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As we enter the festive season, is there anything out there to celebrate?

Members have suffered severe snow damage, followed shortly by some very serious fires.

Now we’re having a droughty start to the stripping season, and the Rand strength has necessitated price decreases to certain markets. Rail tariffs seem to be in for another hefty hike. The list goes on!

Yet there are three things in particular that we can celebrate.

The dream of a state-of-the-art wood chip plant in Durban has been realised, and the first exports are confirmed for January 2005.

Much work still remains to be done, but the likelihood of Members becoming 50% owners of a new BCTMP (bleached, chemi, thermo, mechanical pulp) plant is looking very encouraging as large numbers of Members subscribe for a stake in Pulp United.

After four years of stagnant, and even decreasing, prices for hardwood chips exported to Japan, there are signs that the market is swinging in favour of South African exporters. Significant US$ price increases were negotiated in 2004, and wood chip manufacturers are hoping for
further increases in 2005.

Factors playing a role in this turnaround are:

• A marked swing to plantation-grown timber rather than timber from natural forests. In 1990, about 85% of hardwoods imported into Japan were from natural forests, and this is predicted to drop to 10% by 2010 (see graph below).

• From being a major exporter of hardwood to Japan (over three million bone dry metric tonnes in 1996), the USA is now a net importer of hardwood chips. South Africa is the main beneficiary of this change.

• Strong economic growth in China is causing increased per capita consumption of forest products in that country. Timber imports are on the increase, leading to competition for resources.

It should be noted that the degree to which potential wood chip price increases could affect Members’ mill delivered prices depends very much on the behaviour of the Rand in 2005.

Plantation forests are taking over much of the international Pulpwood trade

Japanese Hardwood Chip Imports,
Percentage by Source Forest Type

Information from WOOD RESOURCE QUARTERLY
“YES” TO PULP UNITED

NCT has received a positive response from its Members to invest in Pulp United, the joint venture company with Södra Cell, Sweden’s leading pulp manufacturer, to establish a BCTMP (bleached, chemi, thermo, mechanical pulp) mill in Richards Bay.

Members signed up within days of NCT launching the project, the first to do so being Grant Smith from Eston. Some Members have already invested lump sums in excess of their individual minimum contribution.

“We have been pleasantly surprised,” says, Patrick Kime, NCT’s General Manager.

“The response has exceeded expectations. If this trend continues, we are hopeful that all the necessary funding will be generated by NCT’s member base,” he continues.

Subscriptions were launched in October and within two weeks, 12% of the total minimum Member funding requirements was subscribed to.

Several meetings have been held with potential Member investors to further discuss topics of interest and importance relating to the investment project.

Some of the common questions raised during discussions have been:

What happens if I cannot reach my full subscription commitment within the collection period?

There are built-in “escape” clauses in the contract providing you with adequate relief should you face onerous circumstances.

My farm is currently out of normal rotation (because of snow damage, fire, etc). Can I start investing later on during the collection period?

Yes. The “escape” clauses allow for such latitude.

How do I go about investing additional amounts?

Three easy voluntary methods are available:

• Lump-sum investment

• Increased deductions

• Extended deductions

Investors can now certainly look forward to an investment opportunity that could realise handsome dividends.

Shares in Pulp United will be issued to investors at regular subscription dates as detailed in the contracts. Bear in mind that capitalisation shares will also be issued against interest accrued in the investment accounts meaning that it is beneficial and wise for investors to get in early in order for their investment to realise more shares.

Members are reminded that the Pulp United Project forms part of NCT’s long-term hardwood pulpwood marketing strategy that is there to benefit all Members whether they choose to invest or not.

Members were given first choice to participate in this project as a means of raising as much of the R400 million required to establish the BCTMP mill.

Pulp United was set up to investigate the feasibility of building the mill. The study will be completed by the end of June 2006 when a final decision of whether or not to go ahead with the construction will be made.
Members eager to sign up for the investment (from top, clockwise):

Phillip Meyer from Greytown
Michael Nsibande from Zululand
Dieter Hein from Vryheid
Colin Tilly from Nelspruit
Grant Smith from Eston

Pulp United, the jointly owned project company between NCT and Södra Cell continues with its feasibility study.

In line with the EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) process, the second public hearing was held in October. The consultants, SRK Consulting, have compiled the Final Scoping Report which has been submitted to the KZN Department of Agriculture & Environment Affairs for comment.

Negotiations continue regarding the selection of a site in Richards Bay as well as for electricity and water supply.

(For more on Pulp United, see page 3)
THE PROOF IS IN THE “JPT” PUDDING

“JPT equals JIT deliveries” - Graham Burnett, NCT Durban Wood Chips.
“An easy innovative tool to plan our business” - Ferdie Brauckmann, NCT Durban Wood Chips

For many years, NCT faced the awesome task in finding a suitable solution to deliver volumes of timber to mills evenly through the month.

Today, it has found the answer to this problem in the Joint Planning Tool (JPT), a real-time, web-based scheduling system.

The system was developed by NCT to eliminate the uneven flow of timber into mills and provide growers and transporters with a scheduling system to deliver volumes of timber rateably throughout the month. The JPT provides real-time information regarding in-transit and delivered loads.

NCT Durban Wood Chips became the first mill to utilise the JPT system of delivery fully. Production volumes at the mill had to meet specific targets and this is where the JPT proved its worth.

Graham Burnett, Operations Manager at NCT Durban Wood Chips says, “By utilising the JPT, we keep our stockholding of timber to a minimum. JPT equals JIT (just in time) deliveries.”

Due to the success of the system over the past few months, mill managers at CTC and ShinCel have acknowledged that the JPT is beneficial to their operations and all deliveries will now be scheduled according to this system.

Haulers have also complimented the system; standing times have been reduced substantially from an average of three hours to fifty minutes at CTC.

As the success story of the JPT spreads, the ICFR’s Forest Engineering Programme (formerly FESA) has also agreed to promote the JPT programme to all timber companies and pulp markets in South Africa.

“This is a clear indication of NCT’s pioneering efforts to add value to the services it offers to its members and stakeholders alike,” says James van Zyl, NCT’s Commercial Service Manager.
NCT Durban Wood Chips has been in production since 17 August 2004 and eagerly awaits its first ship load towards the end of January 2005.

The mechanical parts of the ship loader will be assembled by 15 December with only the electrical installation to be effected during January and February 2005. Commissioning of the loader will commence in February and will be fully operational by the end of that month.

The loader is expected to load the second vessel for the Durban plant expected at the end of February. It will have the capacity to load 800 tonnes per hour and will be fitted with a Jet-slinger to optimise the loading process.

Below and opposite: the ship loader under construction at Durban Wood Chips.
NCT has a “star product” in its range of services to its Members – NCT Special Markets.

Although NCT Special Market annual sales volumes (trade in non-pulp round log timber) is overshadowed by NCT’s annual pulp-wood sales volumes, it still comprises 15% of the Co-operative’s total round-log volume sales per year.

Comparatively, this volume equates to approximately 400 000 tonnes (Special MArkets) to 2,2 million tonnes (pulpwood) anticipated for 2004.

NCT began focusing on Special Market trade in 2000 to counter decreasing sales to non-owned pulp and chipping markets.

NCT Special Markets is a 100% “agency”. This means that NCT has no shareholding in any special markets, and generates its revenue from a 4% commission charge to the supplier/Member on the point-of-sale price before VAT.

A contribution to overall sales volumes

Although NCT Special Markets contribute to the Co-operative’s overall sales volumes, each business unit in Mpumalanga, northern KZN, southern KZN and George is highly profitable in its own right. These NCT Special Market business units are self-funding and is a valuable service to NCT.

What service and benefit do our Members achieve by using NCT’s Special Market Services?

- Introduction to a financially secure trading environment.
- Optimum pricing exposure.
- Payment in 15 days after month-end.
- Professional consulting with regards to forestry practices and logistics.
- Access to competitively priced long-haul transport rates.
- In many cases, “large-volume orders”.

What service and benefit do our registered markets achieve by using NCT’s Special Market Services?

- Timeously procurement of timber.
- Competitive market related prices.
- Focussed services to the markets needs.
- Awareness of the timber resources within NCT grower member supply base.

Geographically, NCT’s Special Markets serve Members in four regions:

Mpumalanga: Leon Olivier 082 806 4047
Northern KZN: Dean Swartz 082 808 6150
Southern KZN: Craig Schütte 082 804 8304
George: Marius Neser 082 806 4094

Anticipated total sales

1 March 2003 - 28 February 2004

15% (400 000 tonnes)

85% (2,2 million tonnes)

Pulpwood Sales Special Market Sales
NCT continues to make a tangible and effective contribution to the environment and the conservation of the Oribi antelope.

The Co-operative sponsored the Oribi Custodian Programme set up by the Oribi Working Group (OWG) to recognise landowners who have made an outstanding contribution to Oribi conservation and their grassland habitat.

General Manager, Patrick Kime, presented Oribi Custodian Boards and Certificates to landowners who were identified by the OWG as worthy recipients.

Recipients of Custodian Boards went to:
- Paula and Angela Hay, Greytown
- Chris Barras, Underberg
- Mo Lister, Ixopo
- Dave Steyn, Ixopo
- Mike Neethling, Port Shepstone
- Wedgewood Estate, Hilton Gardens
- The Currie Family, Eastern Cape

Certificates were presented to:
- Henry Davies, Hilton
- James Berning, Nottingham Road
- Vic Taeuber, Wartburg
- Jon Bates, Nottingham Road
- Peter and Chris Brown, Nottingham Road

NCT has aligned itself with the Oribi Working Group (affiliated to the Endangered Wildlife Trust) to promote the conservation of the endangered Oribi antelope - a red data species - in KwaZulu-Natal.
Advanced generation Eucalyptus grandis seed shows significant growth improvement.

The performance of different generations of E. grandis material has been evaluated at six years of age in a genetic gains trial in Zululand. The results provide an estimate of the genetic progress made over the generations and the value of harnessing the most advanced generations of improved material, under plantation conditions.

The trial, assessed at age 6 years and 10 months, consists of bulks of unimproved (referred to as P0) commercial trees and clonal seed orchard P0 seed; first generation (referred to as F1) seedling seed orchard seed and bulks of commercial F1 (seed collected post felling of commercial compartments); second generation (referred to as F2) seedling seed orchard seed and commercial clones that were available at the time the trial was established.

Stem form, stem volume and tolerance to four diseases Cryphonectria, Botryosphaeria, Endothia and Coniothyrium were assessed.

Figure 1 illustrates the mean (Least Squares Mean) for volume in this trial. There was a 13% gain in individual tree volume of the advanced second generation (F2) material over the first generation seedling seed orchard source (SO_F1_2) and a 14% gain over the commercial F1 (C_F1) material. The F2 material showed significant amounts of gain over the unimproved seed sources, showing a 15%, 24% and 32% improvement over the unimproved material P0_1, P0_2 and P0_3 respectively. Improvement over the commercial clones was also notable at 16% and 62% over commercial clone 1 and 2 respectively.

The results shown in this trial are in line with the expectations that the advanced generation E. grandis material will perform better than the other material due to the genetic gain obtained through breeding for improved growth, form, disease tolerance and quality.

The results of this trial highlight the benefit of planting the CSIR’s advanced generation E. grandis material that has been improved through many years of scientific breeding for improvement in market traits.

Key to Figure:

SO_F2: Bulk F2 seed from seedling seed orchards
SO_F1_1 & SO_F1_2: Bulk F1 seed from seedling seed orchards
C_F1: Commercial F1 seed
P0_1: P0 seed from clonal seed orchard
P0_2 & P0_3: P0 seed from unimproved commercial stands
CC1 & CC2: Commercial clones

Figure 1: Mean individual tree volume of the genetic gains trial in Kwazulu-Natal at age 6 years 10 months. Standard error bars are indicated for each mean.
The snow storms in September this year caused considerable damage to plantations in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands. The worst affected areas extended from south of Ixopo through to areas north of the Greytown district.

Snow events that cause damage to timber plantations are a regular occurrence in higher lying areas of KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga. It is important that we learn from the recent snow event and ensure that, through better species choices, we minimize future risk.

In addition to considerable losses of bark and timber production, the most serious long-term effect of the recent snow will be disruption of felling cycles. NCT has compiled a document containing guidelines that will assist you in scheduling compartments for attention. This document can be obtained from the NCT web page or by contacting the Technical department at Head Office.

The guidelines try to ensure a balance between maximum financial recovery from
damaged trees, maintenance of some form of normality in felling cycles and rehabilitation of damage in the shortest time possible. These are general guidelines and compartments need to be assessed on a case by case basis.

**General principles when rehabilitating damaged compartments**
1. Do not panic and make rash decisions. Drastic clear felling will disrupt felling cycles and in the long-term will not be cost-effective.
2. Do a comprehensive survey of your farm using the NCT document.
3. Prioritise clearing timber on roads and firebreaks. It is worth clearing the first two rows of broken trees from the side of roads.
4. Prioritise the most valuable timber to recoup as much timber as possible.
5. Some markets will accept timber of odd lengths. Check with your local Member Services co-ordinator.
6. Trees do not strip well shortly after being damaged as the bark ‘tightens up, stripping improves two to three months later.
7. Young trees between the ages of 0–2 years tend to bend over with minimal breakage. These trees should stand up again and recover. Intermediate age groups show an increasing tendency for stems to be broken. Older age classes are affected mainly through broken boughs and crowns.
8. For Wattle, prioritise for clear-felling any compartments that are six years or older and have more than 40% of the trees broken or badly bent (beyond the horizontal).
9. For Eucalypts, older compartments that have broken crowns are a lower priority. These trees will develop new leaf material however their growth potential will be severely limited.

**Recovering marketable timber**
Timber should be cross-cut into pulpwood specific lengths where possible. Remove all bark that will strip and sort timber into three categories:
1. Cleanly stripped lengths that comply with pulpwood specifications.
2. Logs that do not strip but otherwise comply with pulpwood specifications. Cross-stack on farm depot. This will allow for maximum airflow through the stack so that bark will dry off and can be removed.
3. Short lengths, very crooked and snapped logs and smaller diameter logs. This timber can be marketed as charcoal timber, firewood or for chipboard.

**Selecting species to replant**
All hardwood species are susceptible to damage from heavy snow at some stage during a plantation rotation. However, certain species show better resistance to snow damage than others. E. grandis and A. mearnsii are very sensitive tree species to snow damage. The juvenile trees tend to bend under the snow load with very little breakage, while intermediate trees suffer mainly from stem breakage. Branch and crown damage is common in mature trees.

Tree taper and crown characteristics are the main factors that control the resistance of trees to snow damage. Slightly tapering stems, asymmetric crowns and rigid horizontal branching are all associated with high risk. E. dunnii has the best natural stem form of the cold tolerant Eucalypts grown in South Africa and this may partially explain why this tree is more susceptible to snow damage.
Trees with longer, narrower crowns (E. nitens and E. badjensis) suffer less damage than spreading heavier crowns (E. grandis).

The recent assessment of GxN hybrid trials illustrates this point. GN hybrids that have crown and leaf characteristics similar to E. grandis suffered heavy damage (50% +) while those displaying morphology closer to E. nitens suffered no or light damage.

**Table 1** rates the susceptibility of commercial species to snow damage. This table should be used in conjunction with the site species recommendations outlined in the NCT Silviculture manual.

### Table 1: Frost and snow ratings for commercial timber species and genotypes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species or genotype</th>
<th>FROST RATING</th>
<th>SNOW RATING</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. mearnsii</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. badjensis</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. benthamii</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
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<td>E. delegatensis</td>
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<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. grandis</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. gra x E. cam</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. gra x E. nit</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. gra x E. uro</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. macarthuri</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. nitens</td>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. saligna</td>
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<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. smithii</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. elliottii</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. ell x P. car</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. greggii (N)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. tecumanii</td>
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<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remember

will repeat itself.

2. Do not plant species sensitive to snow damage above 1100m, particularly on sites prone to heavy accumulation of snow.

3. Spacing: wider spacing allows for a bigger canopy, more crown deflection and often more breakage. However, the effect of tree spacing depends on juvenility of trees and wind conditions. Stand openings and compartment boundaries are more prone to damage.

4. North and west facing slopes are more exposed to prevailing wind, trees planted on these slopes therefore shed snow more readily. South and east facing slopes above 1100m are at the highest risk.

5. Although all hardwood species are prone to snow damage at some stage during a rotation cycle, experience has enabled the ICFR to rate species in terms of snow damage susceptibility. Information from the ICFR and personal experience was used to compile table 1. Follow these recommendations when replanting compartments.

References

Davidson V.R. 1984. A report on snow damage resulting from the snowstorm on 13 June 1984. WRI.

Davidson V.R. 1989. A report on snow damage to timber plantations in Natal. ICFR.


Coryphodema tristis, a moth in the Cossidae family, is an indigenous wood-boring insect with a wide host range.

These hosts include species in the Rosaceae, Combretaceae, Malvaceae, Myoporaceae, Scrophulariaceae, Ulmaceae and Vitaceae. Alarmingly, this cossid moth has recently been found feeding on Eucalyptus nitens, resulting in extensive damage.

This is the first report of the cossid moth Eucalyptus or any other Myrtaceae. Currently, C. tristis has been found only on E. nitens in the Carolina - Badplaas - Lothair area. The extent of its distribution and whether or not it attacks other Eucalypt species is currently unknown.

Cossid moth infestations range from less than 1% to nearly 80% of stands. The sudden and unexpected infestation of E. nitens by this cossid is cause for concern and warrants vigilance.

**Description**
- Eggs. About 1mm long, oval in shape and dull cream coloured.
- Larvae. About 30-40mm long when fully grown. Fully grown larvae have a brown head and the body is light yellowish in colour with reddish blotches. Three short pairs of legs are present behind the head. (A)
- Pupae. Larvae pupate in woven silk and sawdust cocoons. Pupae are about 25-35mm long. Rows of spines present on abdomen and head terminates in spine. (B)
- Adult. Rarely seen and short lived (about one...
Wingspan of 25-50mm. Body is greyish brown, front wings are mottled brown and hind wings are mottled light grey. (C,D)

**Symptoms**
- Round holes penetrating the sapwood (E)
- Trunk and branches of infested trees turn black (F)
- Resin and sawdust appear on trunks and branches (F,G)
- Extensive tunnelling of larvae is found in the sapwood and heartwood (H,I)
- Pupal casings protrude from emergence holes or can be found on the forest floor (J)
- Sawdust is found at the bases of trees (K)

**Basic biology and damage**

Adult female cossid moths lay eggs on the bark of trees, usually in a sheltered place such as cracks in the bark.

Upon emergence, larvae bore through bark and feed on the cambium. As the larvae grow, they bore into the wood, where they cause extensive tunnelling.

Pupation occurs in pupal cocoons constructed inside the larval tunnels. Just prior to adult emergence, the pupae cut themselves out of the cocoons and wriggle towards the tunnel openings until their bodies project halfway out the tree.

In this position, the adults emerge from the pupal cases, resulting in the shed pupal cases protruding half way out the tree or falling to the ground. The cossid moth is reported to have a two-year life cycle in the Western Cape, but the duration of the life cycle in the summer rainfall area is not yet known.

Larvae feeding in the cambium and the extensive tunnelling in the sapwood and heartwood, results in severe damage to trees, which often also die. The main trunks and branches are attacked.

Trees 5–14 years old have been infested but it is likely that the cossid will infest both younger and older trees, provided the diameters of the trunks/branches are sufficient to allow the larvae to feed.

Associations with fungal pathogens seem likely given the black discolouration of the stems and members of the Tree Protection Co-operative Programme at FABI are currently studying this matter.

**Control**

The cossid moth is an indigenous insect with natural enemies of this pest likely to be present. The identity of these natural enemies, their population, biology and whether or not the new Eucalypt host has any influence on their effectiveness is not yet known. No insecticide is currently in use or registered for the cossid moth.

If you notice the cossid moth and/or its symptoms, please contact Brett Hurley of the Tree Protection Co-operative Programme (TPCP) and NRF/DST Centre for Tree Health Biotechnology (CTHB), University of Pretoria

Phone: 012 4205822
Cell: 0829093211
Email: brett.hurley@fabi.up.ac.za
Website: http://fabinet.up.ac.za
The timber industry faced the good and bad of rail in 2004. Thuthi’hlathi, the timber industry’s collaborative project with Spoornet, launched in the Midlands and northern KZN this year, proved invaluable as far as Spoornet’s efficiency and reliability are concerned. Wagon availability problems became a feature of the past. However, rail tariffs increased far in excess of CPI and PPI indicators. While there were some origin points that received single figure increases, the majority of increases in the industry ranged from 15% to 25%, an increment many members found impossible to absorb.

Growing a parcel size
Within Spoornet’s costing system, the Key Performance Indicator is “parcel size”. In an effort to improve NCT’s rail account’s cost recovery ratio and keep tariff increases to a minimum, the minimum parcel size is three wagons in the Midlands and five wagons on the Coal line.

[A parcel is viewed by Spoornet as one consignment of either hardwood or softwood from one origin to one destination.]

While inroads have been made in the Midlands to grow NCT’s parcel size, under difficult circumstances, more needs to be done. Noteworthy is the decline in rail volume from the northern KZN district. Long accepted as the back bone of NCT’s rail account and a district where the parcel size is guaranteed - more than five wagons per consignment - Vryheid is the only district that received tariff increases of 3% and 5% at three of its loading points.

Despite this, there has been a steady decline in the volume railed from this area. The concern is that if northern KZN’s “rail friendly” volumes drop, the overall cost recovery ratio of NCT’s rail account decreases considerably.

Light at the end of the tunnel?
In an effort to understand and quantify the reasons for these excessive tariff increases, NCT engaged Spoornet in discussions at all levels, but to no avail.

This led to the industry as a whole, under the auspices of Forestry SA (FSA), to direct correspondence to Maria Ramos, CEO of Transnet as well as Jeff Radebe, Minister of
Transport, and Alec Erwin, Minister of Public Enterprises.

Mike Edwards of FSA highlighted many of the industry’s concerns with respect to the future of timber on rail and requested intervention to ensure negotiations in a more responsible and transparent manner.

This resulted in a meeting between FSA, the timber industry and Tshidi Nyama, General Manager, Marketing, Sales & Customer Service at Spoornet. It was here that Spoornet undertook to advise the industry of the 2005 rail increases before the end of November 2004. (At the time of going to print, no new tariffs were released).

Simultaneously, the KZN Department of Transport and Department of Public Enterprises was engaged in discussions regarding the industry’s plight.

At the official launch of the KZN Department of Transport White Paper and Policy Document in October - also attended by the National Minister of Transport, Jeff Radebe and the KZN Minister of Transport, Bheki Cele - various references were made to the impact of the under-utilisation of the KZN branch lines and the congestion of road networks caused by timber trucks.

The White Paper explicitly states the need to divert freight volumes from road to rail. The KZN Department of Transport has undertaken actively to resist the closing of any further KZN branch lines.

Minister Cele made specific reference of the plight of the timber industry in the KZN midlands regarding rail concerns, such as non-index related tariff increases in the past two years and the threats this holds for the integrated provincial transport model.

NCT was thanked at the launch for its input into the Policy document.

What the future holds

Timber is the only remaining industry on several branch lines and an economically active sector on a majority of these lines. As such, even small erosion in volumes could result in their closure. Two cases in point are the Franklin to Kokstad and Franklin to Matatiele lines now officially closed by Spoornet.

On the opposite scale, timber has to compete for slots (trains) on the Coal Line with commodities such as coal and manganese, both considered being among Spoornet’s most profitable commodities. By making use of the numerous avenues at its disposal, NCT believes that Spoornet is beginning to understand the plight of the timber industry.

We hope that action is rapid so that rail transport will be an option for timber growers in the future.
A HOT DAY IN RICHMOND

Peter Odell, NCT Tree Farming Forester, Baynesfield
It was a day not to be forgotten. The northerly wind started at dawn along with high temperatures. The fire warning had come through as red.

Although snow had fallen heavily in most parts of the KZN midlands ten days before, the air was hot and dry, the soil and vegetation crying out for moisture.

Adding fuel to fire was all the snow damage — snapped treetops and trees so bent that their crowns lay on the ground.

Around midday, we received news that a fire had started at Etterby Estate, opposite the Byrne Road turn off.

Lance Bartlett, the Forester in charge, immediately called for aerial assistance and all fire crew members and proto teams were activated.

This was all in vain. The conditions were such that by the time aerial support arrived, any attack on the flames would be a lost cause.

The fire first threatened the Etterby compounds and then raced towards the main homestead. Fortunately fire fighters were able to prevent any loss to dwellings and buildings — a brave effort, as conditions were exceptionally dangerous.

In 20 minutes the fire had whisked through most of Etterby Estate, spotting 500m to 1000m in places.

Masonite’s Penavon farm was next in line. The fire roared across the Hella-Hella road and continued on its path of destruction towards the Umkomaas valley.

At one stage we thought we might have caught the fire at the Whinstone/Masonite (Penavon) boundary but the wind swung from a howling northerly to a blistering westerly. The ferocity intensified by the local fire conditions and Whinstone farm went up in smoke.

Rob Gemmel’s house was also in line and at one stage the Etterby household had to retire to the swimming pool. Approximately 150 ha burnt in 15 minutes. And so, the fire carried on, wiping out Masonite’s next farm – Barton Heights and through to SAPPI – Riverdale.

By late afternoon, we accepted defeat and pulled most of our fire fighters out, hoping for a weather-change. Fortunately, the weather eased and we were able to mop up the following day.

The fire, in total, affected Etterby, Masonite, Sappi and Whinstone losing approximately 2000ha. The damage and destruction caused in seven hours cannot be imagined.
Over the past 20 years, improved site-species matching has resulted in large scale planting of Eucalypt species other than that of \textit{E. grandis}.

From the early 1990’s, the “cold tolerant Eucalypts” (CTE’S) were planted in the colder, high altitude areas, and these stands are currently being felled and re-planted. Although coppicing of these CTE's is a viable option, the availability of improved genetic material and a refinement in site-species matching, may favour re-establishment by replanting after felling of existing stands.

However, many of these CTE’s coppice vigorously and in contrast to \textit{E. grandis}, the cut stumps are proving difficult to kill by current methods (such as spraying the cambium of the cut-surface with triclopyr immediately after felling).

Past research at the ICFR suggests that an integrated approach incorporating a number of different strategies may be necessary to reduce the level of coppice re-growth below that where it will compete with newly planted seedlings.

In order to test this, ICFR staff successfully implemented a trial on CTC property at Luneburg plantation on a coppiced \textit{E. macarthurii} stand.

A number of different cultural and chemical methods in various combinations were used in order to establish the most effective manner by which coppice re-growth was reduced.

These included varying the method of herbicide application (basal frill before felling; cut surface) and herbicide type (triclopyr (amine); glyphosate + triclopyr (amine); none); as well as varying the method of slash placement (on top of stump; away from stump; burn).

Although final assessments are still to be made, initial results are promising. Whereas burning did not impact on coppice re-growth, the placement of slash on top of the stumps did suppress the re-growth.

However, the application of herbicides to either a basal frill or cut-surface proved the most effective method. A report will be produced once comprehensive measurements have been completed.

Contact: Keith Little (keith@icfr.unp.ac.za) or Gert van den Berg (gert@icfr.unp.ac.za)
The current year has seen significant progress in the Sirex programme, with the nematode Beddingia siricidicola being reared in South Africa, and released in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape for the first time. Altogether about 178 million nematodes were inoculated into 1763 Sirex-infested pine trees, the first step towards managing the Sirex population in the future.

In addition, emergence depots have been established in key areas, and investment has been made for the long term storage of B. siricidicola. All this has been possible through the combined effort and participation of the forestry industry, Department of Water Affairs & Forestry (DWAF), the Institute for Commercial Forestry Research (ICFR) and the Tree Protection Co-operative Programme (TPCP).

A liquid-nitrogen storage facility has been purchased to secure the availability of nematodes in the foreseeable future.

An essential component of the programme is the annual assessment of the nematodes’ effectiveness in parasitising Sirex. To assist with this, industry has established emergence depots in key areas, for the storage of inoculated and naturally infested logs. Dissection of emerging Sirex wasps allows for the determination of parasitism, and consequently the success of the inoculations and the natural spread of the nematode.

Future research initiatives aim to enhance knowledge of the Sirex – Amylostereum complex, and to develop an understanding of the Sirex life cycle in South Africa.

In 2005, the inoculation programme will gain momentum with a planned release of over 500 million nematodes.

Contact:
Brett Hurley (brett.hurley@fabi.up.ac.za)
New ship loader at Richards Bay

Peter Lorenz, Chairman, CTC

Earlier this year, Elmec Engineering based in Vancouver, Canada, awarded CTC the contract to manage all local aspects of the construction of a second new ship loader in the Port of Richards Bay.

This loader replaces what was referred to as the ‘Duys Loader’ which has been loading wood chips for CTC since 1985. This machine has come to the end of its lifespan having loaded millions of tonnes of wood chips.

The new loader is being assembled on the Finder Jetty next to the first new loader which was also built by Elmec Engineering.

The two new loaders are of similar design which reduces the amount of money tied up in spare parts. This is a significant advantage given that there are some high priced items on the ship loader which need to be replaced for overhaul periodically.

The second ship loader completes the medium term infrastructural development plan at CTC in Richards Bay.

The loading rate will increase to over 1000 tonnes per hour and together with the M6 Conveyor, allows CTC customers to nominate any combination of Wattle and Gum hatches while loading two CTC vessels simultaneously at over 1000 tonnes per hour.

CTC’s customers have expressed satisfaction with these developments.

Keeping the customer satisfied

A comprehensive survey was undertaken in June this year to evaluate NCT’s service to its members and customers.

A total of 1720 questionnaires were mailed to members that attracted a 16% response rate. A further 49 questionnaires were sent to customers with a 57% response rate. All questionnaires were analysed by an independent consultant.

Although both surveys indicated high levels of satisfaction with the service dimensions measured by the questionnaires, there is still room for improvement in certain areas.

Member survey

- Attitude of District Office staff
- Pulpwood marketing effort
- Communications regarding forward planning and long term issues

- Complaint handling
- Order allocation fairness
- Communications regarding changes to supply schedule

Customer survey

- Product delivery at agreed price
- Quality of product
- Courteousness of staff

- Frequency of contacts and visits
- Updating customers on market trends
- Feedback on queries and complaints
Frans Badenhorst, District Manager for the Richards Bay office may have pursued a career as a pilot if it hadn’t been his passion for forestry.

He was exposed to forestry at an early age - “My grandfather was a foreman/clerk on Blyde Plantation at Graskop until the early 1960’s” - but has no regrets in his choice of profession.

Frans joined the NCT Vryheid Office in 1997 as Extension Forester. He transferred to the Richards Bay Office in 1998 and held the position of District Forester (Zululand). With the restructuring of District Offices, he became Member Services Co-ordinator and recently promoted to District Manager.

He services some 350 members (of which 280 are small scale black growers) with his staff team of four. The zone he manages stretches from Mandini in the south to Mbazwane in the north, and Eshowe and Melmoth to the west.

Born in Pretoria and raised in Umtata, Frans is a Saasveld graduate with some 32 years experience in forestry. He started out as Assistant Forester at the Ngome Plantation in northern Natal for the Department of Forestry in 1972. He was seconded to Mbazwane Plantation in 1978.

From Mbazwane he was transferred to Langepan (Kwambonambi) in 1979 as Training Forester where he was responsible for training of employees to supervisory level for the Zululand region.

Frans joined TIMS (Timber Industry Manpower Services in 1979 as a Training Officer and presented safety, fire management and supervisory courses. For five years after that, he was the Training Forester for the Department of Forestry.

He joined Masonite in Estcourt as their Plantation Manager at Draycott Plantation in 1985 where he remained before taking up his position at NCT.

He most enjoys the harvesting aspect of forestry. “It’s physical, progressive and there’s a result in the end,” he remarks.

“I also take pleasure in facing all the management challenges and being part of a process of developing our area into the biggest gum supply zone for NCT. One can say that it is having the best of both forestry worlds,” he concludes.

His other passions include classical music, hiking and sport.

Frans is married to Susan and they have three sons: Gawie (22), Bragan (19) and François (15).
Who’s New?

Lilian Suthiram, Timber Services, Head Office
Annaline Munro, Commercial Services, George Office

Christmas Closure

All NCT offices will close at 13:00 on Friday, 24 December and will re-open at 08:00 on Monday, 3 January 2005.

In Error

In the September edition of the NEWS & VIEWS, Pine Valley Trust was omitted from the list of recipients who received a Certificate of Recognition in the Tree Farmer of the Year Awards. We apologise for the omission.

LOG ON TO NCT’S WEBSITE:
www.nctforest.com

NCT HEAD OFFICE
346 Burger Street
Pietermaritzburg 3201
PO Box 1445
Pietermaritzburg
3200 South Africa
Telephone: (033) 897 8500
Facsimile: (033) 897 8501
www.nctforest.com

NCT “News and Views” is published quarterly. Correspondence is welcomed.
This Christmas...

... to all our Members, customers and staff, a successful and prosperous 2005 - a year of exciting challenges and prospects.
Our Roots

harvest
good
business!

Solid business requires solid foundations and that’s the kind of effort we’ve invested into providing forestry seedlings and clones to independent and commercial South African foresters.

- Over 70 years of combined knowledge and experience in seedling production, farming and clonal forestry.
- ISO9001:2000 and Seedling Growers Association certification
- Ongoing product research and development in association with industry leaders
- A RISK management strategy with dual growing facilities
- Multiple holding nurseries spread throughout the country
- Efficient logistics and administrative support
  In addition to this we offer customised orders and plug types

* Speak to us FIRST for all your forestry planning.