

## FABIANS ATTEND A MAJOR FORESTRY CONFERENCE IN COSTA RICA

*Prepared by Prof Bernard Slippers*

The third IUFRO Latin American conference was held in San José, Costa Rica from 12-15 June 2013. Jolanda Roux, Mike Wingfield and Bernard Slippers attended the meeting on behalf of FABI and in their official capacities as IUFRO office-holders. Jolanda is the coordinator for division 7.02 (Forest Pathology), which is a main part of division 7 that deals with Forest Health. Mike was elected during this meeting as the next president of IUFRO. He will officially take over the leadership of the organization at the IUFRO world congress in October 2014. This is of major significance for the CTHB, FABI, the University of Pretoria and South African research as IUFRO is one of the oldest and largest research organizations in the world, representing over 15000 researchers from 110 countries around the world.



Prof Mike Wingfield (Vice President, IUFRO Arauco), Dr Lee Su See (Vice President, IUFRO Task Forces) and Prof Don Koo Lee (IUFRO Past President) at the third IUFRO Latin American meeting.

The meeting was attended by around 600 representatives of research organizations, governments and policymakers, forestry industries and community organizations, mostly from South America, but a fair number representing all other parts of the world. The *lingua franca* of much of the meeting was Spanish, but all sessions included translation to English.

The threat of human impact and rapid global changes, with a special focus on climate change, was a general theme running through many of the sessions at the meeting. It is clear that multi- and trans-disciplinary research approaches are needed to address these complex, natural and societal, cross boundary problems. A need for more effective and active interaction with communities and with policy-makers was highlighted, both to guide research directions, but also to translate research findings into tangible actions needed to ensure a sustainable future for forests and humanity.

Of particular interest to the FABians attending was the special session on Threats to Forest Health - Forest Pests and Diseases, Biological Invasions, Air Pollution and Climate Change. A central observation from the session was that the threats of pests and pathogens are increasing around the world, especially given increased human assisted spread to non-native environments and pressure of climate change on ecosystems. As with other threats facing forests, it is clear that a multi-faceted approach, based on solid scientific evidence, is needed to reduce the rate of spread and impact of pests and pathogens globally.

The meeting also afforded the opportunity to interact with science friends from around the world and discuss specific research collaborations. For example, a group of researchers including Matt Ayres and Sandy Liebhold from the USA, Maria Lombardero from Spain, Ecki Brockerhoff from New Zealand, and the FABI representatives used this opportunity to discuss strategies and progress on an intercontinental comparison of factors influencing the population ecology of *Sirex noctilio*.

As always, the meeting provided a rich opportunity to strengthen research ties with researchers around the world, especially in this case in South America.