



PROGRAMME

SGASA *Annual Symposium*

9 - 11 JUNE 2026

ST IVES LODGE | KZN MIDLANDS



SAKATA®

PASSION in Seed

NutriGro
Substrates
The foundation of growth.



Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the annual SGASA Symposium. The 2026 edition is proudly hosted at St Ives Lodge in the beautiful KwaZulu-Natal Midlands.

Over the next three days you'll experience a mix of technical visits, practical demonstrations, and thought provoking presentations from leaders across forestry, nurseries, and commercial agriculture. Day 1 features field visits and an evening spit braai at the St Ives Boma. Day 2 brings presentations and industry discussion at the St Ives Conference Facility, and Day 3 includes visits to leading forestry and nursery operations showcasing research, propagation, and commercial production. The symposium will conclude with our SAKATA Gala Dinner.

We trust the programme's summaries will give you full detail on each visit; the symposium itself is designed to combine hands on learning with strategic discussion and networking. Please take the opportunity to engage with presenters, host teams, and fellow delegates – your questions and insights are what make these events valuable.

I would like to extend our sincere appreciation to every nursery and organization that has welcomed us to their facilities during this year's symposium. Your willingness to share your operations, knowledge, and expertise with our members adds tremendous value to this event.

To all our speakers, thank you for investing your time and contributing your experience and insight to help educate, challenge, and inspire our industry.

A special word of thanks must go to our valued sponsors – Sakata, Nutrigro Substrates, Urbinati, and Ellepot South Africa, Nutricoir Global, Vegtech Netafim and Syngenta. Your continued support and commitment to SGASA plays a significant role in making an event of this caliber possible, and we are truly grateful for your partnership.

We would also like to acknowledge all our exhibitors for being part of the symposium. Your support, presence, and engagement contribute greatly to the overall success and networking opportunities throughout the event.

I would personally like to recognize Werner van Niekerk, Shaun Biggs, Dr Sascha Beck-Pay, and Jean Allan for the enormous amount of work, planning, and dedication that went into organizing this symposium. Events like these do not happen without committed individuals working tirelessly behind the scenes, and your efforts are sincerely appreciated.

Finally, thank you to all our members and delegates attending the 2026 SGASA Symposium. I encourage you to take full advantage of the opportunity to connect with fellow industry members, exchange ideas, ask questions, and strengthen relationships within our sector. I trust that you will leave the symposium with new knowledge, fresh perspectives, and valuable connections.

Wishing you an enjoyable and successful 2026 SGASA Symposium.

Kind regards,

Davydd Jenkins
SGASA Chairman





9 - 11 JUNE 2026

ST IVES LODGE | KZN MIDLANDS



PROGRAMME 2026

DAY 1 | NURSERY VISITS | TUESDAY 9 JUNE 2026

07h00 - 09h30	Bus departs St Ives Lodge
09h30 - 12h00	Emseni Farming Tour (Tea and coffee on arrival)
12h00 - 13h00	Lunch at Emseni
13h00 - 14h00	Bus departs Emseni Farming, travel to CPS Seedlings
14h00 - 15h30	CPS Seedlings Tour
15h30 - 17h30	Bus departs CPS Seedlings, returns to St Ives Lodge
18h00	RSVP: Spit Braai at the St Ives Boma Sponsored by Nutri Coir

***Programme is subject to change.**

DAY 2 | CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS | WEDNESDAY 10 JUNE 2026

08h00 - 08h30	Tea and coffee	
08h30 - 08h45	Chairman's Welcome	Davydd Jenkins
08h45 - 09h00	AGM	ALL MEMBERS
09h00 - 09h30	Andermatt – When Nature Means Business: Trends, Drivers and Future Direction of the Global Biologicals Market	Michelle Lesur
09h30 - 10h15	2026 Macroeconomics – The Good, the Bad and the Ugly	Dawie Maree
10h15 - 10h20	Gold Sponsor – Urbinati (5-min presentation)	Erich Jacobs
10h20 - 10h45	Tea and Coffee	
10h45 - 11h05	Toward sustainable management of nursery pathogens: Progress in pesticide testing. Followed by Q&A.	Dr Mesfin Gossa
11h05 - 11h30	Certification Update	Christo Dirks
11h30 - 12h20	Labour Law in Practice: Managing Risk for Seed Growers	Derek Redfern Shannon Lawrence
12h20 - 12h30	Platinum Sponsor – Nutrigro (10-min presentation)	Anton Tollig
12h30 - 13h30	Lunch	

***Programme is subject to change.**

DAY 2 | CONTINUES

13h30 - 13h50	Research Feedback (15 min) Sphelele Zondi, MSc (online, 5 min)	Dr Sascha Beck Pay Sphelele Zondi
13h50 - 14h10	Information Hub (15 min, followed by a 5 min Q&A)	Prof Bernard Slippers
14h10 - 14h25	Diversity of viruses and viroids in Capsicum species in South Africa	Lerato Dhlamini
14h30 - 14h50	Nursery propagation and silviculture research: the cut back of over spec plants and use of paper pots	Dr Ullrich Hechter
14h50 - 14h55	Gold Sponsor – Ellepot (5-min presentation)	Adrian Hembling
15h00 - 15h15	Tea and Coffee	
15h15 - 16h00	Nursery Image Analytics: Measuring plant quality using computer vision. Followed by Q&A.	Dr Kabir Peerbhay
16h00 - 17h00	Consistency over Perfection – Rowing across the Atlantic	Matt Botha
17h15	RSVP: Shuttle to venue in Midlands for dinner (transport provided - dinner own account)	

***Programme is subject to change.**

DAY 3 | NURSERY VISITS | THURSDAY 11 JUNE 2026

07h30	Bus departs St Ives Lodge	
08h00 - 10h00	Mondi Mountain Homes (Closed shoes and high viz jackets are required) Tea/Coffee and rusks on arrival	
10h00 - 10h30	Bus to Sunshine	
10h30 - 12h30	TWK Sunshine Seedlings Tour	
12h30 - 13h30	Lunch at TWK Sunshine Seedlings	
13h30 - 14h30	Bus to Sappi Shaw Centre	
14h30 - 16h30	Sappi Shaw Centre Tour	
16h30 - 17h00	Bus departs from Sappi Shaw Centre, returns to St Ives Lodge	
18h00 - 18h30	Bar opens	
19h00	Sakata Gala Dinner; SGASA Industry Awards (Dress code: Formal)	

***Programme is subject to change.**



Emseni Farming

Our advanced pepper nursery infrastructure enables us to grow our own seedlings from top-quality seeds, creating a strong competitive advantage in the market. Our horticultural team continuously develops best practices through innovative technologies and procedures to meet evolving production and market demands.

Our 2000m² high-care pepper greenhouse nursery has a holding capacity of circa 50k seedlings, supported by ebb-and-flood tables designed to keep plants dry and minimise the risk of diseases.



CPS Seedlings

CPS Seedlings started in 1985, with just recently its fourth-generation family member having joined the management team. The company specialises in commercial Forestry and Vegetable seedlings grown to order only and has nurseries in Pongola and Greytown KZN, with a collective 210 000 tray capacity and plant production on the plus side of 100 million annually.

CPS Seedlings was one of the first nurseries in the country to introduce Peat and Vermiculite into its growing medium and now either produces or imports 95% of its raw materials used in its medium program.

During the delegates visit, we will show case our Williams 1500 and Ellepot Flex Air seeding lines in operation, along with the processing of its prescription growing medium, then onto the nursery side, which can be fully altered to being under plastic for winter production. Our fast-growing clonal program has just received an expansion and upgrade as well as new heated tunnel facilities for high value seedling production during the winter months.

The company prides itself on an annual budgeted program towards greener energy and time permitting, will show off our solar system that allows parts of our operation to now be off-grid, with surplus energy being pushed back into the Eskom grid.





MICHELLE LESUR

CEO, Andermatt Madumbi

From farm to family to finance....

As CEO of Andermatt Madumbi, Michelle is committed to changing the way food is grown. This is to ensure healthy and nutritious food is consumed by all families across Africa irrespective of income levels.

As a proud woman in agriculture, Michelle draws on her wealth of experience in leadership, quantum culture, business strategy, financial management and agri-operations to drive the transformational change she is passionately committed to. Through various boards, businesses and public speaking platforms, Michelle continues to shift perceptions and inspire personal leadership.

The solution to feeding 9 billion people sustainably in 2050 against the complexities of climate change is

logical – we must change our mindsets and “let nature lead innovation”.

Only through a collaborative ecosystem of science, policy, commerce and agricultural practices will we be able to unearth significant systemic solutions required for climate change adaption. The biological industry is well positioned to lead a commercially successful transformation, “backed by science”, and which contributes positively towards climate change mitigation, both locally and globally.





DAWIE MAREE

Head Information and Marketing, FNB Agriculture

Dawie Maree grew up on a farm in the Ventersdorp district in the Northwest Province. After matriculating from Ventersdorp High School he studied agricultural economics at the University of Pretoria and obtained the degree B Sc (Agric) Agricultural Economics in 2000. He then went to Belgium and obtained the degree Master in Management (MBA) (cum laude) at the University of Antwerp Management School in 2002. Dawie returned to South Africa to complete his M Sc (Agric) Agricultural Economics at the University of Pretoria, which he obtained in 2007 with a thesis titled: "Development of different technical, economic and financial benchmarks as management tool for intensive milk producers on the Highveld of South Africa".

Dawie was previously served as an agricultural economist and regional manager of MPO North and MPO Eastern Cape. During this time he wrote various articles for the Dairy Mail and presented the general and dairy economic conditions to producers. In 2008 he attended the International Farm Comparison Network in Kiel, Germany as representative of the MPO.

In April 2009 he joined Agri SA as economist (later senior-economist) and functionary of the Commercial Policy Committee of Agri SA. In this position he represents Agri SA on various forums such as the Agricultural Trade Forum, the National

Disaster Management Advisory Forum, disaster management committees of the Department of Agricultural, Forestry and Fisheries. As member of Business Unity South Africa, Dawie also represent Agri SA in BUSA's activities dealing with issues that affect farmers directly. Dawie also attended various SACAU (Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions) workshops and conferences on issues of financing, food security, linking farmers to markets and other related issues in Africa. Dawie also made several presentations on issues pertaining to agriculture and food security, both locally and internationally, to farmers, the media as well as special lectures to institutions outside of agriculture, such as the SA National Defence College.

Dawie joined FNB Agriculture on 1 February 2015 as Head: Information and Marketing. In his current role he often shares some insights on the current and future state of agriculture in South Africa to various audiences. Dawie represent FNB Agriculture on various forums such as Agbiz (Agricultural Business Chamber). He also provides expert inputs for internal bank committees in order make informed decisions regarding the agricultural industry.

Dawie is married to Isobelle, a lecturer in education, and have a "pigeon-pair" teen twins who give him hell.





DR MESFIN GOSSA

Senior Scientist, ICFR

Dr Gossa is a Senior Scientist at the Institute for Commercial Forestry Research (ICFR). He is an entomologist and nematologist by training, with broad interest in surveillance, monitoring, identification, population genetics, ecology, biocontrol, and management of insect pests of economic importance to agriculture and forestry. His current research focuses on field evaluation and quantification of the

impacts of pests and pathogens on tree growth and yield, and the development of management options to support effective and sustainable management of pests and diseases within the IPM framework. These include testing and identification of new and best performing natural, biological and synthetic products (insecticides, miticides and fungicides) against key nursery and plantation pests and pathogens.



DEREK REDFERN

Founding Director, Redfern Incorporated Attorneys

SHANNON LAWRENCE

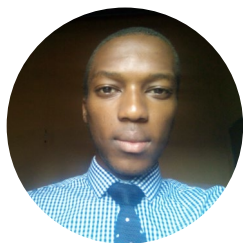
Senior Associate, Redfern Incorporated Attorneys

Derek Redfern is the founding Director of Redfern Incorporated Attorneys and has spent over 20 years specialising in Employment and Education Law. He works closely with Shannon Lawrence, a senior associate at the firm with over 10 years' experience in labour law.

Together, they work with employers across a range of sectors, including agriculture, helping clients navigate real-world workplace challenges, from discipline and restructuring to compliance and day-to-day HR issues.

Their approach is practical and solution-driven, with a strong focus on managing risk and finding outcomes that are fair, workable, and commercially sensible. Rather than simply applying the law, they focus on what works in practice.

Redfern Incorporated Attorneys is a boutique law firm specialising in Employment and Education Law, known for its hands-on approach and long-standing relationships with clients across both the corporate and education sectors.



SPHELELE ZONDI

Master's student

Sphelele Zondi, is a master's student at the Forestry and Agricultural Biotechnology Institute (FABI) in the Tree Protection Cooperative Programme (TPCP) under the supervision of Professor Bernard Slippers. His primary research involves identifying fungal pathogens associated with the Ellepot system in forestry nurseries in South Africa, as well as evaluating the potential for reusing Ellepots to minimize environmental impact and costs.

His research interests are focused on developing eco-friendly solutions for agroforestry. As part of my education, he obtained a Bachelor of Science in Biotechnology from Durban University of Technology (DUT) and a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Biotechnology from the University of Johannesburg.

For his honours research, He published a paper titled "Microbial Diversity Analysis of soil in the rhizosphere of *Securidaca longipendunculata* (African violet tree)," which provides an alternative to fertiliser by characterising plant growth-promoting bacteria (PGPBs) that enhance growth and suppress pathogens. He has worked as a laboratory assistant in Forest Health at Mondi under the management of Izette Greyling.

CONTACT DETAILS:

- **Email:** Sphelele.zondi@fabi.ac.za
- **Contact number:** 073 954 8558
- **LinkedIn profile:** Sphelele Zondi



PROF BERNARD SLIPPERS

FABI, University of Pretoria

Bernard Slippers is the Director of the Forestry and Agricultural Biotechnology Institute (FABI). He is a Professor in the Department of Biochemistry, Genetics and Microbiology at the University of Pretoria. Bernard studies the interactions between organisms that affect plant health in a changing global context, and uses molecular, chemical and sensor technologies to develop precision pest management tools.





LERATO DHLAMINI

Aspiring plant pathologist

Lerato Dhlamini is an aspiring plant pathologist based at the Agricultural Research Council – Plant Health and Protection (ARC-PHP), specialising in plant virology. Her current research focuses on surveying viruses and viroids infecting *Capsicum* species in South Africa. This project aims to determine the diversity, distribution, and prevalence of both emerging and known viruses and viroids using a metagenomics approach. The findings from this study are expected to contribute to the development of effective disease management strategies.

She holds an MSc in Botany from the University of Johannesburg. Her MSc research focussed on population genetics of fungal species from the grassland biome of South Africa. Prior to her current role, Ms Dhlamini worked at Andermatt PHP, where she gained hands-on experience in biological product development. This experience strengthened her ability to apply research in addressing practical agricultural challenges.



DR ULLRICH HECHTER

Propagation Science Specialist, Mondi

CURRENT POSITION & FUNCTIONS

Ullrich is a Propagation Science Specialist at Mondi, where he oversees research in nursery propagation and re-establishment silviculture, driving scientific advancement across commercial eucalyptus plantation operations.

FORMER ROLES

Prior to joining Mondi in 2022, Ullrich was a full-time doctoral student at Nelson Mandela University, where he also served as an Assistant Lecturer across numerous subjects.

QUALIFICATIONS

Ullrich holds a PhD in Forestry from Nelson Mandela University.

INTERESTS, PASSIONS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Ullrich is passionate about travel, experiencing new cultures and cuisines, and outdoor pursuits such as mountain hiking. He has presented his research at numerous international conferences, most recently at an IUFRO conference in New Zealand.



DR KABIR PEERBHAY

Principal Research Officer, Sappi

Kabir is the Principal Research Officer leading Sappi's Precision Forestry team. With over 15 years of combined academic and industry experience, he holds a PhD, and Associate Professorship from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). His work focus is on advancing the application of Geo-Informatic Systems and Remote Sensor technologies to support data-driven forest management, particularly in the

measurement, quantification, and continuous quality assessment of Sappi's growing stock. Since 2016, Kabir has maintained an active National Research Foundation (NRF) scientific rating and produced innovative research that earned him recognition among the Top 10 most published young scientists at University in both 2020 and 2025.



MATT BOTHA

Founder, Wild Child Africa

Matt Botha grew up in Pietermaritzburg, raised by two teachers who ensured he stayed mostly on the straight and narrow—at least during term time. School holidays, mostly on the Wild Coast, however, were a different story, sparking a lifelong appetite for adventure and love for the ocean and land.

After school, he pursued rugby with great enthusiasm and very average results. Despite a thoroughly unremarkable career on the field, the game took him around the world and introduced him to amazing people in far-flung places — arguably a better return than any trophy.

A brief and forgettable stint in the corporate world confirmed what he suspected all along: he wasn't built for boardrooms. Entrepreneurship followed, along with a fair share of hard lessons and "tuition fees" paid the expensive way. Eventually, he found his way back to where he feels most at home — the wild.

Matt is the founder of Wild Child Africa, a family-run adventure-travel business fuelled by a shared

love of the outdoors, community and conservation. His brother, father (both former headmasters), and mother are all involved, making it equal parts passion project and family affair. Yup, and their magic, you may have guessed, lies in Pondoland on The Wild Coast, where it all began.

His fondness for adventure — sometimes questionable in its logic — has led him to take on challenges like the Freedom Challenge, summiting Kilimanjaro barefoot (not recommended), and most recently, spending far too long in a rowing boat.

His latest story, 'Consistency over Perfection', is one of resilience, discipline, and the allowing tough times to help you grow.



Mondi Mountain Home Nursery Complex

The Mondi Mountain Home Nursery Complex, located in Hilton, KwaZulu-Natal, was established in 1989 and has since evolved into a key strategic facility within Mondi's forestry operations.

Today, the complex comprises a commercial nursery, a bulking-up facility, the Seedex facility, and the Trahar Technology Centre. A wide range of research is conducted on-site, including wood quality science, forest health, biotechnology, propagation and silviculture, site productivity, and tree breeding.

Spanning approximately 21 hectares, the complex represents a fully integrated platform linking research, propagation, and operational deployment.

The commercial nursery produces approximately 8 million clonal plants annually, with a primary focus on cold-tolerant eucalypt hybrids (*Eucalyptus grandis* × *Eucalyptus nitens*).

Operations are supported by a workforce of 35 Mondi employees and 133 contractor staff, of whom around 80 are directly involved in production activities.

The core function of the Mountain Home Nursery Complex is to develop and supply superior genetic planting material to Mondi's forestry operations —minimising crop risk and enhancing plantation productivity.

As part of the SGASA field visit, delegates will have the opportunity to explore the Seedex and bulking-up facilities, as well as the tree health screening facility, and observe live demonstrations of new nursery technologies currently implemented at Mountain Home.



Sappi Shaw Research Centre

The Sappi Shaw Research Centre (named after Mike Shaw, Sappi Research GM from 1984 – 1997), was established in 1985. It's based at a historic homestead with previous owners including the renowned Ian Player (of White Rhino Saga fame). It's the base for 34 scientists (including 10 PhD's) and technical field staff with the core objectives of creating and testing germplasm and supporting Sappi Forests with cutting edge research on Climate Change, Tree Improvement, Seed and Propagation Technologies, Silviculture and Harvesting, as well as other enabling technologies, such as Remote Sensing, LIDAR, drones, Near Infrared Spectroscopy, Genomics and Tissue Culture.

The field stop will walk delegates through some of Sappi's value chain, starting by talking about the market and climate, which informs the breeding strategy, the development and testing of new genotypes, the various propagation steps to deploy it, followed by silviculture and harvesting to develop the trees into a form ready to be used by Sappi's Mills, as well as some of the enabling technologies that support the process along the way.

