

## Merger Holz breaks ground at the first official tree planting ceremony in Schierke

Rosenthal, May 1, 2023 – Mercer Holz broke ground last week at the first *Growing Forest – Growing a Future* tree-planting event in Schierke, Germany. It was attended by Martin Stöhr, Managing Director of Mercer Holz; Wolfgang Beck, Senior Vice President of Global Wood Sourcing, Mercer Europe and Bill Adams, Vice President of Sustainability & Innovation at Mercer. Mercer Holz was pleased to be joined by Deputy Mayor of Schierke Jens Weidlich, Michael Selmikat, forest ranger for the Wernigerode region and Thorsten Nothwehr from HOFOS.

The journey to Schierke through the Harz stunned the attendees of the event: the landscape bears witness to the enormity of the European spruce bark beetle devastation. “Merely five years ago, the Harz was verdant with healthy, green spruce trees,” states Martin Stöhr. “Today it is bare, with mere stumps and dead branches. As far as the eye can see, it bears the brutal effect of the bark beetle. Sure, if we left the area alone to regenerate from spruce cones, in 80 years there will be another forest. However, it will only be yet another spruce forest. We need mixed stocks to strengthen our German forests and restore it to a more natural state.”

The first seedlings were planted last week, marking the start of a multi-year tree-planting programme, *Growing forests – Growing a future*, to collaborate with forest- and landowners in Germany to reforest areas lost to climate change and the bark beetle epidemic. The programme commits to standing alongside forest owners in efforts to sustain the longevity of forests in Germany. Through the programme, Mercer Holz will provide participating forest owners across Germany with a careful selection of seedlings to help replenish their forests.

In line with the recently released guidelines by the European Commission, [the seedlings are of a mixed variety](#). The majority of forests in Germany are monoculture (spruce). Although the single variety forest stuns in its uniformity, it lacks the immunity to withstand pests such as the bark beetle and climate change events. The seedlings provided through the GFGF programme are a diverse mix of trees; simultaneously increasing biodiversity, pathogen resistance and resilience, as well as providing cultural and recreational value to the German public.

Michael Selmikat, the forest ranger for the Wernigerode region, mentioned that initiatives like the *Growing forests – Growing a future* positively impacts smaller communities like Schierke, as these areas rely on tourism and depend on healthy, green and stable forests to thrive. Selmikat welcomes Mercer’s initiative and that the small village of Schierke is grateful for any help it can get—and this is the same for all villages in Germany.

Rounding up what was a positive start to the *Growing Forests – Growing a Future* programme, Stöhr concluded, “This is as important to Mercer Holz as it is to the German public. I see first-hand how the spruce bark beetle have decimated our forests. But what not everyone understands is that Mercer Holz’s long term interests intersect with our German public: we want to see our forests thrive—not just today, but for the future of our futures.”

For more information on the *Growing forests – Growing a future* programme, photos of the tree planting event and what German forests are facing, please visit our website at [growingourforests.com](http://growingourforests.com) (EN) or [unserewaelder.com](http://unserewaelder.com) (DE).

## Questions?

If you would like to find out more about the *Growing forests - Growing a future* programme, speak with a forest owner or a Mercer representative, please contact us:

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### About Mercer Holz

Mercer Holz is the wood purchasing organisation for Mercer International's German operations: Mercer Rosenthal, Mercer Stendal, Mercer Torgau, and Mercer Timber Products. For more than 15 years, we have been supplying pulp and sawmills with large quantities of industrial wood, saw logs and wood chips. In addition to supplying Mercer's German mills, we offer industry-leading procurement, harvesting, and logistics services for third-party customers. This provides optimal networking across Europe allowing our suppliers and customers to benefit from the economies of scale.

### About Growing Forests - Growing a Future

The *Growing Forests - Growing a Future* (GFGF) programme is a Mercer initiative, supporting - and in alliance with - German forest owners in sustaining their forests to keep forestry alive. Mercer is one of the first companies within the German wood industry with such a large-scale tree-planting endeavour.

The GFGF programme is a step towards replacing and regenerating that which has been lost from the bark beetle and other natural disasters that have affected our forests. Uniting expertise and commitment of participants, the GFGF programme aims to nurture and create the forests of the future with foresters and policy makers. In the face of concerns such as the bark beetle, climate change, natural disasters like floods, wildfires and soil degradation. It is indeed a collaborative effort to sustain—and improve—the health of German forests for our tomorrows.