REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI) FOR SOLUTIONS FOR FORESTRY THINNING OPERATIONS

RFI NUMBER: RFI003/2026
BRIEFING SESSION: NONE
CLOSING DATE AND TIME: 06 NOVEMBER 2026 AT 12H00

SUBMISSION VIA EMAIL: TENDERS@SAFCOL.CO.ZA

1. DISCLAIMER

This **Request for Information (RFI)** is for information purposes only and does not constitute a formal tender or commitment to procure services. SAFCOL reserves the right to issue a formal Request for Proposal (RFP) based on responses received.

2. ISSUANCE OF RFI

2.1. South African Forestry Company SOC Ltd ("SAFCOL") invites you to submit an RFI to submit information for the works/goods/services as stated in the specification.

2.2. This RFI is a stand-alone information-gathering and market-testing exercise, intended solely to assist SAFCOL in obtaining current market information and developing an understanding of available solutions for safe, productive and commercially viable forestry thinning operations under various terrain conditions.

2.3. SAFCOL seeks information on available technologies, equipment, services, methodologies and supplier capabilities that may support forestry thinning operations under the following terrain conditions:

Thinning System	**Slope Range**
Mechanised, ground-based skidder and/or tractor thinning	0% – 30% and 30% – 40%
Manual preparation thinning for forwarders	0% – 30% and 30% – 40%
Difficult-terrain thinning	40% and above

For purposes of this RFI, difficult terrain refers primarily to steep-area slopes of 40% and above, with a smaller proportion of thinning volumes occurring on slopes between 30% and 40% that may present challenges to SAFCOL's current harvesting systems.

2.4. The objective of this RFI is to identify and assess available thinning solutions and the readiness and capability of the market to provide suitable systems for SAFCOL's plantation operations. The information obtained will assist SAFCOL in understanding available technologies, equipment, operational approaches, supplier capabilities, commercial models and practical industry solutions, and will inform possible future procurement planning and the development of appropriate requirements and specifications.

3. SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

3.1. SAFCOL has delegated the responsibility for this RFI to Lungile Moeketsi, (email: Lungile.Moeketsi@safcol.co.za) to whom all enquiries, questions and requests for information regarding this RFI may be directed. Please note that all questions and requests for information must be submitted to Lungile Moeketsi on or before **02 November 2026 at 16h00.**

3.2. Each **RFI Response must be submitted electronically in PDF format to Tenders@safcol.co.za** . All RFI submissions must be properly indexed, legible, complete and capable of being opened and accessed without difficulty.

3.3. RFI Responses must be submitted to SAFCOL no later than **12h00 on 06 November 2026**.

3.4. RFI Responses reaching SAFCOL later than the date and time specified above may, in SAFCOL's sole discretion, not be considered by SAFCOL.

3.5. The Respondent is required to complete the RFI Response and provide all information requested in terms of this RFI.

3.6. All correspondence and any other documentation and oral communication exchanged between the Respondent and SAFCOL shall be in English.

3.7. SAFCOL reserves the right to request additional information or clarification from any Respondent in relation to its RFI Response, as it may, in its discretion, deem necessary, whether or not such information was specifically requested in this RFI. SAFCOL may also require a Respondent to provide or present supplementary information relating to its RFI Response.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1. SAFCOL is a state-owned forestry company listed as a Schedule 2 major public entity in terms of the Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999. It was established in 1992 following the promulgation of the Management of State Forest Act 128 of 1992 to promote the development in the long term of the forestry industry according to accepted commercial management practice in South Africa. Through its wholly owned subsidiary, Komatiland Forests (KLF), SAFCOL conducts its forestry operations and manages plantation assets in various regions of the country.

4.2. The Tactical Harvesting Plan identifies the compartments scheduled for thinnings over the next five-year period. It determines the planned volumes, timing, location, terrain conditions, tree size information, and operational requirements needed to select appropriate thinning systems. The plan is used to guide resource planning, contractor requirements, equipment selection, procurement decisions, safety planning, and the implementation of suitable solutions for all thinning systems mentioned above.

4.2.1. Current environment

SAFCOL consist of 15 plantation situated from Makhado in Limpopo province down to Vryheid in Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN). Table 1 below displays the relevant plantations that may utilise difficult terrain extraction solutions for clearfell.

Table 1: SAFCOL plantation distribution

Area	Plantation	Closest town
KZN	Ngome	Vryheid
Lothair	Roburnia	Amsterdam
	Jessievale	Loathair
Belfast	Belfast	Belfast
Nelspruit	Berlin	Nelspruit
	Nelshoogte	Nelspruit
Sudwala	Uitsoek	Nelspruit
Sabie/Graskop	Bergvliet	Sabie
	Brooklands	Sabie
	Witklip	Wit rivier
	Tweefontein	Sabie
	Blyde	Graskop
	Wilgeboom	Graskop
Tzaneen	Woodbush	Tzaneen
Limpopo	Entabeni	Makhado

Table 2: Average annual thinning volumes for the next five years.

Area	Plantation	Average 0% - 30%	Average 30% - 40%	Average 40% +	Average annual volume	Volume per area
KZN	Ngome	7 265	511	205	7 981	7 981
Lothair	Roburnia	29 259	1 275	484	31 018	62 982
	Jessievale	31 778	158	28	31 963	
Belfast	Belfast	7 663	0	0	7 663	7 663
Nelspruit	Berlin	14 637	2 209	1 833	18 679	40 057
	Nelshoogte	18 887	1 747	744	21 378	
Sudwala	Uitsoek	11 935	2 264	1 912	16 111	16 111
Sabie/Graskop	Bergvliet	28 664	5 049	3 606	37 318	186 616
	Brooklands	27 722	2 920	1 814	32 456	
	Witklip	17 115	661	290	18 066	
	Tweefontein	46 760	10 676	12 794	70 230	
	Blyde	15 492	2 176	2 199	19 867	
	Wilgeboom	7 229	881	570	8 679	
Tzaneen	Woodbush	20 339	2 348	2 037	24 724	24 724
Limpopo	Entabeni	21 345	2 490	2 178	26 012	26 012
	Average	**306 088**	**35 365**	**30 692**	**372 146**	**372 146**

Table 3 displays the following tree average annual information:

- average tree volume for thinning
- maximum tree volume for thinning
- average tree diameter for thinning
- maximum tree diameter for thinning

<u>This information must be used as a guideline for the selection of suitable solutions for thinning volumes. No volumes can be guaranteed due to market fluctuations</u>

Table 3: Thinning tree size information

Area	Plantation	Average tree	Max tree volume	Average DBH	Max DBH
KZN	Ngome	0.208	0.499	21.7	29.3
Lothair	Roburnia	0.122	0.391	18.6	27.4
	Jessievale	0.174	0.482	20.2	30.6
Belfast	Belfast	0.079	0.203	16.3	22.7
Nelspruit	Berlin	0.136	0.330	19.4	25.6
	Nelshoogte	0.179	0.443	21.0	28.7
Sudwala	Uitsoek	0.119	0.375	18.4	27.5
Sabie/Grask	Bergvliet	0.228	0.533	21.9	28.6
	Brooklands	0.207	0.496	21.0	28.7
	Witklip	0.152	0.328	19.8	26.3
	Tweefontein	0.201	0.672	21.2	31.9
	Blyde	0.143	0.339	19.5	27.3
	Wilgeboom	0.128	0.332	18.5	26.1
Tzaneen	Woodbush	0.196	0.528	21.6	31.0
Limpopo	Entabeni	0.236	0.708	21.7	32.2
	Average	**0.167**	**0.444**	**20.1**	**28.3**

4.2.2. Existing systems

SAFCOL thin majority of its 0% - 40% annual volume with the following systems:

- Cut to length mechanised thinning operations,
- Motor manual ground base tractor thinning operations.
- Manual preparation of forwarder thinnings operations

4.2.3. Current challenges

The following are current challenges:

- Fluctuating markets and timber demand
- Procurement processes
- Increasing difficult terrain thinning volume
- Exchange rate and the cost of equipment

4.2.4. Strategic objectives

SAFCOL's strategic direction places strong emphasis on business growth, customer centricity, excellence in forestry operations, a future-fit organisation, financial sustainability and responsible forest management. The RFI for thinning solutions directly supports these strategic goals by enabling SAFCOL to identify practical, safe and commercially viable technologies and operational approaches that can improve productivity across its thinning operations.

In addition, the RFI contributes to financial sustainability and business growth by identifying solutions that may reduce dependency on manual labour operations, improve cost predictability, support better utilisation of forestry assets, and strengthen SAFCOL's ability to supply customers consistently. By requesting information from the local market, the RFI will help inform future procurement decisions and ensure that potential solutions are practical to implement and sustainable over the long term.

The initiative further supports SAFCOL's future-fit and innovation objectives by encouraging the evaluation of modern thinning technologies and operational systems, including mechanised, ground-based skidder and/or tractor thinning, manual preparation thinning for forwarders, and difficult-terrain thinning solutions. These solutions align with SAFCOL's broader focus on technology adoption, research, operational improvement and responsible forest management, while also creating opportunities for industry benchmarking, supplier development, skills transfer and improved environmental performance.

5. SCOPE OF WORK

The exercise should include the following:

5.1. **Market Analysis**

- Identification of established mechanised, ground base, manual prep and difficult terrain service providers operating within South Africa that can supply the required services and or equipment for various thinning services.

- Availability of equipment and technologies specifically designed for mechanised, ground base, manual prep and difficult terrain thinning operations, for example:
  - Mechanised thinnings – cut to length or full tree systems
  - ground base cable skidder/ tractor thinnings
  - manual preparation of thinnings for forwarders
  - hand roll thinning operations
  - shovel yarders for thinnings
  - shovel grapple yarders for thinnings
  - thinning cable yarding systems
  - winch-assisted thinnings
  - tethered machines
  - any other thinning solution
- Identification of potential emerging thinnig service providers

5.2. **Industry Benchmarking**

- Performance metrics such as:
  - productivity (m^3/hour, m^3/day, m^3 per shift) and
  - operating costs – R/m^3

5.3. **Commercial & Compliance Review**

- Proposed pricing for various mechanised, ground base, manual prep and difficult terrain thinning systems
- Availability of leasing/rental of various thinning equipment for example:
  - Mechanised thinnings – cut to length or full tree systems
  - ground base cable skidder/ tractor thinnings
  - manual preparation of thinnings for forwarders
  - hand roll thinning operations
  - shovel yarders for thinnings
  - shovel grapple yarders for thinnings
  - thinning cable yarding systems
  - winch-assisted thinnings
  - tethered machines
  - any other thinning solution

6. SCOPE OF INFORMATION REQUESTED

Suppliers are requested to provide information regarding the following:

6.1. **Service provider organisational information**

- Are you an established service provider operating within South Africa that can supply the required service of thinning operations
- Are you an emerging service provider willing to start up thinning services
- Provide Company Profile

6.2. **Thinning experience**

Please provide the following information:

- Number of Projects completed in the last 15 years
- Similar projects currently busy with

- Client references for thinning operations delivered not older than 15 years.

6.3. **Functional and Technical**

- List all the available equipment and technologies specifically designed and available for thinning operations for example:
  - mechanised
  - ground base cable skidder/ tractor thinnings
  - manual preparation of thinnings for forwarders
  - hand roll thinning operations
  - shovel yarders for thinnings
  - shovel grapple yarders for thinnings
  - thinning cable yarding systems
  - winch-assisted thinnings
  - tethered machines
  - any other thinning solution

6.4. **Performance**

- Performance metrics such as:
  - productivity (m^3/hour, m^3/shift or day),
  - safety performance – supply a safety management program

6.5. **Pricing Information**

Provide indicative information only for

- R/m^3 for thinning systems
- Availability of
  - Leasing/renting - R/machine hour for thinning equipment for renting

Pricing submitted in response to this RFI is for planning purposes only.

7. QUESTIONS FOR RESPONDENTS

Please respond to the following:

7.1. **Business**

1. Describe your solution.
2. What differentiates your offering?
3. What experience do you have?
4. What implementation methodology do you recommend?

8. RESPONSE FORMAT

Responses should include the Executive summary and the scope of Information Requested.

9. CONFIDENTIALITY

Respondents must clearly identify and appropriately mark any information contained in their RFI Response that they consider to be confidential, proprietary or commercially sensitive, and provide the basis for such classification where applicable. SAFCOL will handle all submissions and information received in accordance with applicable legislation, including requirements governing access to information, records management, protection of personal information and confidentiality. Submission of information as part of this RFI does not guarantee that such information will remain confidential where disclosure is required by law or by a competent authority.

10. RESPONDENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND CONDITIONS

10.1. Participation in this RFI is entirely voluntary, and submission of an RFI Response does not create any obligation on the part of SAFCOL to procure any goods or services from the Respondent.

10.2. Submission of an RFI Response does not confer, establish or create any preferred supplier, approved supplier, pre-qualification or other preferential status for the Respondent with SAFCOL, nor does it create any expectation or entitlement to participate in any future procurement process.

10.3. SAFCOL reserves the right to contact any Respondent for purposes of seeking clarification, additional information or further details regarding its RFI Response. Any such engagement shall not be construed as an award, appointment or commitment by SAFCOL.

10.4. Information submitted by Respondents may be evaluated and used by SAFCOL for purposes of understanding market capabilities, assessing available solutions and informing the development of future procurement strategies, specifications, terms of reference, tender documentation and/or other procurement processes.

10.5. SAFCOL reserves the right, at its sole discretion and subject to applicable legislation and its policies and procedures, to amend, clarify, suspend or withdraw this RFI, in whole or in part, at any time without incurring any liability to Respondents.

10.6. The submission of an RFI Response shall be at the Respondent's own cost and risk, and SAFCOL shall not be liable for any costs, expenses or losses incurred by a Respondent in preparing or submitting an RFI Response or participating in any engagement arising from this RFI.

11. B-BBEE AND SUPPLIER DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Information Required	Respondent Response	Supporting Documentation (if available)
B-BBEE Status Level	Level ___ / Non-compliant	Valid B-BBEE Certificate, Sworn Affidavit or applicable verification document
Black Ownership	___%	B-BBEE Certificate/Sworn Affidavit and/or CIPC documentation
Black Women Ownership	___%	B-BBEE Certificate/Sworn Affidavit and/or supporting ownership documentation
Black Youth Ownership	___%	B-BBEE Certificate/Sworn Affidavit and/or supporting

		documentation
Ownership by Persons with Disabilities	___%	B-BBEE Certificate/Sworn Affidavit and/or applicable supporting documentation
Local Content / South African Ownership	___%	Supporting documentation, where available
Other relevant B-BBEE or transformation information	Please specify	Supporting documentation, where available

Note: *The information requested above is for market research, planning and procurement strategy development purposes only. It will be used by SAFCOL to understand the B-BBEE and transformation profile of potential service providers and to inform the development of future procurement requirements and specific goals, where applicable. Submission of this information does not constitute an evaluation, pre-qualification, allocation of preference points or determination of supplier status, and will not confer any preferential or other procurement status on the Respondent.*

ANNEXURE A: SERVICE PROVIDER RESPONSE FORM — MECHANISED, GROUND BASE, MANUAL PREPERATION AND DIFFICULT TERRAIN THINNING SOLUTIONS

Service providers must complete this section. Please type responses in the spaces provided, tick the relevant options where applicable, and attach supporting documents. If a section is not applicable, please indicate "Not applicable" and provide a short reason.

A. Respondent and company details	
Registered company name	
Trading name	
Company registration number	
VAT number / Tax number	
CSD supplier number	
Contact person, telephone and email	
Physical address	
Indicate your preference of geographical area as described in Table 1: It can be only one area or a combination of areas ☐ KZN ☐ Lothair ☐ Belfast ☐ Nelspruit ☐ Sudwala ☐ Sabie/Graskop ☐ Tzaneen ☐ Limpopo	
Record your reasons for selecting above geographical area/s	
Select your preference between a fix 3 to 5 year contract period or a panel for 5 years	
☐ 3 -5 year contract period ☐ 5 year panel	
Describe your thinning solution/s below:.	

What differentiates your offering from other thinning service providers?
What implementation methodology/plan do you recommend?

B. Type of respondent - Please tick applicable option(s)

☐ Service provider
☐ Dealer / Distributor / Agent
☐ Manufacturer
☐ New entrant/start up
☐ Other – describe below if other

C. Proposed thinning solution technical specifications, capability and performance

Key technical specifications - Record type, make, model of thinning solutions, minimum engine power, slope capability, extraction distance, extraction method, payload capacity, line pull, reach, amount of winches, break system, operating system, anchoring requirements, attachments, uphill and downhill capability, intermediate support capabilities,

If you are an emerging service provider, record the proposed thinning system/s you would like to propose for the RFI exercise

Select and record the various thinning solutions below with all the required machine specifications and production output in m^3/hour or m^3/shift or m^3/day

Mechanised, ground base, manual prep and difficult terrain thinnings categories

☐ Shovel yarders for thinnings
☐ Grapple shovel yarders for thinnings
☐ High lead and sky line yarding thinning systems
☐ Winch-assisted thinning systems
☐ Tethered thinning systems
☐ Synchro winch systems
☐ Ground base cable and tractor systems
☐ Manual preparation of thinnings for forwarder
☐ Mechanised thinning systems
☐ Handroll thinnings
☐ Other n solution – describe other below:

Thinning solution 1
Thinning solution 2
Thinning solution 3
Thinning solution 4
Thinning solution 5
Thinning solution 6
Thinning solution 7
Thinning solution 8
Thinning solution 9
Thinning solution 10
Suitability for thinning tree specifications - Explain how the solution handles thinning stem size, payload, slope, extraction distance, landing requirements and production targets.

Will the proposed extraction solution be capable to handle the tree size specifications and conditions supplied in the terms of reference	☐ Yes ☐ No

Expected thinning cost, production and annual volume requirement - Provide expected system rates for various proposed solutions as well as the daily production rates for the above mention average tree volumes

Type the system rates before the R/m³, then the daily production an dthen the annual volume requirement

System number	**System harvesting rate – R/m³**	**Daily production – m³/day**	**Annual volume requirement – m³/year**
System 1			
System 2			
System 3			
System 4			
System 5			
System 6			
System 5			
System 6			
System 7			
System 8			
System 9			
System 10			

Thinning operating assumptions and limitations

State assumptions, site requirements, constraints and limitations.

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D. Experience - Relevant experience and references –
List similar projects and case studies with client references and lessons learned

List similar projects – Local

Did you supply any n thinning solutions local?	☐ Yes ☐ No

Client references: Record local client names and contact numbers not older than 15 years. Indicate the period of the contract period for each reference

Reference name – Company name	Contract period	Contact name

Record, if any lessons learnt from previous projects

Commercial options available for thinning equipment available for renting – service providers do have difficult terrain equipment and ground skidding equipment available to rent out

☐ No ☐ Rental

Describe equipment what is available for renting and indicate the rate without supplying diesel

Confidential information included?

☐No ☐Yes

Identify section(s):

_____

E. Declaration by respondent

I confirm that the information provided in this response form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and that SAFCOL may use the information for market intelligence, planning and possible future procurement purposes.	
Name and designation	
Signature	
Date	