

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Could South Africa's invasive plants become its next green economy opportunity?

Limpopo site visit showcases how biomass can restore land, create jobs and strengthen rural economies



Johannesburg, South Africa, 27 August 2026 – South Africa's alien and invasive plants are damaging ecosystems, reducing water security and limiting agricultural productivity. But they also represent an untapped economic opportunity.

From 20 to 22 July 2026, the National Business Initiative (NBI), through its NBI4BIOMASS initiative, hosted a site visit in Limpopo to showcase how invasive plant biomass can be transformed into new business opportunities while restoring landscapes and supporting more resilient rural economies.

Held in Ga-Kibi Village, Blouberg Local Municipality, the visit brought together entrepreneurs, technical specialists, government representatives and practitioners working across the biomass value chain to explore practical, on-the-ground solutions.

Participants visited community enterprises already converting invasive biomass into economic value through initiatives including charcoal production, regenerative agriculture, improved rangeland management and livestock production. The programme aimed to demonstrate how environmental restoration can go together with enterprise development and local job creation.

"Alien and invasive plants are not only an environmental challenge, but they are also an economic opportunity," says Alex McNamara, Head of Environment at the NBI.

"If we want to strengthen water security, restore productive landscapes and create more inclusive rural economies, we need to think beyond clearing invasive plants. We need to build sustainable value chains that create lasting opportunities for communities and entrepreneurs."

Alongside field visits, participants took part in collaborative discussions to identify the barriers preventing the biomass economy from scaling, including market access, business viability, technical support and stronger value chain coordination. Insights from the visit will help inform future collaboration across the sector.

The site visit forms part of NBI4BIOMASS's ongoing work to unlock the economic potential of South Africa's invasive biomass while supporting ecological restoration and inclusive economic development.

Interview opportunities

Interviews are available with NBI representatives and participating stakeholders following the site visit.

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Editors' Notes

About NBI4BIOMASS

NBI4BIOMASS is co-funded by the European Union and the French, German and Slovak governments, and implemented by five agencies: **Expertise France** (France), **Enabel** (Belgium), **Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)** (Germany), **Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH**, **Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation** (Slovakia) and **SNV** (Netherlands).

The initiative supports the responsible utilisation of alien and invasive plant biomass to strengthen ecological restoration, enterprise development and inclusive local economic growth.

About the National Business Initiative (NBI)

For more than 30 years, the National Business Initiative (NBI) has brought together South African and multinational companies to drive collective action on the country's most pressing social, economic and environmental challenges. Working alongside business, government, civil society and development partners, the NBI develops practical solutions that contribute to sustainable and inclusive growth.

About TEI IYBA

The Team Europe Initiative Investing in Young Businesses in Africa (TEI IYBA) is EU's Global Gateway flagship strengthening entrepreneurial ecosystems and supporting early-stage businesses and MSMEs to drive jobs and private investment across Sub-Saharan Africa.

About IYBA SEED

IYBA SEED supports entrepreneurship ecosystem development across 5 countries in SSA through a long-term, holistic approach to strengthening organisations that help businesses grow

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