

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

A WORD FROM JEAN-PAUL, MANAGING DIRECTOR

Dear readers,

Very few are aware of the complexities of professional forestry. An element that is largely ignored although critical in this industry, like in many others is Research and Development.

In the case of trees one doesn't produce nice dummies or complex drawings. All research has trees as an output. And trees grow at their own pace, which at its turn influences the timeframe for analysing research results.

With this newsletter we aim at creating an opening in the largely unknown world of research in forestry and its expected results.

Enjoy the reading.

PREPARING FOR TIMBER PROCESSING



A view of the participants of the workshop, in Protea Skyz Hotel in Kampala

To provide help to the small-holders, Gatsby took the initiative of bringing together the growers with a number of consultants, specialized in sawmilling, resource mapping, harvesting & haulage and investment. They gave an overview of the different available options (poles, veneer, MDF/chipboard, sawn timber, pulp), the required volumes of raw material and corresponding investments, the respective markets and which information and requirements investors desire before they give out any money. Whatever processing plant is selected as most appropriate by the grower(s), the investment inevitably runs into hundreds of thousands and millions of US dollars. As BGF, where working with farmers is the most important operation, with

tens of thousands of farmers scattered around sometimes considerable areas, we are analyzing very carefully the options regarding harvesting and hauling systems, and of course the kind of sawmill needed. Indeed, logistics might be the single biggest cost of the whole tree growing and processing process. The contacts with those experts might prove to be valuable not only to UTGA growers, but also to BGF.

Within a few years that's what we will do

BGF participated in the "Uganda Commercial Tree Growers Industry" workshop, organized jointly between the Gatsby Africa Trust and UTGA (Ugandan Tree Growers Association). It took place on 21st and 22nd of February in Kampala. The aim of the workshop was to support growers in formulating pathways towards accessing high-value markets. The motive behind the organization of the workshop was the coming of age of about 105,000ha of mostly pine plantations in Uganda, which through thinnings and clearfellings have started to provide a huge timber volume to the market (see article in Miti #54 "The Ugandan timber plantation resource and markets" by Mike Howard). About 90% of these plantations were established through a successful Government project called the "Sawlog Production Grant Scheme" with support from the Government of Norway, the European Union and FAO of late. While the silvicultural part of the plantations is of good quality, the harvesting and processing part is still a work in progress, with small-holders struggling to make profit out of their investment. Big established companies, often internationally owned, have their processing plants.



The participants appreciated Miti magazine for the quality of its information ("The best forestry magazine of East Africa")

TREE BREEDING IN AN EASTERN AFRICAN CONTEXT



Day 1: Participants to the workshop listening attentively to one of the speakers

Germplasm meaning either seeds or living tree parts of plants that can be transported like cuttings or tissue cultures.

As BGF previously was elected as chair of the “Kenya Commercial Tree Improvement Strategy” (see the Newsletter of November last year), we were very much present.

Regarding trees, tree breeding is taking place both in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, executed both by Government (Kenya Forestry Research Institute, Tanzania Forestry Research Institute, National Forestry Resources Research Institute in Uganda) and the private sector (e.g. Finlays for *Eucalyptus grandis* in Kericho). In all three countries tree breeding programmes are running, in

No good timber without good trees

As a practical example of the importance of tree breeding, nothing better than talk about BGF’s flagship species in Kenya, *Melia volkensii*. It has now enjoyed a breeding programme led by KEFRI and JICA (the Japanese International Cooperation Agency), for about 20 years, and as such is one of the rare African species where this happens. The gains of the breeding between the 1st and 2nd generation, as documented by KEFRI, were an average of 17.4% in height and 18.6% to 31.1% in diameter. This is big. It means that logs destined for the sawmill will be substantially longer and fatter, and that a bigger percentage of the trees will be straighter and not crooked anymore. End last year, BGF has signed an agreement with KEFRI to plant a seed orchard which will give it easy access to the 2nd generation of improved melia trees.

It’s a commercial win, really needed in a tough ecological environment not favoured by climate neither topography.

The same “wins” can be applicable to other commercial tree species, all over East Africa. Therefore, during 14th and 15th of March, New Forests (a global investment manager of nature-based real assets) and the Gatsby Africa Trust organized yet another workshop (Gatsby is quite active) on “Commercial Forestry Tree Improvement” with “Collaborative research & deployment: a means to access improved germplasm and deploy quality plants in East Africa and beyond” as its particular theme.

different phases of execution (tree breeding is a lengthy, never-ending process) and with different, sometimes overlapping species. It costs money, and partnership and cooperation is the way to go to cut costs.

But it was emphasized by different speakers that high-yielding plantations result from different contributions, like good silvicultural practices and management, not merely the right tree germplasm.



Day 2: The panel (from left to right Paulo Lyimo-SUA Tanzania, Revocatus Mushumbushi-TAFORI, Hillary Agaba (NaFORRI) and Jan Vandenabeele (BGF) answering questions from the floor