



The Badger Bioshear cuts trees up to 250mm in diameter.



The Bandit Intimidator 18XP with infeed.

Capable of cutting trees up to 250mm in diameter, it delivers up to six cuts per minute. With a tiltable head and made of high-quality wear-resistant steel, the Bioshear combines strength and precision, making it ideal for demanding forestry and land-clearing tasks.

PERFORMANCE FEATURES

- Fast harvest of small trees and bushes.
- Max diameter 250mm.
- Recommended flow main circuit 50-100L/min.
- Recommended flow auxiliary circuit 30-60L/min.
- Recommended max working pressure 280 Bar.
- Tiltable head $\pm 38^\circ$
- Quality wear-resistant steel.
- Cut and grip in one seamless motion.

BANDIT INTIMIDATOR 18XP WITH INFEED

457MM TOWABLE HAND-FED DRUM CHIPPER

A top choice for forestry, tree care, and land clearing professionals needing to chip larger, more limby material.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

CATEGORY	SPECIFICATIONS
Capacity	457mm (18")
Infeed Opening	520 x 529mm
Engine / Power	Perkins 1106D 70TA / 172 hp / 129 kW
Fuel / Tank Capacity	Diesel / 145 L
Drum / Blades	Drum Style: 4 Reversible Blades
Max Production	± 310m³ typical, up to 620m³ / 8-hour day
Weight/Axle/Tyre Size	5,250 kg / 4,000 kg unbraked axle / 235/75R 17.5" tyres
Dimensions	5,500 (L) x 2,330 (W) x 2,950 (H) mm
Discharge	Height-adjustable chute. Hydraulic swivel and chip deflector.

PERFORMANCE FEATURES

- Power slot: Enhances airflow/throwing power, while simplifying unplugging access.
- Auto-feed system: Self-contained hydraulics optimise feed rate via engine RPM.
- Dual-feed system: Steel infeed conveyor with slide box with feed wheel with lift/down-pressure cylinder for heavy material.
- Fuel efficiency: Synchronised feeding reduces idle time, cutting fuel costs by up to 30%.

- Optimised chip quality: 940mm drum produces consistent, high-quality chips while extending blade life.

- Hydraulic versatility: 360° hydraulic swivel discharge with lift cylinder for improved down pressure and smoother feeding.

SAFETY & RELIABILITY

- Standard auto-feed: Automatic reversing system prevents stalling and ensures smooth, continuous operation.
- Robust construction: Reinforced drum, dual in-feed rollers deliver durability in tough conditions.
- Efficient maintenance: Cleanout door design allows quicker servicing and reliable performance.
- Warranty: 1yr/2,000hr machine coverage and 5yr/3,000hr 'GUTS' warranty.

SAFETY & RELIABILITY

- Control: Remote or tether-controlled.
- Warranty: 1 yr/2,000hr machine coverage and 5 yr/3,000hr 'GUTS' warranty.
- Local Build: Localised engineering with 55% local content.

BANDIT INTIMIDATOR 21XP

533MM TOWABLE HAND-FED DRUM CHIPPER

Designed for professionals requiring exceptional production, high throughput, and the ability to process large whole trees.

PERFORMANCE FEATURES

- Massive feed power: The slide box feed system delivers 4,920kg of pulling force, enabling effortless feeding of large materials and reducing trimming labour.
- High-capacity processing: Class-leading 667mm x 622mm throat opening handles whole trees and heavy clearing with ease.



The Bandit Intimidator 21XP can process large whole trees.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

CATEGORY	SPECIFICATIONS
Capacity	533mm (21")
Infeed Opening	667mm x 622mm
Engine / Power	Cummins, Cat / 170-350 hp / 127-262 kW
Fuel	Diesel
Drum / Blades	Drum style: 4 Reversible blades
Max Production	260-520m³ typical, up to 1,040m³ / 8-hour day
Weight	± 6,985 kg
Dimensions	5,820 (L) x 2,550 (W) x 3,070 (H) mm (Closed hopper lid)
Discharge	360° manual swivel; 305mm adjustable chip deflector



The Bandit 2680XP tracked grinder is known as The Beast.

BANDIT "THE BEAST" 2680XP TRACK

660MM TRACK HORIZONTAL GRINDER

This grinder offers flagship versatility for a wide range of applications. With a powerful design, it serves tree services, municipalities, recycling yards, agricultural, and forestry operations.

PERFORMANCE FEATURES

- Efficient milling: Beast cutter mill with a unique cutter-body holder ensures uniform output and lower energy use.
- Versatile processing: Handles slash, chips, bark, C&D waste, tree waste, and limbs for premium mulch production.
- Can be fitted with a chipping drum.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

CATEGORY	SPECIFICATIONS
Capacity	890mm
Infeed Opening	890mm x 1,520mm
Engine / Power	540-755 hp / 405-555 kW
Fuel / Tank Capacity	Diesel / 1,098 L
Feed wheel	(1) 510mm in diameter
Infeed conveyor	Six speed, 3,660 (L) x 1,524 (W) mm
Discharge conveyor	1,220mm wide cleated rubber
Stacking height	5,791mm
Teeth / Blades	30 or 60 / 8
Max production	800-1,100 m³ typical / 8-hour day
Weight	30,844 kg
Dimensions	10,520 (L) x 2,970 (W) x 3,785 (H) mm

Focus on Forestry 2023 took place a month after the destruction of NCT's Richard Bay wood chip mill. Philip Day, NCT's vice chairperson, saw the Bandit Beast in action at the Focus Field Day. It was installed and commissioned at the mill by the second week of Feb 2024, and the mill's eucalyptus line was in operation for the waiting suppliers and ships.

- Compact manoeuvrability: Easy transport into tight sites; track model accesses rough terrain.
- High productivity: Achieves target size on first pass, reducing fuel use and wear.

SAFETY & RELIABILITY

- Heavy-duty construction: Solid welded steel frame with premium components for maximum uptime.
- Global dealer support: Backed by an extensive worldwide parts and service network.
- Track mobility: Caterpillar steel undercarriage allows on-site positioning directly at the material source.



**AFRICA
BIOMASS
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BIOMASS TO ENERGY



BANDIT
THE BEAST® **2680XP**

Track Horizontal Grinder

The Beast® Model 2680XP offers exceptional versatility for tree services, logging operations, sawmills and biofuel processors. Handling wood logs, waste wood, forestry residue and more with ease.

✓ **Heavy Duty** ✓ **Maximum Productivity** ✓ **Multi Material Processing**

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We operate in all nine provinces of South Africa and across border, into Sub-Saharan Africa.

Mulching nurtures soil health in many ways, including by regulating soil temperature, retaining moisture, preventing erosion and inhibiting weed growth. Foresters increasingly use mulchers to create fire breaks, prepare sites for replanting, and reduce under-canopy fuel loads.

SERRAT FX

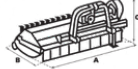
The FX is a heavy-duty forestry mulcher designed for tractors with 80–150 hp. It is ideal for clearing brushwood, under-canopy mulching, reducing fuel loads in plantations, maintaining areas beneath utility lines, and maintaining forestry roads and firebreaks.



The Serrat FX heavy duty tractor-mounted mulcher.

PERFORMANCE FEATURES

- High power capacity: Engineered for tractors up to 150 hp for aggressive land clearing.
- Octagonal strength: The Polser rotor's octagonal shape provides superior structural integrity during high-impact operation.
- Optimised mulching: Designed to reduce fuel loads and process large diameter debris efficiently. 🌿

MODEL		 kW	 hp				 KG	No. belts & type				
										A	B	C
T-1400	1,400	60–112	80–150	12	36	19	1,040	3 XPC	540	1,680	1,340	1,010
T-1600	1,600	67–112	90–150	12	40	22	1,160	3 XPC	540	1,880	1,340	1,010
T-1800	1,800	74–112	100–150	16	45	24	1,253	4 XPC	1,000	2,080	1,340	1,010
T-2000	2,000	82–112	110–150	16	50	26	1,325	4 XPC	1,000	2,280	1,340	1,010
T-2300	2,300	96–112	130–150	20	58	29	1,510	4 XPC	1,000	2,580	1,340	1,010

*Measurements in millimetres

SYMBOL KEY

	Working Width
 kW	Tractor Kilowatt
 hp	Tractor Horsepower

	Swinging Hammers
	Fixed Teeth
	Fixed Blade

 KG	Machine Weight
	PTO
	A = Length (mm)
	B = Width (mm)
	C = Height (mm)

Furniture Industry Masterplan gains momentum

South Africa's Furniture Industry Masterplan, introduced in 2021, is beginning to show measurable progress. The plan, developed jointly by government, industry, manufacturers and organised labour, aims to stabilise and rebuild the country's furniture manufacturing base by strengthening local production, improving competitiveness, and supporting export-led growth.

By Joy Crane

Progress was reviewed at an Executive Oversight Committee meeting in March, led by the Deputy Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition, Alexandra Abrahams, at the Jack Maserow Furniture Factory in Johannesburg.

According to the South African Furniture Initiative (SAFI), the masterplan has created unprecedented alignment across government, labour, and industry. SAFI CEO Greg Boule describes it as a turning point that enables coordinated, practical responses to long-standing structural challenges.

Furniture manufacturing remains one of South Africa's most labour-intensive sectors, contributing about 0.95% to manufacturing GDP and 1.6% to manufacturing employment. After two decades of decline driven by import pressure and reduced competitiveness, employment has begun to stabilise, rising from just over 29,000 workers in 2021 to more than 30,800 in 2024.

The masterplan is built on six pillars: localisation, competitiveness, export promotion, raw material supply, skills development and transformation. Together, these focus on increasing demand for locally made furniture, improving access to finance, expanding export markets, addressing supply constraints, rebuilding technical skills and promoting inclusive growth.

SAFI plays a central role in implementation, acting as a link between manufacturers, government, regulators, retailers and international



Deputy Minister Alexandra Abrahams of the dtic.

markets. Its work includes advocating for fair trade enforcement, supporting compliance and creating commercial opportunities through export missions, buyer matchmaking and digital platforms such as the Furniture Catalogue and Export Market Finder.

Early impacts are emerging, particularly in fair competition and market access. Increased scrutiny of import declarations is addressing tariff misclassification and under-declaration, while engagement with standards bodies is advancing compulsory specifications to prevent non-compliant products from entering the market. Export initiatives are also generating growing international interest in South African furniture.

Since implementation began, key milestones include the establishment of a R400 million Furniture Challenge Fund, with over R100 million disbursed to 20 companies, the

The furniture sector has been designated a priority sector since 2012 and remains crucial to government's plans to boost manufacturing and industrial capacity.

reopening of previously closed factories and the creation of 849 jobs across several provinces.

Additional support includes funding through the National Empowerment Fund, City of Cape Town pilot programmes, international selling missions, and digital platforms such as the national Furniture Catalogue and Export Market Finder, designed to position South African manufacturers directly within global procurement networks.

Boule notes that unfair import practices remain a broader national concern. Without stronger enforcement, illicit trade and dumping threaten not only the furniture sector but South Africa's wider manufacturing base.

"This is fundamentally about fairness," he says. "Local manufacturers cannot compete sustainably if imported products bypass acceptable standards or enter the country under incorrect classifications."

The masterplan therefore calls for coordinated customs enforcement, improved inspections, and multi-agency action to protect jobs and sustain local manufacturing. 🌿

Furniture Design Competition winners announced

The Deputy Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition (the dtic), Alexandra Abrahams, presented the keynote address and announced the winners of the prestigious annual Furniture Design Competition. The Student category was won by Elani Bothman of Potchefstroom Academy, Northwest Province and the Established Manufacturer category by Leago Lekganyane of Mtheza Legacy Holdings Centurion, Gauteng.

The Student category was open to design students enrolled at South African educational institutions, while the Established Manufacturers category catered to manufacturing businesses with in-house design capabilities. Winners and finalists received prizes from sponsors, including Lewis Group, Homewood, Furntech, the dtic, Proudly South African, the African Institute of Interior Design Professions, PG Bison, and Rubio Monocoat.

Elani's design for the Mvelo desk centres on the idea of a union, inspired by Zulu symbols that represent marriage and harmony. Leago's company, Mtheza Legacy Holdings, designed the Moya coffee table, which easily fits in the back seat area of most cars. The table does not use connectors and is held together by friction and its own weight.



Leago Lekganyane of Mtheza Legacy Holdings won the Established Manufacturer Category with the Moya coffee table.

The competition is hosted by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (dtic), and, among others, the South African Furniture Initiative (SAFI), the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), and Proudly South African.

Abrahams said the furniture sector was designated a priority sector in 2012 and remains crucial to the government's plans to boost manufacturing and industrial capacity.

"We should recognise the enabling role government can play in this industry: with the state procuring more than R2 billion in furniture annually, public expenditure can be positioned in a disciplined and market-supportive manner to expand opportunities for local manufacturers, crowd in private investment, and strengthen employment across the value chain," said Abrahams. 🌱



Elani Bothman's Mvelo desk won the Student Category in the annual Furniture Design Competition.

Lucas Mill Swingblade Sawmills



Woodland Mills Band Sawmills



Giving small-scale foresters a practical, no-fuss way to convert timber on-site.



Fort Cox: Where forestry and agriculture training meet

South Africa has eleven agricultural training colleges. Only one of them offers a forestry qualification, and it has been doing so since 1930. Fort Cox Agriculture and Forestry Training Institute (FCAFTI), based in Middeldrift in the Eastern Cape's Amathole region, occupies an important niche in the country's forestry education landscape.

The Forestry and Natural Resource Management department offers two accredited programmes, a Diploma in Forestry and an Advanced Diploma in Forestry Management.

THE QUALIFICATIONS

The Diploma in Forestry (NQF Level 6) is a three-year programme covering the knowledge and practical skills required for a professional forestry career. It serves as the entry point into the second offering, the Advanced Diploma in Forestry Management (NQF Level 7). The advanced diploma is a one-year programme designed for recent graduates and those already working in the sector who want to formalise and advance their expertise.

Both qualifications are accredited by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) through its Higher Education Quality Assurance Committee (HEQC). FCAFTI's participation in initiatives such as Forest21 further reflects its commitment to strengthening forestry education and aligning graduate competencies with industry expectations.

RESEARCH WITH A PURPOSE

The Advanced Diploma carries a compulsory applied research component that is expected to respond directly to industry needs while accounting for social and environmental realities. The intention is that graduating students contribute something measurable to the industry.

The 2025 research project by Inathi Kwezi, supervised by Angel Goldsmith, is a product of exactly this approach: applied, practical, and relevant.

WORTH KNOWING

FCAFTI is not the only institution in South Africa offering forestry diplomas. Nelson Mandela University's George campus (Saasveld) also offers

a Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Forestry, among other qualifications. But Fort Cox remains the only agricultural training college doing so, making it the go-to option for students in the Eastern Cape and the other provinces seeking a forestry qualification. 🌲

Info: www.fortcox.ac.za



The effect of Mycorrhizal Fungi inoculation on the growth rate of Eucalyptus Grandis seedlings at SA Fine-Tuned nursery in Stutterheim

Mini dissertation by Inathi Kwezi submitted to the Department of Forestry & Natural Resources at Fort Cox for her Advanced Diploma in Forestry Management. Supervised by Angel A Goldsmith.

Forestry contributes significantly to South Africa's economy, providing raw materials for domestic and international markets. Among many species, *Eucalyptus grandis* is valued for its rapid growth, adaptability, and high-quality wood (1).

However, plantation forestry depends on the supply of vigorous seedlings from nurseries. Thus, the growing interest in *Arbuscular Mycorrhizal Fungi* (AMF) for improving seedling performance.

AMF forms symbiotic relationships with plant roots, enhancing nutrient uptake, improving water-use efficiency, and supporting root development (2). While the benefits are well-documented globally, their application in South African nurseries remains underexplored.

RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study was to evaluate the effects of AMF inoculation on the early growth of *Eucalyptus grandis* seedlings under nursery conditions in Stutterheim.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Quantify the effects of mycorrhizal fungi inoculation on seedling growth parameters above ground and below ground
2. Evaluate the extent of mycorrhizal colonisation in the roots of inoculated seedlings and investigate its relationship with early root development and overall seedling growth development

METHOD

A completely randomised design was used, consisting of three treatments:

- Non-inoculated control
- Moderate inoculum rate (250g AMF per 25 L growing medium)
- High inoculum rate (500g AMF per 25 L growing medium).

Each treatment was replicated four times, with each replicate consisting of a single nursery tray planted with 100 seeds. The result was 1,200 seeds across all treatments. A one-way ANOVA was used to assess significant differences among treatments.

RESULTS

The average seedling height is shown in Figure 1. After nine weeks, the 250g treatment consistently achieved the greatest height, reaching 3.0cm, followed by the 500g treatment at 2.7cm. The control treatment was the lowest, remaining nearly stagnant at 1.4cm ($p < 0.05$).

Figure 2 shows the average leaf count after nine weeks. The 250g treatment remained the highest with nine leaves, closely followed by the 500g treatment with eight leaves, while the control treatment remained with four leaves ($p < 0.05$).

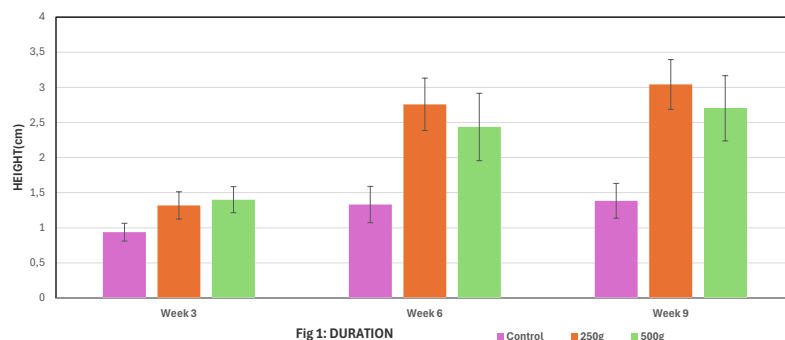


Figure 1: Average height at nine weeks.

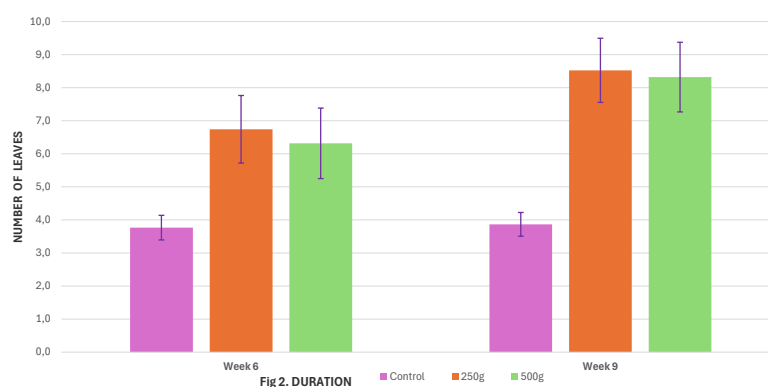


Figure 2: Average leaf count.



Apply AMF at moderate levels: A rate of 250g per 25 litres of growing medium is recommended for *Eucalyptus grandis* nursery production.

Figure 3: Root quality.

Figure 3 indicates that seedlings from the 250g treatment exhibited a more fibrous and extensively lateral-branched root system, suggesting improved soil exploration capacity.

The 500g treatment also showed increased root density compared to the control, but exhibited signs of reduced root elongation.

DISCUSSION

These results demonstrate that mycorrhizal fungi inoculation positively influences the early growth of *Eucalyptus grandis* seedlings, with effects that vary with inoculum concentration.

The initial height growth advantage observed in the 500g treatment may

performance of the 250g treatment indicates that moderate inoculation supports efficient nutrient exchange and long-term growth.

Leaf development followed a similar pattern, with both inoculated treatments outperforming the control, confirming the role of AMF in enhancing nutrient uptake. However, the limited difference between the 250g and 500g treatments suggests a threshold for additional inoculum foliar growth.

Although root length differences were minimal, increased root density in the inoculated treatments indicates improved root architecture and nutrient-absorption capacity. This is consistent with findings by Gao *et al* (4), who reported enhanced lateral root branching in AMF-inoculated plants.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings demonstrate that while AMF inoculation can enhance early seedling development, its effectiveness is highly dependent on application rate. Moderate inoculation created favourable conditions for sustained growth, whereas excessive application introduced stress and limited overall performance.

- Apply AMF at moderate levels: A rate of 250g per 25 litres of growing medium is recommended for *Eucalyptus grandis* nursery production.
- Avoid over-application: Higher rates (500g) may increase stress and mortality, particularly in less controlled environments.
- Optimise nursery conditions: Consistent watering, adequate light, and stable greenhouse conditions are essential to maximise AMF benefits.
- Support further research: Future trials should include improved replication, mortality tracking, and direct measurement of root colonisation.

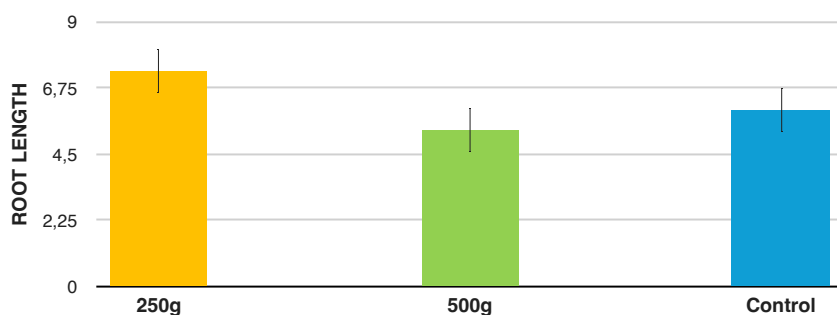


Figure 4: Average root length

Figure 4 depicts the average root length across all treatments. The 250g treatment recorded the longest mean root length, followed by the control, while the 500g treatment showed the shortest average root length. Although quantitative differences in root length were small, qualitative observations indicated markedly higher root density in inoculated treatments.

be linked to rapid nutrient availability during early stages. However, its decline relative to 250g treatment over time suggests that excessive inoculum results in increased metabolic demand or competition within the root zone.

Similar trends have been reported by Wu *et al.* (3), in which growth benefits diminished at higher colonisation levels. The sustained



WHO IS INATHI KWEZI?

Inathi Kwezi is a young forestry professional who has completed her Advanced Diploma in Forestry Management at Fort Cox Agriculture and Forestry Training Institute. She is currently working as a forest intern under the FSA Forestry Graduate Employment programme.

"I did not initially set out to study forestry, as it was foreign to me. A family friend told me about it, and what began as an unfamiliar path quickly developed into a strong interest. Forestry drew me in as I discovered its depth and versatility, particularly its connection to environmental sustainability and community development", explains Inathi.

She wants to contribute to a more innovative and inclusive forestry sector. Through her work and her platform, *Forestry Beyond Trees*, she

wants to foster creative collaborations and inspire young people to see forestry as a field of opportunity, impact and long-term growth.

"I plan to further my education and specialise in precision forestry by applying Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing tools to improve decision-making, enhance efficiency, and create innovative solutions that blend science, technology, and community empowerment".

Inathi's research on mycorrhizal fungi inoculation in *Eucalyptus grandis* seedlings was driven by an interest in improving early-stage plant growth through biological approaches. She focused on identifying practical and cost-effective methods to enhance nursery productivity while reducing environmental impact.

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