Call for Expression of Interest

Future Plantation Forests for the South African Bio-economy

The South African Forest Sector plays a significant role in the South African economy through its contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as well as employment. Even though the Sector covers only 1% of the land base, forestry and the forest products industry contributes approximately R 41.9 billion to the GDP and creates over 146 000 direct and indirect jobs. Even though the sector has shown growth in volume production from a finite land base, it faces a number of other challenges to remain internationally competitive. The key competitive challenges include amongst others:

- A need for an increased wood resource grown on a shrinking land area, which requires increased productivity in order to meet the demand.
- A requirement to be competitive on a global level. South African forest products are not tariff protected or government subsidised (as is the case in other countries).
- Rising input costs and a need to reduce the costs of producing timber to be competitive in the domestic and international markets (administered costs imposed by government are particularly high).
- An increasing threat of pests and diseases threatening sustainable timber supply.

Sector specific Research, Development and Innovation priorities identified to address the challenges faced by the sector include:

- Appropriate forest management to address a range of systems and end-products.
- Development and application of biotechnology in tree improvement and tree protection.
- Ecosystem management for growing trees sustainably.
- Application of spatial technologies in forestry including remote sensing.
- Improvement of timber (woody biomass) as a feedstock for bio-based products including bioenergy, biopolymers, biomaterials and other bio-products required for a diversified bio-economy.
- Forest engineering and modernisation research (harvesting, roads and transport, ergonomics and people) – reduced stump to mill costs.
- Managing a fragmented/mosaic forest landscape, including rural sustainable development.
• Responding to demands for competing in **new global markets**.
• **“Impact” research to support policy development** and inform legislation, to support the competitiveness of the sector.
• Technologies and capacity to **predict risks**, and to detect, monitor and design **control programs to a continuously increasing base of threats to the sector**.

Forestry South Africa hereby invites interested parties to submit *Expressions of Interest* to the FSA SIF funding. Submissions will be evaluated by the FSA SIF Steering Committee where after successful submissions will be requested to submit a comprehensive *Application for Project Funding* for final consideration. *Expressions of Interest and Applications for Project Funding* will be considered based on their responsiveness to the sector challenges and priorities as well as the following key criteria identified by the DST:

- Increased private sector investment in Research, Development and Innovation
- Increased general level of Research and Development in South Africa forest sector
- Increase the competitiveness of the forest sector (nationally and internationally)
- Develop human capital
- Generate knowledge
- Contribute to the intellectual property portfolio of the forest sector
- Work towards transformation through the development of opportunities for emerging new role players

*Expressions of Interest* for project funding as well as *Applications for Project Funding* forms are available on the FSA website. For any enquiries please contact Dr Ronald Heath at 011 803 3403 / 083 611 6946 or ronald@forestrysouthafrica.co.za. Expression of Interest for project funding should be submitted to Dr Ronald Heath at ronald@forestrysouthafrica.co.za no later than 1 August 2014.