

FABI ACADEMICS HIT THE AIRWAVES

FABI Professors Zander Myburg and Bernard Slippers participated in a two-hour live broadcast on radio station SAfm as guest speakers at the NRF Science for Society lecture series discussing the topic “Biotechnology: Productive forest plantations as a possible answer to our energy and material needs”.

Guests from academia, industry and government packed the Senate Hall at the University of Pretoria where Vice Chancellor and Principle of the University of Pretoria, Prof. Cheryl de la Rey along with Prof. Nithaya Chetty, deputy CEO: Astronomy representing the National Research Foundation (NRF) welcomed everyone.

Veteran radio presenter Ike Phaahla hosted the lecture on SAfm’s “The Talkshop” radio programme. The presentations were followed by a panel discussion that included Drs Steven Hussey, Eshchar Mizrahi and Sanushka Naidoo who together answered questions on the topic from listeners and guests in the venue.

Prof. Myburg’s talk titled “Tree biotechnology: learning to read, write and translate the genetic code of trees” took listeners through some of the ground breaking research work being done in the Forest Molecular Genetics (FMG) programme. He also gave a glimpse into the future and where the rapid strides in technological development is taking genetic research.

Prof. Slippers spoke of the role biotechnology plays in addressing forestry pests and diseases and of the work being done in the Tree Protection Cooperative Programme (TPCP) to address the increasing number of pests and pathogens plaguing the local forestry industry.

This is the fourth year that the NRF has been running the Science for Society lecture series as a means of bridging the divide that exists between science and community issues and to help society relate to how science, research and technology positively impact on our day-to-day lives and on future generations. Through this lecture series, the organisation seeks to showcase the work of NRF-funded researchers in addressing real challenges that are facing South Africa today.

