

Young, green innovators invited to enter Blue Sky Awards

Young researchers and innovators who are focused on greener, sustainable innovations using forest-based science are invited to enter the South African round of the global Blue Sky Awards.

The awards aim to reward pioneering work such as transforming wood-based raw materials into novel products, improving forestry techniques or pulping processes, or contributing to the forest bio-economy.



Source: Supplied

The Blue Sky Young Researchers Innovation Award – a biennial competition for students and young researchers– is sponsored at a global level by the International Council of Forest and Paper Associations (ICFPA) and locally in South Africa by the Paper Manufacturers Association of South Africa (Pamsa).

This year's theme is ***Building a Lower Carbon Economy with Climate Positive Forestry and Forest Products.***

"Our sector is heralded the world over – with the science to back us up – as one that is leading the way in terms of climate change mitigation and greener solutions to carbon-heavy products," says Jane Molony, Pamsa executive director. This is because harvested wood products store carbon; carbon that has been absorbed by trees through photosynthesis.

"The forestry sector is as wide as it is deep with the products made from trees almost countless," notes Molony. From timber in homes and construction to toilet rolls in the bathroom, from everyday paper and packaging products to dissolving wood pulp and biochemicals, sustainably farmed trees are the source of carbon-storing, fibre-based products.

Using programmes such as the Blue Sky Awards, Pamsa seeks to promote green innovation, development and research throughout the forest sector value chain, whether it is climate-positive forestry, cleaner production or making oils and chemicals out of lignin.

Pamsa will award the top two student submissions with R15,000 and R10,000 respectively. These entries will be submitted to the international round, and stand the chance of being selected to share their projects at the ICFPA CEO Global Roundtable in April/May 2023.

The closing date for entries is 15 July 2022.

Eligibility

- Applicants must be students or researchers who were 30 years old or younger on 1 March 2022.
- Applicants must be carrying out research and innovation projects relevant to forestry, forest products, and/or forest products processing technologies – with links to academia, public or private research centres, and/or corporate research and innovation departments.
- Research work must demonstrate that it promotes innovation and decarbonisation in the forest products sector, either in the forest, at production facilities, along the supply chain, or via product innovation.

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