

FOREST AND ORNAMENTAL PLANT PHYTOSANITARY WORKING GROUP

Prepared by Brett Hurley

Pests and diseases remain one of the most serious threats to the health of native and non-native trees in South Africa and worldwide. In an attempt to support and coordinate efforts to manage these threats the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) has recently established a Forest and Ornamental Plant Phytosanitary Working Group (FOP PWG). The formation of this working group was in response to South Africa's participation in the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and the World Trade Organization Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (WTO-SPS), as well as the development of an integrated national forest protection strategy for South Africa.

The FOP PWG provides a technical forum to discuss issues relevant to tree health, including strategies to prevent the introduction and spread of pests and diseases, as well as procedures and regulations around the introduction of biological control agents to manage already present pests. The working group comprises members from various stakeholders, including two academic staff, namely Prof. Jolanda Roux and Dr Brett Hurley, who are linked to the Centre of Excellence in Tree Health Biotechnology (CTHB) and the Tree Protection Cooperative Programme (TPCP) of the University of Pretoria. It is hoped that the formation of this working group will contribute to the protection of South Africa's tree resources, including both native forests and non-native plantations.