


She Is Forestry SA

2023/2024 – A Time to Shine



“The success of every woman should be the inspiration to another. We should raise each other up. Make sure you’re very courageous: be strong, be extremely kind, and above all be humble.”

– Serena Williams



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“She Is Forestry SA is creating awareness about the Forestry Sector, strengthening the link between forestry and society, enabling increased knowledge and better understanding of forests, and strengthen willingness of society to support sustainable forest management.”

**– Nelly Malatji,
She Is Forestry SA Director and Secretary**



Forestry Sector,
it is your
time to
shine!



After three successful webinars that first looked at the barriers women have had to overcome to be part of the Forestry Sector, then considered the opportunities available to women wishing to join the Sector and advance within it, before finally considering how each of us can achieve more and grow through presenting the best versions of ourselves, the question was, 'what next? Where does our webinar journey go from here?'

The answer, a combination of all three. A webinar that provided women with the opportunity to put forward the best versions of themselves and in doing so, help to breakdown some of the barriers placed in front of others. A webinar that challenged women to embrace 'their time to shine', inviting them to step up and become the role models and mentors needed by others, both inside the Sector and beyond it, in order to navigate the barriers they currently face.

The 2023 webinar, themed 'Your time to shine!', provided the perfect platform for women to embrace their inner potential before letting it shine out and light the way for others. Like a pebble cast into a lake, sharing your inner light with the wider world creates ripples that travel far beyond the original reach of the individual who released it.

Certainly, this has been the case for the four brave and inspirational young women who stepped forward to become our first forestry mentors. A need identified by the various schools She Is Forestry SA supports and fulfilled by four

very different young women who shared their background, forestry journey and current role within the Sector in the hope their story would inspire the next generation of young women to follow them into forestry.

It was also perfectly captured in the inspirational keynote speech by Mondi CEO Vivien McMenamin, which will be discussed in a later article, and the brilliant entrepreneurship talk by MTO's Itumeleng Langeni.

The webinar also challenged the Sector to shine a light on the industrious nature of female small-scale growers, who have turned their hand to crafting natural products that are sourced from their forestry landholdings to supplement their income. Mama Busi Nguni took the audience on a wonderful trip to meet the craft women she has helped mentor, describing the challenges they face and the role the Sector can have in supporting these industrious entrepreneurs.

After the success of last year's back-a-buddy campaign, another webinar-based fundraiser was initiated, this time for toilet paper and printer paper. These two everyday staples most of us take for granted, our five schools often have to do without. The idea of a teacher being unable to print out a worksheet or a pupil being unable to use a toilet hygienically touched the heart of our amazing audience who donated over R10 000, which She Is Forestry SA matched. This will hopefully bridge the shortfall at our schools and enhance the educational experience for the learners there.

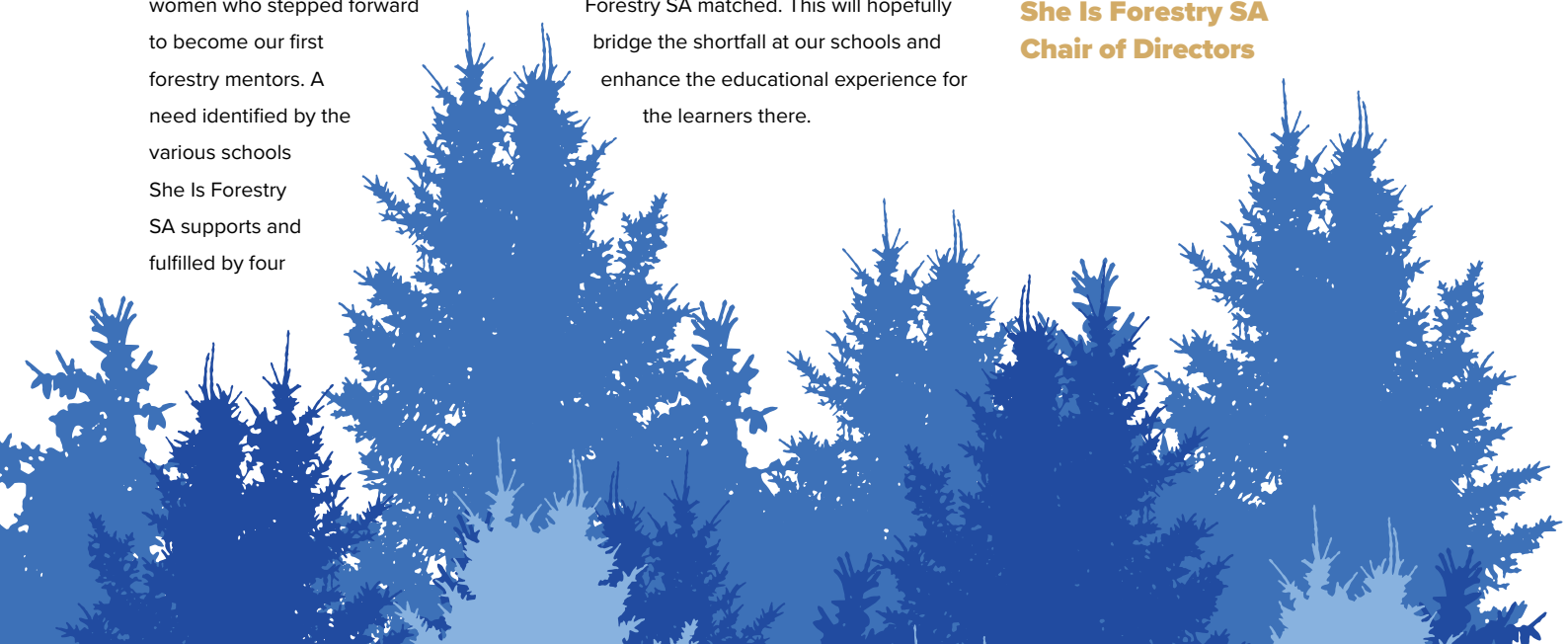
For this we can thank the planning team, Forestry South Africa's Dr Katy Johnson, FSCC's Makhosazana Mavimbela and Dargle Pole's Julia Rees, whose commitment, hard work, purpose-led planning and excellence in this field ensured this webinar surpassed all expectations.

The positive shift in the way Industry embraces and acknowledges the role of women within our Sector is encouraging. It was reflected in the outstanding nominations we received for the five She Is Forestry SA awards categories. Like last year, each of our nominees was worthy of being heralded the winner and while only five could be crowned, it perhaps should be said that the real winner on the night was our Sector for having such a myriad of phenomenal women at its disposal.

I am excited about what 2024 will bring. While we are a relatively small Sector, Forestry has always embraced innovation, technology and change when it comes to the way we operate and manage our plantations and value chains. If we could harness this willingness to explore the unknown and embrace the new and the different, and truly apply it in a transformation context, accepting that in difference there is also great adaptability and strength, then I believe as a Sector we would be shining a light that all others would want to follow.

Happy reading!

Bathobile Ntshingila
She Is Forestry SA
Chair of Directors



“I am humbled, motivated and thankful by the support and enthusiasm She Is Forestry SA has generated over the past five years. It feels like only yesterday Katy Johnson and I were putting together the first webinar in a one-month window. A lot has happened since then, Directors have come on board, schools have been adopted, we are creating videos, running back-a-buddy campaigns, and handing out awards, while supporting female crafters. We have created a movement, a cause, a platform for change; whose heart remains rooted in the same single founding philosophy we started from all those years ago – Gender Equality. We don’t want to put barriers in front of sons, husbands, brothers and fathers, but we do want to demolish those that are holding back our daughters, sisters, mothers and wives, preventing them from realising their potential.”

– Makhosazana Mavimbela, She Is Forestry SA Director



“In five short years, She Is Forestry SA has proved itself as a platform for change, creating a movement whose impact stretches far beyond the boundaries of our Sector. Forestry South Africa is an incredibly proud supporter of this initiative and the exceptional women at its helm. They exemplify how perseverance, hard work and determination can transform a shared vision into a collective reality, creating a lasting legacy of change.”

– Forestry South Africa





She Is Forestry SA tells women from across the Sector that it is “Your time to shine!”

Katy Johnson

**FSA Communication Consultant and
She Is Forestry SA Webinar Coordinator**

“Inside each of us there is a light, whose strength depends on whether we choose to feed the flames or douse them out. For too long, women have doused their light, afraid that if they let it burn too brightly they will attract negative attention. As such, the number of women putting themselves forward for mentor roles is vastly superseded by the number of men, and they are far less likely to challenge an idea or raise their heads above the parapet. It’s sad for our gender, for the individuals themselves and for the Sector who misses out on their valuable contribution. The enemy here is not men, or work culture, it is our own inner voice. The unrelenting voice telling us we are not enough and that no one can find out. So rather than stand out, we shrink. Instead of letting our inner light shine out, we look for ways to dampen it down. This has to stop, as in doing this we are not just failing ourselves, we are failing future generations too.” – Ms Makhosazana Mavimbela, Forest Sector Charter Council (FSCC) Executive Director and She Is Forestry SA Director and Coordinator.

One woman whose light truly shines bright is industry stalwart and mentor to many, Mondi CEO Vivien McMenamin. Viv’s inspiring 15-minute speech would not have felt out of place amongst the most watched TED talks, as she presented the five principles that have made a difference in her career (see page 7). Her bonus point, the need for perspective, seemed to voice the thoughts of many on the webinar chat. Here Viv identifies an impatience

amongst the youth, who seem to want it all and want it tomorrow. “You cannot start in an industry one day and expect to be CEO within the next five years. You simply have not given yourself the time to gain the experience you need within that industry. You must first consolidate your knowledge and yourself in that role. Trying to skip this stage will only lead to frustration and a poorer career journey. The first six months in any role is about learning, I believe unless you truly hate the role you’re in, you should look to stay in it for a minimum of 5 years.” What really flicked a switch, was Viv’s suggestion that rather than looking for the next run up all the time, we should look to expand our skillset outwards by constantly looking for challenges, opportunities and projects to get involved in within your role and to grow and develop through them.

Viv’s keynote speech was followed by a touching talk by FSCC Executive Director, Makhosazana (Khosi) Mavimbela. Khosi had been to all the schools She Is Forestry SA supports, handing out the menstrual cups last year’s back-a-buddy initiative paid for. While at the schools she had the opportunity to speak to the Head Teachers and find out more about what their schools and learners really need. “It was humbling to hear the necessities they were lacking, while also inspiring to hear about the high aspiration initiatives they felt could benefit their learners. The best part was that I genuinely felt we could help with both! It is almost unimaginable that in today’s South Africa there are still

schools struggling to fund the basics like toilet paper, but for many rural schools – certainly our five – this seems to be the reality. The same goes for printer paper, teachers want to create worksheets and homework but do not have the necessities to do this. Fortunately, we represent an industry that not only has the capacity to fund this, it creates them! While it was great to know we could help provide the basics with our next webinar back-a-buddy initiative, what truly excited me was the prospect of addressing their high aspiration hopes. The teachers wanted to provide their female learners with careers advice and role models and I knew webinar coordinator, FSA's Katy Johnson, would find a way of doing this."

The response to the four role-model three-minute videos was both incredible and overwhelming. The webinar chat exploded with congratulations for the four women involved and She Is Forestry SA for instigating the initiative. All four are now uploaded on the She Is Forestry SA YouTube channel and have been watched multiple times. They will be presented to the five schools during the 'toilet paper and printer paper handover' on a drive, which will be added to every year as we expand the videos to involve women working across the entire Sector and all its associated value chains. While the associated industry acclaim for the videos has been great, it is the impact these will have on the learners She Is Forestry SA is invested in, that will be this project's greatest reward.

After an inspiring panel discussion with the four women featured in the videos, Noxolo Ndlovu, Nonkululeko Ntinga, Yoliswa Phiri and Zinhle Mbuyazi, the focus of the webinar shifted from upliftment to entrepreneurialism. Itumeleng Langeni, MTO Group, gave an informative presentation on what entrepreneurialism

looks like in a forestry context, painting a brilliant picture of all the opportunities available to both women and men within a forestry setting. Viewers were then treated to another short video, this time celebrating the incredible craftsmanship of South Africa's small-scale growers who have had to diversify to survive. Khosi joined Mama Busi in this video and pledged She Is Forestry SA's ongoing support of this initiative in the form of sourcing all future Keynote Speaker and Award winner gifts from the ladies. *"I have always believed in leading by example, if She Is Forestry SA pledges their support to these women then I believe others will too. We can't expect the industry to step up and support these ladies and then not do the same ourselves"*, explains Khosi in the video.

As with the previous year, the webinar closed with the She Is Forestry SA Award ceremony. This year an additional category was added, for female researchers, as so many were nominated the previous year. As always, the standard of nominee was exceptional and in our eyes they are all winners! However, this year the awards went to:

- Resounding contribution to the Forestry Sector and Forestry Value-Chain – Louise van Wyk, Sappi
- Resounding contribution to Forestry Research – Melissa Reynolds, Forestry Molecular Genetics Programme
- Small-scale Grower Award – Queen Sabathile Tembe
- Undergraduate Award – Philasande Bhentshu
- Postgraduate Award – Noxolo Ndlovu

It is fair to say the 2023 Webinar was a conclusive success, with 332 audience members who included representatives from six government departments, nine industry associations, 12 SA forestry companies, 17 SA and four international forestry businesses, five SA and four international universities, three high schools and ten international NGOs and NPOs. It resulted in five published articles and over 750 video views and truly showcased how the South African Forestry Sector celebrates and uplifts women.



SHE IS FORESTRY SA WOMEN IN FORESTRY WEBINAR 2023

THURSDAY 3rd AUGUST 2023
10h00 – 15h10
ONLINE VIA ZOOM

REGISTRATION LINK

Webinar Hosting Sponsor **F**
Webinar Sponsor **FORESTRY SOUTH AFRICA™**
Design Sponsor **MTO | group**

Guest Facilitator



Nelly Ndlovu

Keynote Speaker



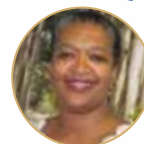
Vivien McMenamin

Guest Speaker



Zimbili Sibiba

Guest Speaker



Itumeleng Langeni

Panel Discussion

Noxolo Ndlovu, NCT Forestry, Junior Research Scientist
Nonkululeko Ntinga, Mondi South Africa, Nurseries Manager
Yoliswa Phiri, Sappi South Africa, Management Forester
Zinhle Mbuyazi, WSB Transport, Forestry Contractor



“She Is Forestry SA is not just an organisation, it is a beacon of hope for women in the Forestry Sector. It’s value-add and contribution cuts across the value chain, including education. Over the years, through the webinar, we have witnessed heart-felt stories where women and beneficiaries of our work have shared how She Is Forestry SA has not only impacted, but transformed, their lives. To witness others being awarded for great work, is a source of great personal pleasure. In the famous words of Graca Machel “Our lives will only have meaning if each one of us can confidently say that I was able to bring five, ten, fifteen and twenty women along with me... do not climb alone.”

– Irene Mathabela, She Is Forestry SA Director



“Cultivating women's roles in forestry isn't just about gender equality; it's about tapping into diverse perspectives, empowering communities, and fostering sustainable practices for a resilient future in South Africa. It is for this reason that PAMSA is a proud supporter of the She Is Forestry SA initiative. The She Is Forestry SA initiative is making significant strides in the South African Forestry Sector by promoting gender inclusivity and empowering women. Through mentorship, training, and advocacy, it's breaking down barriers, creating new opportunities, and fostering diverse leadership. By amplifying women's voices and contributions, it's driving innovation, sustainability, and resilience, ultimately shaping a more equitable and thriving Forestry Sector in South Africa.”

– PAMSA



Learning from a legend – five rules to grow by

Adapted from Vivien McMenamin's 2023 She Is Forestry SA Keynote Speech

Before you lead others, you need to lead yourself

To be an authentic leader, you need to have good self-knowledge of two things. First, your core values. These provide the internal compass that will keep you on a right course independent of the changing circumstances. Viv explains how her core values of non-racialism and female empowerment have been at the heart of most career decisions she made throughout her varying roles in politics, government and now industry. The second is an understanding of your strengths and weakness and the willingness to accept, embrace and talk openly about these. *"Too many women in particular are nervous to talk about their weaknesses. They see identifying a weakness as a sign of being weak, and this really is not the case. By knowing your strengths and capitalising on these, while staying aware of your weaknesses and circumnavigating these, often with the help of your colleagues, you are a far stronger person than someone who ignores them."*

Develop a vision for self

True progression, personally or professionally, starts with a vision. A clear idea of where you are and where you want to be, obviously this will evolve, but I believe it is important to spend time developing this regularly. *"Personally, I have a five-year vision with associated annual goals. These are not New Year resolutions, they are clear targets that are realistic, measurable and timely. Every year I set out to achieve these goals, I then reflect on what changed, what I should carry forward and what needs leaving behind."*

Build your network

"When it was first suggested that I should build a network in my 30s I felt somewhat repulsed, it seemed somehow manipulative and insincere. What I have come to realise is it is perhaps the polar opposite, as a network cultivates relationships and keeps them alive." When Viv discusses her network she highlights the important role her mentors have played, especially at crossroads in her life, stressing the importance of bouncing pros and cons of big decisions off someone you respect and whose values align with yours.



Asking for advice is not a sign of weakness

There is often a misconstrued expectation amongst women that they have to be the readymade product, the finished article. This often acts as a barrier to them asking for advice. To be an effective manager you must accept that you are unlikely to be the most knowledgeable person in the room, especially at the start of a new job. As a leader you need to learn, engage and absorb knowledge, advice and perspectives from your colleagues. To do this, you need to ask for advice. *"In this respect, I believe many women have got it completely wrong. The real sign of weakness is not asking for advice."*

Learn from feedback

"Of all the points mentioned above, this has perhaps had the greatest impact on me as a leader. It came from an observation by the coach I saw in my 30s, who identified that I described my career as a solo journey. No career is a solo journey, it's a team effort. This resulted in a fundamental shift in how I looked at my career and has contributed greatly to my growth and development." Learning from feedback is important, at Mondi Viv describes the 360-degree feedback they receive every two years and how the feedback always has some element that niggles. *"What I have learnt, is that the niggle is the single most important part of the feedback. We need to lean into the uncomfortable nature of feedback rather than leaning away from it."*



The caring heart of forestry

Julia Rees

**She Is Forestry SA Director and Treasurer
and Owner of Dargle Poles**

*“No act of kindness, no matter how small,
is ever wasted”
– Aesop*

While 2023 felt like the year where we turned a corner, and placed COVID-19 and the economic downturn it brought behind us, there was still a lot of political and economic uncertainty. With uncertainty comes fear of scarcity, which is never a good environment into which you launch a charity appeal. While the generosity and outpouring of support we received for the three previous years' webinars provided some comfort, there was still a sense of foreboding when the webinar team got together to discuss fundraising.

This year, we hoped to make a truly lasting impact on the five schools we support by creating videos that could be used

by them and others to promote careers advice and provide inspiring female role models. It was an initiative sparked by the schools themselves and supported by the entire POC, but it would also take fundraising requirements to the next level. On top of that, we were planning an additional award category and to support the small-scale grower craftswomen by presenting our Keynote Speaker and award winners with crafted gifts. Would we get the financial backing needed to make these big ideas a reality?

Thankfully, again weeks of concern and anxiety gave way to gratitude and immense pride as the donations rolled in. Companies who had supported the initiative from day one were joined by new sponsors willing to come on board to make 'lasting change'. In total, a staggering

R270 000 was raised through corporate sponsorship, illustrating both the generosity of our Sector and the worthiness of the cause.

In many ways it was like a webinar version of the movie 'Groundhog Day'! The same pre-webinar nerves were doused by the same incredible show of industry support. Any webinar nerves left over were quickly vanquished by the humbling generosity of our webinar audience, who came on board with our 'back-a-buddy' campaign donating nearly R10 000, which She Is Forestry SA matched for the toilet paper and printer paper drive.

"As webinar coordinator, I always feel especially apprehensive about standing there and asking a faceless audience to donate their hard-earned cash during a cost of living crisis. I never take it for granted that we will get any donations on the day, let alone hit our fundraising targets. When we do, the sense of pride, joy and heartfelt thanks, is almost impossible to put into words. The caring heart of the Forestry Sector is a truly compassionate and charitable one." – Katy Johnson, Forestry South Africa and SIFSA Webinar Coordinator.

TABLE ONE: Money Raised from Sponsors

COMPANY NAME	AMOUNT
FPM & SETA	75 000.00
FSCC (earmarked for webinar hosting)	40 000.00
FSCC (earmarked for video production)	25 000.00
FSA	25 000.00
Merensky	10 000.00
Mondi South Africa	10 000.00
Mondi Zimele	10 000.00
MTO	15 000.00
NCT	10 000.00
PAMSA	10 000.00
SAPPI	10 000.00
Sawmilling SA	10 000.00
SAWPA	10 000.00
Total	R270 000.00

BACK-A-BUDDY Audience contribution	9 450.00
She Is Forestry SA Matched Funding	10 000
Total	19 450.00

During the webinar, R50 000 was given out as prize money to the five She Is Forestry SA Award winners. R45 5250 was spent on the webinar hosting and graphic design costs. R25 000 will be spent on toilet paper and printer paper for the five schools and a further R75 000 on acquiring hard drives to place the role model videos, educational items such as calculators, whiteboards, and extra paper stocks as required by each school.

There is currently R213 709 in the She Is Forestry SA bank account. This has been earmarked for several exciting projects in 2024, including printing additional copies of the She Is Forestry SA Magazine for distribution at the schools we support, as well as other educational institutions.

Globally, 2023 has had to be a year of austerity, yet for She Is Forestry SA it has been another year of amazing abundance despite the uncertainty brought by political and economic challenges. She Is Forestry SA is acutely aware of the importance of spending these funds wisely to maximise the benefit they bring. We understand the importance of working closely with the schools to ensure the funds we generate bring about sustainable, lasting change that meets their needs. The role model videos not only meet the needs of our five schools, but they can be rolled out to all schools, making an impact countrywide. These initiatives have been approved by the She Is Forestry SA Directors and are in the process of being implemented. The effectiveness of each initiative our donations support will continue to be monitored and reviewed.

"I am passionate about uplifting through education. Any initiative that can aid education by keeping girls in school, providing them with the inspiration and knowledge needed to be the best they can be, is an initiative I am proud to be part of. What She Is Forestry SA has done, in such a short time, is truly commendable and I thank the organisations like FSCC, FSA and FP&M SETA that initiated it, as well as the countless forestry companies who continue to support it." – Ms Irene Mathabela, Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment. Deputy Director: Sector Liaison and Capacity Development and She Is Forestry SA Director

Establishing the Awards as part of the She Is Forestry SA legacy

The She Is Forestry SA Awards were certainly the highlight of the 2022 webinar for many people, not least because they provided an opportunity to formally acknowledge the important role women play, from the start of the forestry value chain in the many forestry nurseries to the other end where the myriad of forest products are created.

“It was the realisation of an idea we had envisaged right at the start of the She Is Forestry SA process in 2020. I cannot begin to find the words to express the enormous sense of pride we felt when women from different generations, working across the Sector and its value chain, were being nominated and recognised for their contribution to our Industry.”

– Ms Morongoa Leseke, DFFE,

Chief Director Forestry Operations and She Is Forestry SA Director

In 2023, we wanted to build on last year's success and make the Awards part of the She Is Forestry SA legacy. We also expanded it, by introducing a new category – Resounding Contribution to Forestry Science – to acknowledge the large amount of research-based nominations we had received the first year.

“It was incredibly difficult being a judge! Each candidate nominated showed such determination, such positivity, and such a tangible contribution to the Sector.”

*– Ms Julia Rees, Dargle Poles Director and
She Is Forestry SA Director and Treasurer*

Five winners were eventually selected, although it should be noted that every woman nominated was a worthy winner. Sappi's Louise van Wyk, nominated by Forestry South Africa for her contribution to their Environmental Management Committee, was presented with the “Resounding Contribution to the Forestry Sector and Value-Chain Award”. While Queen Sabathile Tembe took home the award “Recognising the Contribution of Small-Scale Growers” due to her ongoing support and commitment to her community.

Melissa Reynolds, nominated by the Forest Molecular Genetic Programme won the “Resounding Contribution to Forestry Science Award” for her role in the innovative forestry research happening across the Sector.

While there were more student nominations than last year, the organisers did feel slightly despondent not to have a submission from every Higher Education Institute running an undergraduate or postgraduate forestry programme. The awards are a platform where all nominees are showcased, giving them industry exposure that could benefit their future career prospects. Then there is the R10 000 prize money, that would benefit our student winners perhaps more than any other cohort.

A huge congratulations must go to Undergraduate Award winner, Pilasande Bhentshu, whose academic excellence and commitment to her fellow students scooped her the award. As well as Postgraduate Award winner, Noxolo Ndlovu, whose academic brilliance was noted not only by her university who nominated her but also her funding body. We are certain that we will be seeing a lot more from both ladies, as well as all the other nominees in the future.

Each of our award winners received a beautiful handcrafted beaded necklace and earring set created by our small-scale growers' craftswomen, as a gift.



Resounding contribution to the Forestry Sector and Forestry Value Chains

Winner: Louise van Wyk, Sappi, nominated by FSA as the Chair of the Environmental Management Committee

In a Sector full of exceptional individuals, Louise still stands out. An advocate for women, her foresight, proactivity and ability to see a solution others would overlook, has meant Sector challenges such as mining rights and water use licences are met head on with the full support of the entire Sector.



Resounding contribution to Forestry Science

Winner: Melissa Reynolds, FMG Programme, Manager of the Precision Tree Breeding Platform

Over the past 15 years, Melissa has played a pivotal role in developing and implementing 21st century molecular technologies for forest tree breeding. Her passion, drive and professionalism has led to the implementation of advanced robotics systems and there is no denying the resounding contribution her work has made to the Forestry Sector.

Postgraduate Award

Winner: Noxolo Ndlovu, Nelson Mandela University

An exceptional student with an outstanding academic record, she has been repeatedly published in international journals and has already left her mark on the industry with her research. Passionate about serving her community, she has pioneered projects to alleviate hunger. Her unwavering commitment to personal growth, exceptional leadership qualities and passion for forestry research ensures Noxolo truly embodies excellence in the forestry field.



Undergraduate Award

Winner: Pilasande Bhentshu, Fort Cox Agricultural College

Pilasande embodies the spirit of resilience and determination. After facing financial exclusion Pilasande refused to succumb to defeat and embarked on a new path with an FP&M SETA bursary. Her unwavering dedication to her studies and fostering positive change, Pilasande will undoubtedly leave an indelible mark on the Forestry Industry.



Small-scale Grower Award

Queen Sabathile Tembe, Mondi Zimele

Mother of the area's traditional leader, Queen Tembe is not just dedicated to royal duties, she is also a champion tree farmer. Passionate about passing on her cultural knowledge to other small-scale growers and encouraging future generations to take an interest in forestry.



Thobekile Xaba, Merensky Plantation Manager

Thobekile is an inspiration to all. It took hard work, determination and a lot of passion for her to realise her forestry dream but she believes the sky is the limit and anything is possible if you do the right things. Always putting the health and safety of fellow employees first, she is a role model to many.

Simone Singh, Mondi Chartered Accountant

Anything but your average chartered accountant. Simone lives her philosophy to 'never be limited by other people's limited imagination'. Constantly striving to take on bigger, better challenges, she recently became a mother and sees this as her most important role.



Yvette Grobbelaar, NCT Forestry, Melmoth Estate Clerk

Yvette always goes the extra mile for NCT. She is not afraid to fight fires, exceed expectations and still finds the time, often late at night, to help her son with his school projects and exams.



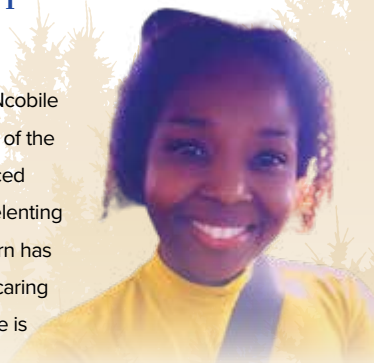
Nyasha Zimbodza, Sappi Southern Africa Risk Coordinator

Nyasha's unbridled passion for the safety of her colleagues has led to her area being elected as the Safest Sappi Business Unit in 2021 and 2022 – reaching a record 7 million injury free hours, an incredible 3 years and 7 months of losing no time to injury!



Ncobile Zitha, MTO Group Plantation Manager

The first woman to hold a Plantation Manager position at the MTO Group, Ncobile is considered by colleagues to be one of the most special ladies they have met. Faced with big challenges in her life, her unrelenting positive attitude and willingness to learn has seen her succeed in her career while caring for her siblings and battling cancer. She is also a mother of three!

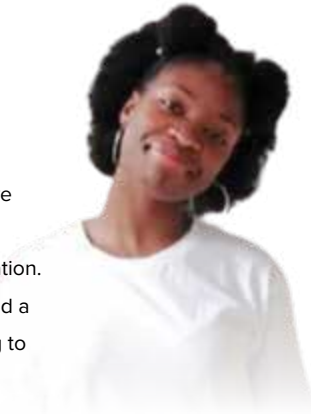


Throla Mbuyazi, NCT Forestry

Throla took over her family business when her husband became critically ill. Alone, she has balanced family and work life, creating a business that could send all four of her children to university and enable her to build a beautiful home and own a Toyota Bakkie.

Nsovo Manganye, Stellenbosch University

An excellent student, with no less than five distinctions, Nsovo is also a member of Stellenbosch's Forestry Student's Association. She is an inspiration to her classmates and a role model for any female scholar looking to succeed in STEM areas.



Marchalyn Snell-Jordaan, Merensky SFP Planning Manager

Marchalyn is the cornerstone of the planning function at SFP, capturing data to advance management growth models. Her eye for detail commands respect from all at Merensky. Currently on the path towards becoming a forest growth and yield specialist, she is also an unwavering custodian of the timber resource database, loved wife and dedicated mother.



Doni Sithole, Mondi Zimele Forestry Area Manager

A hero, role model and mentor. Doni saved the lives of fifteen people when a fire changed direction. Proud of the choice she made, she now actively mentors contractors and new entrants. The first female Area Manager, she is a role model and positive example.



Madeleen Algera, SAFCOL Growth and Yield Specialist

One of very few females in this area of research, Madeleen is responsible for the developing of new growing strategies for SAFCOL and reducing the average clear felling age by 5 years. SAFCOL is very proud of this young lady.



Leane Naude, PAMSA

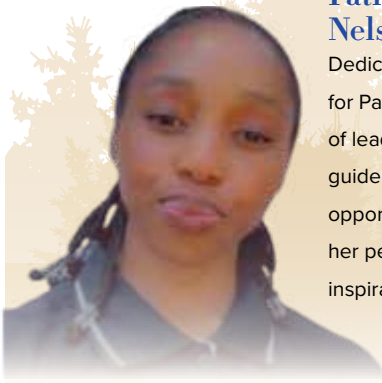
One of three recipients of a Blue Sky Award presented by the International Council of Forest and Paper Associations. Leane's dedication and focus to research and innovation has yielded an inexpensive purification method for renewable biomass and a pending patent.



Dr Ilaria Germishuizen, ICFR Research Director

At the forefront of forestry research for the past two decades, Ilaria is a pioneer, role model and industry leader. A pioneer of spatial technologies in a forestry context, she has contributed hugely to Sector development and growth as well as being an inspiration to all.





Patience Nomthandazo, Nelson Mandela University

Dedication to academic excellence is not merely a goal for Patience, it is a personal mission. Her strong sense of leadership and initiative enables her to inspire and guide others to shared goals. Patience is always seeking opportunities to make a positive impact on the lives of her peers and the broader community. She really is an inspiration to all.



Julia Candotti, University of Pretoria

Julia has already made an outstanding contribution to forestry research, developing a new genome-wide genotyping technology. Julia has exhibited excellent leadership qualities, investing time in mentoring other graduates through coordinating a weekly journal club and generously giving of her time.



Scovia Akello, Stellenbosch University

Scovia has lived through trauma most of us could not imagine, surviving LRA attacks on her Northern Uganda village. Despite this and having to balance her education with domestic duties, she performed well at school and received a full undergraduate scholarship from the Government of Uganda, and then a MSc scholarship from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. Dedicated and determined to continue her studies, she is making a positive impact on her department and is a great ambassador for forestry.

“I love the anonymous quote ‘Excellence is never an accident; it is the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction, skilful execution and the vision to see obstacles as opportunities.’ I believe we should all aspire to excellence and these five exceptional women, and all the nominees, are perfect examples of this, making them brilliant role models and pathfinders to follow.”

**– Nonhlanhla Buthelezi-Onverwacht,
She Is Forestry SA Director**





“As a company one of our values is inclusivity. By promoting women in Forestry and highlighting what women have achieved, She Is Forestry SA, not only aligns with one of our key values but also shows other women what is possible.”

– Merensky

“The strategic intent behind the MTO Group’s holistic transformation strategy is to foster an inclusive culture which recognises that diversity, in all areas of our business, will ensure the achievement of our business objectives in a sustainable manner to the benefit of all our stakeholders. We, therefore, see alignment with She Is Forestry SA’s culture which embraces, celebrates, and promotes the inclusion of women in all spheres of the Forestry Industry. She Is Forestry SA elevates- in our hearts and minds- the debate of women inclusivity in the Forestry Sector. It’s a journey that requires commitment and accountability for it to be fully realised in a sustainable manner. People and their growth is at the core of MTO’s holistic transformation strategy, so it makes it easy for us to get involved in any initiative that we believe supports the growth of people – be it directly or indirectly.”

– MTO



MTO | group



sappi

“Sappi believes that women entering the rewarding world of the Forestry Sector, enriches it with fresh perspectives and ideas, driving inclusive economic growth and sustainability for all value chain participants. Women’s involvement in forestry signifies a step towards gender equality and empowerment, fostering a more robust and dynamic industry and aligns with our company’s approach to embracing diversity. We believe that the expanding forestry value chain presents numerous opportunities in South Africa: the She Is Forestry SA initiative targets a sector that is ripe with potential for career growth and entrepreneurship.”

– Sappi

Providing real role models to inspire & uplift future generations

“You are either part of the solution or part of the problem.”

– Eldridge Cleaver

This webinar was all about the importance of keeping two lights burning. The internal light inside us, which we must feed rather than subdue, and the light we shine on others. The role model videos were the perfect combination of both.

It was an opportunity for the She Is Forestry SA POC to take a step back, allowing space for the light to fall on the four young women who stepped up to be forestry role models. This enabled their growth, while also giving them the encouragement to feed their internal flame. This flame of self-belief, self-worth and self-belonging radiated out of each one of them as they spoke passionately about their forestry careers, the journey that had got them there and their backgrounds. The light that shines from these exceptional young women will light the path for other high school learners who feel they have very few options available to them.

“We are losing female Grade 12 and Matric learners at an alarming rate due to teen pregnancy and substance abuse. They are falling between the gaps because they cannot see any other future. We need to provide them with one, with role models they can relate to and that will inspire them to stay at school and pursue career avenues they previously never dreamed of.”

*– Mr Majosi, from Mnceba
Senior Secondary School in the Eastern Cape*

During May and June 2024, representatives of She Is Forestry SA, Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Forestry South Africa, the Forest Sector Charter Council and various Forestry companies visited the five She Is Forestry SA adoptive schools to distribute toilet paper, printer paper and the hard drives containing the She Is Forestry SA videos.

“In rural schools, the need is great. We are underfunded and under-resourced. If She Is Forestry SA could help us provide the basics, toilet paper and printer paper, it would make a huge difference in our ability to educate our youth.”

*– Mr Mashapa from
Mangoako Secondary School in Limpopo*

It was an enormous privilege to witness the impact these videos had on the female learners, the realisation that these four women had navigated similar barriers to the ones they face and had succeeded to carve out amazing careers for themselves.

“I am excited to see how our learners respond to the forestry role models. It's hard to imagine yourself being anything more than you are exposed to. By exposing our learners to the potential career avenues found in forestry, an industry that is on our doorstep, we will be broadening their horizons and showing them there is more out there to pursue.”

*– Mr Nkosi from
Chief Funwako Secondary School in Mpumalanga*

The schools were also incredibly thankful for the toilet paper and printer paper which they hope will bridge any gaps in their funding provisions, thus ensuring no child goes without worksheets and basic hygiene. In addition, other items were distributed by the companies that joined She Is Forestry SA on the various visits, and these were much appreciated by the schools and learners.

“It is the consistency of support shown by She Is Forestry SA that sets them apart from other organisations. They have adopted our school, and they are making a lasting positive impact. What they give us goes far beyond toilet paper and printer paper; it’s hope, hope for a better future.”

*– Mr Blaai from
Concordia High School in the Western Cape*

Like last year, the school visits offered the opportunity for She Is Forestry SA to gain a better understanding of what each school required going forwards. “These engagements were enlightening and incredibly important as they help steer She Is Forestry SA in the right direction when it comes to the items we will donate in the future. By speaking with the Principals and Educators at each school we can ensure we provide items that create lasting impact,” She Is Forestry SA Director Makhosazana Mavimbela explains.

Feedback from the schools regarding both this initiative and previous campaigns has been incredibly positive and appreciated. They now truly believe that this is a lasting partnership for change and that we are as committed to their schools, their learners and education as they are. More importantly they are starting to believe that together we have the potential to be a powerful driver of positive change.

“The impact of She Is Forestry SA’s generosity has been huge. We have seen massive leaps in the maths grades of the matrics who received calculators. The menstrual cups will help reduce absenteeism due to period poverty across the school and the role model videos will open our learners’ eyes to the endless possibilities out there. Thank you doesn’t seem enough. She Is Forestry SA has changed the lives of our learners and the prospects of our school immeasurably.”

*– Mr Ndlovu from Phindizwe High School in
KwaZulu-Natal*

“I have a simple philosophy: leave the world a better place than you found it. Sometimes the negativity and suffering around us and in the media can be overwhelming, but if we all try and make a difference in our sphere of influence around us... well the world will be a better place. I have grown up with privilege and education, and I feel it's my responsibility to use that to contribute positively. Being in the Forestry Sector I love what we do, the people that I work with, what we stand for, and I love that we contribute to a sustainable future. Let's use that to inspire and motivate, and enable our girls and youth to believe in themselves and dare to dream of a bright future for themselves in Forestry.”

– Julia Rees, She Is Forestry SA Director





NCT

NCT FORESTRY AGRICULTURAL CO-OPERATIVE LIMITED

“The world has arguably never seen such radical change on environmental, social, political and technical fronts, as has been experienced over the recent decade. Some devastating and some incredibly positive. The all-encompassing cohesive role of women in this tumultuous time cannot be understated. As a Forestry Industry, grappling with change, we have to acknowledge the tremendous contribution being made by women on all of these fronts. The She Is Forestry SA programme is the ideal vehicle from which to honour their impactful role. NCT, in keeping with its own respect for the role of women, is proud to support the programme and the women that it so justifiably celebrates.”

– NCT Forestry



“As a woman in forestry, my greatest responsibility and source of pride is lifting those around me, seeing another flourish and fulfil their potential is one of the most rewarding experiences one can witness. That is what we all felt during the 2023 webinar when individuals from our forestry community secretly bid for crafts made by women they had never met, to support a cause that is truly worthy. When our Sector unites, it really is unstoppable.”

**– Susan Morongoa Leseke,
She Is Forestry SA Director**

Mama Busi Mnguni, the solution seeker

Few characters in forestry are as vibrant and colourful as Mama Busi, a small-scale grower, FSA Executive Committee member and She Is Forestry SA visionary. Indeed, there are many accolades you could pin to this diminutive woman with a big personality. Perhaps the quality she is most often praised for is her capacity to uplift others through her own drive, determination and persistence.

"For a small-scale grower, with 2 to 3 hectares of planted trees, the long rotation time is the most challenging aspect of forestry. We know we should leave our trees in the ground for 7 years plus to get the maximum profit from their fibre, but many of us simply cannot afford to do that. They harvest early, losing any profit they will see and have to face the reality of their expenditure outweighing any income made from the harvest. It is hard", Mama Busi explains.

While many would despair, or turn to annual cash crops for smaller, but regular, financial returns, Mama Busi likes to think beyond the obvious.

"In our landholdings we have many natural materials that our ancestors have been using for years to create items they could barter with or sell. We still have those materials and there are still some of us with the skills needed to make these cultural heritage crafts, this could be the solution", she continues.

Mama Busi, alongside other small-scale female foresters, have set up a community of crafts people determined to substitute their inter-rotation incomes while passing

cultural heritage crafts down to the next generation.

As she explains, "the clay from the ground here was used by our ancestors to make pots for Zulu beer, now we use the same clay and skills to make beautiful home decorations. Beading was the way our grandmothers communicated to our grandfathers in the past, a small splash of white beads was a sign of love, combinations of yellow and white indicated pregnancy. They harvested the palm leaves to make bags, baskets and sunhats. These skills and these items still have a use today, we have the women who can make them, all we need now is the market."

That is where She Is Forestry SA comes in, as co-ordinator Makhosazana Mavimbela explains, *"forestry is a complex network of small, medium and corporate growers, where small-scale growers, like Mama Busi, help satisfy the fibre demand of the corporate companies. It is a relationship that both sides benefit from and should therefore ensure it remains sustainable. Listening to the craftswomen, they are*

passionate about forestry but fear it is no longer viable to do in isolation. They have shown great aptitude and drive to find a solution, now they need help to bring that to a receptive market. Here is where the corporates and associations like She Is Forestry SA can help. As She Is Forestry SA, we will use our webinar to promote their crafts and we will lead by example, sourcing our keynote speakers and award winners' gifts from these ladies going forward. I believe that if you show a willingness first, others in the Sector will follow, and I am certain we have the capacity and inclination as a Sector to support these women and help them find a market for crafts."

Mama Busi and the other small-scale growers who have turned to cultural crafts to substitute their income are a great example that forestry is not just about the trees. It's about the people, their passion, belief, determination and perseverance. If you want to support this amazing cause, please contact makhosazana@forestsectorcharter.co.za for more information.



Fibre Processing and Manufacturing (FP&M) SETA

proud supporter of

She Is Forestry SA

Dr Felleng Yende
CEO of the FP&M SETA



The Forestry Sector accounts for about a quarter¹ of the agricultural sector's GDP alone, demonstrating its incredible

power and potential as an economic accelerator and job creator. From the vast timber plantations spanning the hills and valleys of Mpumalanga to the busy sawmills and pulp manufacturers in KwaZulu-Natal, and even vibrant textile manufacturers in the Western Cape, the Forestry Sector's reach spans the length and breadth of the country, reverberating throughout value chains, supporting thousands of breadwinners, and touching millions of lives.

It is good news for South Africa, the Sector's future is bright. Amidst increasing focus on environmental sustainability, the option of wood as a renewable product has seen consumer preferences shift towards eco-friendly paper packaging. Seen together with rapid growth in e-commerce and online shopping, this means that in today's digital age, paper is far from obsolete. Instead, the forest product market represents an area of untapped growth potential.

Likewise, the emergence of green construction trends has driven demand for wooden building materials and furniture. As a result, the World Bank predicts a fourfold increase in global timber demand by 2050, further fuelled by population growth.

However, for the Forestry Sector to truly thrive, we need to grow its capacity, hone its competitiveness, and embrace innovation.

Consider that replenishing timber reserves takes decades, and increased emphasis on resource management will be required to ensure a steady supply and maintain competitiveness. Companies will also need

to optimise their operations and resource utilisation.

Additionally, environmental concerns will necessitate a shift towards sustainability-focussed innovation and transformation throughout supply chains. The local Sector will need to prioritise the development of eco-friendly products and processes to remain relevant, while maintaining cost-efficiency and quality.

To successfully meet this challenge, the Sector will therefore need to explore the benefits of new technologies. For example, a recent McKinsey study notes that businesses in the Paper and Forest Products Sector could realise improvements in productivity of up to 15% by implementing existing digital and analytics tools.

This transformation will require fresh thinking and approaches, as well as active participation and collaboration from both the public and private sectors. We cannot afford to continue with business as usual or allow monopolies in thinking. Only by embracing change, encouraging the input of diverse voices, fostering new skills, and promoting innovative technologies, can we build a stronger, future-proof sector.

Diversity is the foundation of creativity, flexibility, and agility, leaving businesses and sectors more open to out-of-the-box ideas and disruption. Critically, within South Africa's Forestry Sector, this means that we must empower women to enter and take up leadership positions within the sector, lending us the benefit of their contributions, skills, and expertise. We, too, must grow our own timber, and invest in and nurture our talent pipeline.

Demonstrating the importance of gender diversity, a recent study of companies in the S&P 1500 over the past 15 years found



that a 10% increase in the representation of women on the board of directors – which was equivalent to the addition of just one female director – translated into a 17.5% increase in a company's environmental rating.

The Fibre Processing and Manufacturing (FP&M) SETA is a local leader in this regard, as we support initiatives and provide training programmes aimed at upskilling women in forestry, while providing them with the necessary work experience, job opportunities, and resources to build flourishing careers and businesses.

Through partnerships with entities such as with Forestry South Africa and its She Is Forestry SA initiative, we aim to create a female-led workforce that is skilled in the use of current processes and technologies and equipped with the tools and resources needed to actively seek out innovation.

The 13 sub-sectors that we serve ultimately represent a major proportion of the economy, and through its varied linkages, forestry remains an integral part of producing essential consumer products by South Africans, for South Africans. In collaboration with the She Is Forestry SA initiative, we therefore champion the advancement of women in forestry, to ensure that they are provided with the necessary support, training, and access to resources, and that they receive the recognition they deserve as inspirations within this dynamic Sector.

¹ https://www.thedtic.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/Masterplan-Forestry_Sector.pdf PDF page 4 – "The sector contributes almost 25% to Agricultural GDP"

2024: A time to broaden horizons

"If you shine your light, others may do the same. You can ignite a chain reaction of illumination that is unstoppable."

– Dylan Patterson

If 2023 was all about letting your inner light shine through and guide others, 2024 will be about finding the confidence and strong sense of self to share our spotlight with others.

As women in forestry, we understand that we will often be the minority in the room. The lone female voice.

We know what it is to be different and the gender-based barriers which unite all women, independent of race, religion or upbringing. Our journey has given us insights into the world of others, those previously discriminated against based on their race, ethnicity or disability. We can empathise with their struggles, frustration and disillusionment, but we can also do more.

She Is Forestry SA has given women a platform and voice, it has enabled us to shine a light on our struggles, breakdown some of the gender-based barriers we face and provide a united voice. It has been a catalyst for change that has the potential to reach even further. By using our spotlight to illuminate the challenges and potential of others, the previously disadvantaged and those living with disabilities, we will be using our



Makhosazana (Khosi) Mavimbela
FSCC Executive Director and
She Is Forestry SA Director and Coordinator

platform to create even greater change by promoting the power of diversity, independent of gender, race or disability.

"It is a notable milestone in She Is Forestry SA's evolution, and the evolution of women in our Sector in general, that we are prepared to share the spotlight with others who have been marginalised. It shows a degree of self-assurance that I am not sure was there four years ago when we embarked on this journey. The webinar has played a massive role in this, the level of support and understanding shown by our male colleagues, the validation and acknowledgement felt when female leaders share the same feelings of inadequacy and inequality, all of this has made us stronger and quietened the inner critic. I am almost certain that if I had proposed a webinar theme based on diversity, rather than a gender specific theme, even a year ago it would have been dismissed. I think, as women in forestry we have grown so much in the past year that it is time to share that growth with others. Especially as many women fall into several of the disadvantaged groups, be it economically, racially or physically. By helping to break down these barriers, we will be doing our bit for women, but we will also be sharing the spotlight with others in need," explains She Is Forestry SA Webinar Coordinator, Katy Johnson.

“She Is Forestry SA will remain relevant because it focusses on women from the entire value chain. It remains a privilege to form part of this movement, while the country faces all sorts of adversities, but we remain a beacon of hope in our communities. The five schools that we donate to each year serve as proof of our contribution to the forestry community. The Awards and financial compensation we provide to deserving beneficiaries, is one area we take pride in. The exciting Role Models videos, displayed on our YouTube channel and soon our Website, are casting out to the world a true picture of the integral role women play in our industry. The annual Webinars remain our pride and joy, as they are a platform to come together and celebrate ourselves. I will forever be grateful to one of the visionaries behind She Is Forestry SA, Mr Norman Dlamini (Forestry South Africa), he brought the vision forward, so all who read it can run with it, that is why we serve with so much passion.”

– Bathobile Ntshingila, She Is Forestry SA Director



The Forest Sector Charter Council has played an integral role in supporting She Is Forestry SA during its first five years, so it seems fitting to ask their new Chair of the Governing Board, Ms Nelly Ndlovu to give the keynote address at the 2024 She Is Forestry SA webinar. Her forestry career has been dominated by transformation and she is a passionate advocate for diversity, making her perfectly placed to help us shine our light further. She also epitomises mentorship, she herself introducing her mentor Vivien McMenamin at last year's webinar and herself being a mentor for so many in the industry.

This year will see a change in the presentation of the webinar, with Katy Johnson, FSA's communication consultant and She Is Forestry SA webinar coordinator, stepping back from the hosting role to make space for She Is Forestry SA directors Julia Rees and Bathobile Ntshingila to have their turn in the spotlight. Katy instead will be one of our presenters, wearing her scientific hat to look at the power of diversity and what we can learn from nature.

New forestry role models will be given their time to shine, as part of our video series aimed at empowering high school learners to think of a career in forestry and be inspired by relatable role models. The webinar will also make space for our Entrepreneurial Task Team to showcase more of their initiatives, with She Is

Forestry SA continuing to support the Small-Scale Grower Craftswomen by presenting our Keynote speaker and Award winners with handmade gifts. The third year of Awards will see no new categories but hopefully many more nominations as we extend the nomination phase. The highly anticipated She Is Forestry SA website will also be unveiled and used as a tool, to aid not only women, but forestry entrepreneurs. There will also be another back-a-buddy campaign run throughout the duration of the webinar, but we don't want to give too much away about it yet.

“When we first started, there was no idea what we would be able to achieve and how long it would keep going. Five years later, we are in a place that none of us could have imagined, we are proud to share our spotlight to champion diversity. It takes great strength and character to shine your light on another – She Is Forestry SA has cultivated this strength and it makes me exceptionally proud to be part of this phenomenal organisation.” – Nelly Malatji, She Is Forestry SA Director



“The South African Wood Preservers Association (SAWPA), representing the primary wood preservation industry subsector, supports and honour the continued participation and contribution of women in the Forestry Sector and are proud to have woman who are taking up leadership roles in our industry and some actively participating in the She in Forestry initiative. We trust that their participation will encourage more women to get involved in the Forestry Sector.”

– SAWPA



“Mondi Zimele is a proud champion of the She Is Forestry SA initiative, the women at its helm and those it supports. It’s a partnership based on truly aligned values regarding gender equality and transformation and by coming together as the Sector through She Is Forestry SA we are in the unique position to create a single, unified voice, empowering and promoting women across the Forestry Sector and its associated value chains.”

– Mondi Zimele



**SAWMILLING
SOUTH AFRICA**
We saw the future

“Sawmilling South Africa is a proud partner of She Is Forestry SA. We recognise the importance of improving gender diversity in the sawmilling sector as it is a typically male-dominated environment. Women at all levels can bring unique insights and expertise that bolster efficiency and creativity. This in turn can enhance productivity, foster a culture of equality, and ensure a more robust and sustainable industry overall.”

– Sawmilling South Africa



“It has been such a joy to partner with the She is Forestry SA campaign over the last few years. One of our goals is to increase female representation within Mondi and are on our Gender, Diversity & Inclusion journey. We need more women in Forestry, at every sphere of leadership, and I believe that this campaign grows and inspires women to strive to be more. The invaluable insights shared by our CEO Viv McMenamin, at a previous She Is Forestry SA webinar is a great example of how the She Is Forestry SA initiative provides a platform for the sharing of ideas, connection and mentorship. She Is Forestry SA shines a spotlight on the amazing opportunities in the Forestry Sector – what an inspiring initiative!”

– Mondi



“As the FSCC, we firmly believe that ‘Making a Difference’ is a fundamental pillar of sustainable transformation and by coming together as a united Sector to create shared change is the most rewarding, sustainable and effective way of making that difference. She Is Forestry SA exemplified this during the 2023 She Is Forestry SA webinar, where through their ‘back-a-buddy’ campaign raised over R20 000 used to donate printer paper and toilet paper to their five sponsored schools, who were severely lacking in both. As a Forestry Sector, we should take great pride in the knowledge that our trees, our growers and our processors are playing an integral role in transforming the educational needs and landscape for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.”

– FSCC



**FOREST SECTOR
CHARTER COUNCIL**

