



## NCT FORESTRY CO-OPERATIVE LIMITED

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### NCT'S 2012 TREE FARMER AWARDS

NCT Forestry's 2012 Tree Farmer awards went to RF Gevers (Pty) Limited in the category of farms managed on privately-owned land and NJ Madonsela in the category of a farm managed on communal land. Both recipients were recognised for their excellence in sustainable plantation management and have earned their place on the exclusive list of achievers in tree farming.

The RF Gevers company is a family operation that was established by Robert Gevers in Vryheid in 1949. The 250ha farm named *Lekker Water* was predominantly grassland which was ploughed up and planted to black wattle. The main market for wattle timber at that time was the Hlobane Coal Mine. From this humble beginning, the operation has grown to include 19 farms and a modern saw mill.

The company owns approximately 2 760ha of pine plantations, 1 840ha of black wattle and 100ha eucalypts. Other productive areas include pastures and camps for grazing a beef herd with 800ha of open areas managed primarily for conservation and fire protection. These areas include grasslands, riparian areas, rocky outcrops, firebreaks and patches of indigenous bush.

A notable feature of the farms is the exceptional standard of silviculture that is implemented. Brush is managed by implementing a cool burn to reduce the fire risk. This is followed by land preparation which involves a shallow rip line on flat sites and pit preparation in steeper areas.

Fire protection on the farms is also worthy of special mention. External firebreaks are well prepared and a network of internal breaks means that any fire in a compartment can be contained to a limited area. Wattle is planted strategically to form a network of green fire protection belts. Open areas are managed to fit into their fire protection plan.

The general management is extremely compliant with all aspects of sustainable plantation management including health and safety, decent work and living conditions, minimising impacts on the environment and optimising productivity. The operation is a worthy recipient of the 2012 award.

The same can be said of NJ Madonsela, winner in the category of a farm managed on communal land.

He manages a stand of five hectares of wattle in the Matimatolo traditional authority outside Greytown. The land allocated to him by the traditional authority was infested with jungle wattle which he has converted into a sustainable wattle plantation.

NJ carries out outstanding wattle silviculture practices that are evident on his farm. He uses natural regeneration methods to develop his wattle, but lines his rows neatly, thinned to the recommended spacing for wattle.

He runs a neat harvesting operation where the stumps are cut at ground level to make it easy to extract timber and to work the next crop. The farm is well-protected by boundary firebreaks that protect against runaway veld fires. To be on the safe side, he ploughs his inter-rows in case of any fire that may jump a firebreak. The farm is also fenced to safeguard his trees from stray animals that damage juvenile trees. Although his farm is small in area, he has subdivided it into different age classes to provide sustainable income for his needs.

NJ was brought up on a dairy farm in Greytown in the 1920s starting out as a herd-boy and later promoted to kitchen duties. When he left the farm for greener pastures as a young adult, he was determined to be the last Madonsela to be a farm worker.

Having only achieved Std 2 schooling, NJ always wanted to give his children a better education and it was this true grit that turned him into an entrepreneur with diverse business interests. He started his own taxi

business, opened the first black-owned bottle store in the Umvoti area and then in 1989 began his relationship with timber farming and NCT.

NJ joined NCT as a shareholding member in 1999 and has never looked back. Despite his low level of education, he managed a series of successful businesses. Today, he has sold off his taxi business and bottle store to concentrate on tree farming. He has sub-divided part of the farm to produce vegetables on a small-scale for his own consumption and depending on the crop, sells to the community and supermarkets in Greytown.

NCT initiated the Tree Farmer of the year awards in 2000.

Each winner received a Stihl chainsaw sponsored by PMB Power Products & Stihl Pietermaritzburg

Ends



Hagen Gevers & NJ Madonsela receive their awards from NCT Chairman, Harald Niebuhr