EXPANDING AN UNDERSTANDING OF SOUTH AFRICA'S MYCODIVERSITY

South Africa has one of the most biologically diverse floras on earth. The fungal diversity of the country is equally diverse but poorly documented. Mycologists and plant pathologists in South Africa share a concern for this knowledge-gap and seek opportunities to rectify the situation. Five biologists from the universities of Stellenbosch, Pretoria and the Free State, including Prof Mike Wingfield of FABI, recently undertook a broad based mycological foray into the natural forests of the southern Cape.

Prof Wingfield was joined by Prof Leanne Dreyer, Prof Francois Roets and Dr Terry Trinder-Smith of University of Stellenbosch as well as Prof Wijnand Swart of the University of the Free State, who collected samples for the isolation of fungi from roots, soil and leaves of a wide variety of native trees. The work formed part of a number of projects of interest to FABI including those relating to tree diseases supported by the DST-NRF Centre of Excellence in Tree Health Biotechnology (CTHB). The work was also linked to collaborations with Prof Pedro Crous, Director of the Westerdijk Fungal Biodiversity Institute in the Netherlands, who holds appointments at the Universities of Pretoria and Stellenbosch.