

Track #1 - Published Abstract

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South African National Forest Operations Productivity Project

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South African forests play an important part in the global forest products industry. While most of the country was not traditionally forested, large plantations have been established to provide a sustainable wood supply for domestic and global markets. As competition continues to drive production and pricing, improvements in harvesting productivity and silvicultural activities become necessary to develop the industry. Addressing these needs, operators are moving away from manual and motor-manual harvesting and silvicultural activities towards increased mechanization. Armed with productivity data, forest operators can plan, manage, and optimize their operations; however data for more mechanized equipment in South African specific conditions not widely available. In order to supplement available productivity data and minimize the overall effort to collect these data, a collaborative project was developed that coordinated the efforts of university researchers, forest products companies, and forest operators.

Starting with the development and acceptance of an industry-wide time study standard procedure, project coordinators prioritized topics to minimize duplication, trained data collection teams, reviewed and advised proposals, and finally checked and distributed the data. With standardized procedures and carefully detailed project description sheets, resulting data could be shared between all project partners. One company could complete a study and receive data from many studies from other project partners. Specific company identifying information and no costs, modeling, or other processing of these data is shared, allowing each participant to use these data in their own way and avoid any anti-trust issues.

Innovative approaches to data collection and sharing such as those in this project help all players in South Africa's forest industry improve their silviculture and harvesting operations, as these activities mechanize and the need for competitive timber supplies continue to grow.

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