

INVASION BIOLOGIST VISITS FABI



Invasion biologist Prof. John Wilson (pictured left) addressed FABI on biological invasions in South Africa and the Government's plans to develop control measures to limit the impact of these invasive species on native species of plants and animals. Prof. Wilson is a senior specialist scientist at the South African Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) and is based at the Centre for Invasion Biology (CIB) and Department of Botany and Zoology at the University of Stellenbosch.

He briefed FABI academics on the International Plant Sentinel Network (IPSN) that has membership of over 3000 botanical gardens. This network collectively has 30-40% of the known plant species in the world in collections. Botanical Gardens are frequently used to detect new diseases and pathogens or to observe host jumps.

The International Plant Sentinel Network (IPSN) is being developed to facilitate collaboration amongst institutes around the world, with a focus on linking botanic gardens and arboreta, National Plant Protection Organisations and plant health scientists. The aim will be for these institutes to work together in order to provide an early warning system of new and emerging pest and pathogen risks. Member gardens will help to provide scientific evidence regarding known quarantine organisms and potential new risks to NPPOs in order to inform plant health activities and thus help safeguard susceptible plant species worldwide.

Negotiations are underway to determine in which ways plant pathologists and entomologists at FABI can assist in identifying pathogens and pests in the South African Botanical Gardens.



Examining mopane psyllids during a tour of the FABI Biocontrol Facility, in the photo are Prof. John Wilson from the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) and Centre for Invasion Biology (CIB), Prof. Bernard Slippers (FABI) and Samantha Bush (FABI).