

SA leg of Blue Sky Young Researchers Innovation Award launched

The Paper Manufacturers Association of South Africa (PAMSA) has launched the local leg of the Blue Sky Young Researchers Innovation Award.



Research – from tree breeding to materials development and the beneficiation of process waste – is vital in a sustainable forestry sector. (Image: Mndi)

Organised by the International Council of Forest and Paper Associations (ICFPA), to which PAMSA belongs, it invites young students and researchers in wood- and fibre-based fields to showcase their work and be rewarded for their contribution to science and society, as well as be recognised by an international community.

Students and researchers under the age of 30 who are conducting research and innovation projects relevant to forestry, forest products and/or wood fibre processing technologies can apply. Entrants should have links to academia, public or private research centres, or corporate research and innovation departments.

'Boosting the forest bio-economy'

This year's Blue Sky Awards theme is "Boosting the forest bio-economy: Nature-based solutions towards a lower carbon economy". Projects should seek to cover a range of activities related to forest-based science, innovative forest-based products that drive health and/or environmental benefits, and process improvements and innovation along the sector's value chain. Submissions should also demonstrate direct and indirect links to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Research – from tree breeding to materials development and the beneficiation of process waste – is vital in a sustainable forestry sector, says Jane Molony, PAMSA executive director, “Research strengthens the industry’s role in meeting international climate change commitments, especially as the sector seeks to ‘build back better’ with more resilient and sustainable solutions in the post-Covid economy.”

Wood fibre, lignin, cellulose and papermaking by-products hold immense potential as alternatives to fossil-based products.



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“Harvested wood products – timber, pulp and other wood-fibre based resources – are some of the oldest materials in the world, and well-managed forests and timber plantations are underrated as renewable resources and solutions to climate change. What many people don’t realise, is that trees and anything manufactured from their wood are carbon-storage mechanisms,” explains Molony.

Rewards, prestige and global opportunity

The top two South African entries – as judged by a panel of local industry experts – will be awarded R25,000 and R15,000 respectively and their entries will be submitted into the international round.

The top three international submissions – selected from the participating countries – will present their projects to global forest products industry CEOs and representatives at the CEO Roundtable in Australia in April 2021.

The online entry form, as well as entry criteria and terms of reference, are available [here](#). Deadline for submissions is 24 August 2020.

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