

## **ANOTHER ACCOLADE FOR THE TPCP, THE CTHB AND THE SA FORESTRY INDUSTRY**

The Tree Protection Co-operative Programme (TPCP), which is strongly linked to the DST/NRF Centre of Excellence in Tree Health Biotechnology (CTHB), is now nearing the end of its 22<sup>nd</sup> year. This co-operative programme between the University of Pretoria and the South African Forestry Industry is strongly supported by the Technology and Human Resources for Industry Programme (THRIP), which is funded by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and managed by the National Research Foundation (NRF). Forest industry funding is effectively leveraged (currently at a 1:3 ratio) from THRIP and linked directly (and proportionally) to South African students conducting research at local Universities. The TPCP (and South African forestry) has benefitted from THRIP support for the past 16 years with peer review based re-applications every three years.

### **DTI awards**

On the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of October 2011, DTI hosted their annual Technology Exhibition and Awards Ceremony. This year the event took place in Polokwane (Limpopo) and the theme was “Bridging communities through technology”. The TPCP received the exciting news a few weeks before the event that it was a finalist for one of the THRIP awards. Following this news, the TPCP and all other finalists were requested to exhibit examples of their research outputs, products and services to the general public. The exhibition was attended by between 400-500 learners from local schools with the purpose of encouraging them to pursue careers in science, engineering and technology.

The purpose of the awards ceremony was to recognise individuals and organisations for their consistent efforts in advancing and promoting technology interests and innovation. The awards were a combination of three DTI technology programmes, viz. Support Programme for Industrial Innovation (SPII), Technology and Human Resource for Industry Programme (THRIP) and Seda Technology Programme.

### **TPCP wins, Forestry SA wins**

The TPCP was delighted to be announced as the winner of the THRIP award for “Human Resource Development – quantity and quality of students”. Prof Teresa Coutinho, one of the leaders of the TPCP research team attended the Gala Dinner and received the award on behalf of the team. This award represents a very substantial vote of confidence in not only the TPCP, but importantly, its South African Forestry Industry partners. While we tend to typically focus our attention on the research products of the TPCP partnership between the Industry and the University of Pretoria, the important contribution of South African Forestry to education and human capacity development is often outside the spotlight. The new THRIP award brings the focus back to this very important contribution.

Prior to the DTI gala dinner, Dr Rob Davies, Minister of DTI, toured the exhibits and was most complimentary of the TPCP’s efforts. The exhibit also

attracted substantial excitement and interest of young South African learners who deserve exposure to the important intersection between South African Industry and Universities aimed at promoting research. While the majority of the exhibits were strongly focused on the engineering sector, agriculture, IT and in our case FORESTRY also featured. After the minister and his delegation had inspected the exhibits, the gala dinner took place and this was attended by about 200 people. Minister Davies, together with the Premier of Limpopo, Mr Cassel Mathale, presented the awards and in the accompanying photograph, Prof Teresa Coutinho can be seen with the TPCP trophy, certificate and in the company of influential South African leaders.

### **Education, tree planting and the future**

The THRIP award to the TPCP is a great honour and an important milestone for forestry in South Africa. It clearly recognises the commitment that the South African Forestry Industry makes not only to research and development, but also to the education of young South Africans. This vision will clearly pay substantial dividends far into the future. Much like planting trees, the outcomes of education are felt long after our investments are made. The TPCP team is grateful to its members for their long-sighted view in terms of forestry research.



From Left to Right: Mr. Pitsi Moloto - MEC Limpopo Economic Development, Environment and Tourism;  
Prof. Teresa Coutinho - Department of Microbiology and Plant Pathology, and TPCP team member at the University of Pretoria;  
Ms.Elizabeth Thabethe - Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry;  
and Dr Rob Davis - Minister of Trade and Industry.