

FIELDWORK TO UNDERSTAND THE EMERGING CERATOCYSTIS THREAT TO EUCALYPTUS IN SOUTH AFRICA

From 17 to 19 February, some members of the *Ceratocystis* team, Dr Irene Barnes, and TPCP students, Arista Fourie and Granny Hlongwane, as well as postdoc Dr FeiFei Liu, went on a field trip to Kwambonambi, KwaZulu-Natal, to observe the *Ceratocystis* infection on *Eucalyptus* hybrid clones in the plantations. Guided by Prof Jolanda Roux from SAPPI, the team was able to observe typical *Ceratocystis* symptoms such as stem cankers, wilting and streaks of vascular discolouration in the stems and roots of diseased plants. The team also noted great growth variation between healthy and diseased hybrid clones of the same age.



They collected diseased plant and soil samples from three different sites for further analysis at FABI. Granny will process these samples as part of her MSc project to determine the distribution of the pathogen in the plant and soil samples and to determine the genetic diversity of the *Ceratocystis* population.



The team also discovered some other fungal gems in the plantation debris including birds' nests and stinkhorn fungi.