

Biomass research lab opens at Science University

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By Donald Matthys

A laboratory which will allow more in-depth research and training for students on bush-related questions and to offer physical and chemical biomass analysis services to the public and the Namibian biomass industry at large, was recently opened at the Namibia Science and Technology University (NUST).

The laboratory is equipped with a Kjeldahl Nitrogen Analyzer for the determination of the nitrogen and protein content in bush samples, a laboratory furnace for routine preparation of samples as well as a universal testing machine and a plastics identification unit for applied research on wood plastic composites. The equipment is valued at N\$1,3 million.

Additionally, the Bush Control and Biomass Utilisation (BCBU) Project, has supported the development of laboratory capacities at NUST for research on and analysis of bush biomass with N\$600,000 within the framework of a grant agreement since 2018.

The laboratory comes at a time when capacities for bush analysis are still rudimentary in Namibia, making it difficult for research institutions, entrepreneurs or the public at large to get the main properties of the bush analysed.]

In the past years, bush samples have frequently been sent abroad for testing, especially to South Africa, Germany or France, due to a lack of sufficient local laboratory capacities. Currently, only the University of Namibia (UNAM) and the laboratory of the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform are have the capacity to conduct biomass analysis on basic parameters.

The laboratory is a joint initiative between the BCBU Project, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit and the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism.

Johannes Laufs (Team Leader: GIZ Bush Control and Biomass Utilisation Project); Dr Andrew Nnikondo (acting Vice Chancellor: NUST); Joseph Hailwa (Director of Forestry) and Gerlinde Sauer (Counsellor for Development Cooperation- German Embassy).