

PROF. MIKE WINGFIELD SHARES INSIGHTS ON RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL TREE HEALTH PROGRAMME

After nearly three decades at the helm of the Tree Protection Co-operative Programme, Prof. Mike Wingfield shared seven attributes he thought were central to the success of the 30-year-old programme, with the audience at the 30th Annual Meeting of the TPCP. The seven attributes can be summarised as follows:



1. The TPCP grew from “a small and unlikely beginning” in response to the urging of the forestry industry following a threat of *Cryphonectria* canker to Eucalyptus plantations. He said the team, at the time based at the University of the Orange Free State, understood then that a once-off solution to the disease was not enough as they had to anticipate more pathogens and pests in the future.
2. Prof. Wingfield said “people power” was central to the growth and success of the TPCP because “it takes a team to succeed”.
3. The TPCP adopted “the leverage model”, because understanding the value proposition meant all the parties involved, industry and the academics, benefited from the partnership.
4. Sustaining human capacity and infrastructure is crucial. He said nurturing and transferring skills in the team ensured that there was a pool of people to draw on to do the work in the programme. Team members also embraced and mastered new technologies to drive forward research.

5. Sustainable plantation health requires global connections and partnerships. Prof. Wingfield said having a network of collaborators across the globe ensured that the TPCP team anticipated new pests and disease even before they were introduced.

6. New forestry pests and disease problems are a certainty that will not go away.

7. There are no silver bullets to tree health problems. Prof. Wingfield said there were no quick fixes to pests and diseases and warned against “fake news” and “jumping on the bandwagon”.