
South Africa: more pulp industry development

A new pulp mill that will produce between 400,000 and 500,000 metric tonnes a year, largely for export, is being planned for the Umtata-Kokstad-Ugie triangle. According to Enoch Gogongwana, provincial MEC for Economic Affairs, Environment and Tourism, such project would create 600 direct and 1000 indirect jobs. The total investment would involve some 1.5 billion Rands.

The above implies a cost of 937 000 rands per job -direct and indirect- created. By comparison, a non forestry-related community project put together at Mkambati, will provide 138 jobs at a cost of 6000 rands per job, and all enterprises (more than 10) participating in the project will be owned and run by the community, with the result that the money will stay in the community.

Additional problems are the environmental and health impacts associated with pulp mills, which are not something new to South Africa. It has been said that "the smell, choking and feeling of skin burning just driving past the pulp mill near Nelsruit is terrible." If the new pulp mill is to be situated in the Kokstad-Ugie-Umtata triangle, then at least one river may end up being polluted, given that all rivers in this area flow into the Umzimvubu river, which catches 56% of Transkei's water.

Sources: Daily Dispatch 6/10/97; Chris Albertyn and Marlene Powell (pers.comm.)