

# Ben Shange small-scale timber farmer



**“My work is significant, it has meaning. I am providing jobs and contributing to the economy” – Ben Shange**

Ben Shange has always cultivated the land. He started growing vegetables to feed his family, selling the excess at the local market. In 2003 he saw an opportunity to start growing trees, marking the beginning of a new chapter in his life.

Drawing on his experience growing vegetables and with help from his family, Ben planted 2ha of gum at his home near Manguzi in northern KwaZulu-Natal.

In 2006 Mondi began working in the area through Khulanathi and Awethu Forestry Investments. Awethu facilitated the marketing of timber to the Mondi Richards Bay mill, and assisted the Manguzi growers with seedlings and advice.

Today Ben has 40 ha of Eucalyptus, employs three permanent staff and hires an extra 10 people during planting season.

## **Starting up new businesses**

He used the capital from his forestry operation to open a number of other businesses – he has a spaza shop, a mobile freezer, rents rondavels and has 120 head of cattle.

He has also established a 5ha demonstration plot to encourage others in the community to grow trees.



**“It was amazing to understand the whole supply chain”**

Awethu Forestry functions as an agent for Mondi Zimele in the Manguzi area – offering continuous support to small growers at field days and assisting with harvesting and transport.

They recently organised a visit to the Mondi Richards Bay mill which helped the growers understand the timber market better.

“I saw how my timber becomes a part of many products we use in daily life,” said Ben.



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