



Forestlinks

An eNewsletter from Forest Industries Branch

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National Indigenous Forestry Strategy update

The National Indigenous Forestry Strategy Steering Committee held its third meeting on 26 September 2007. The Memorandum of Understanding requires the Steering Committee to prepare an annual implementation plan. A draft implementation plan for the strategy was discussed.

The Plan includes activities under three broad headings.

National Strategic Actions will include major events or key activities taking place at a national level. An example of this is the development of communication tools used to market and promote the aims and objectives of the strategy in indigenous communities.

Existing and On-going Actions include the activities that industry and Government agencies are currently implementing or in partnership. Activities include a government and industry project aiming to improve awareness among forestry companies of vocational education and training opportunities under the National Training System. These opportunities include Australian Apprenticeships and courses within the national training package.

The third band of activities, *Supporting Actions*, has a distinct regional flavour. In Victoria for example, Timber Communities Australia (TCA) has identified significant labour and skills shortages and have plans for Indigenous involvement to fill the gaps. TCA has formed a steering committee of industry, local contractors and Local Aboriginal groups to progress this initiative that will have benefits for all parties.

For more information on the Implementation Plan or the Strategy contact Sid Eades (02) 6272 3948 or sid.eades@daff.gov.au

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Establishment of Forest and Wood Products Australia

Forest and Wood Products Australia (FWPA) was declared as the new services body for the forest and wood products industry on 24 August 2007. FWPA assumed the functions and responsibilities of Forest and Wood Products Research and Development Corporation (FWPRDC) from 3 September 2007.

The primary function of FWPA is to fund research and development, and marketing and public relations projects that will increase the productivity and profitability of forest based industries. The Australian Government will collect levies from forest industries and provide them to FWPA for research and development, as well as marketing. The Government will also provide matching contributions for funds put towards research and development.

FWPA's research and development investments will focus specifically on priority areas identified within the national forest and wood products industries where:

- The outputs for research and development will provide broad sectoral and / or cross sectoral industry benefits or;
- It is cost effective for industry to co-invest in specific projects, thus forming partnerships and realising synergies.

The new company will have greater resources at its disposal than its predecessor as the new arrangements allow for the collection of new statutory private grower levies and voluntary payments from state growers. This will allow an increase in research and development and the establishment of generic marketing and promotion programmes. This new initiative will contribute to the future sustainability and development of the forestry industry.

All levies payers are entitled to become members of FWPA. For more information about the operations of FWPA contact FWPA on (03) 9614 7544 or by email at info@fwpa.com.au

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Forestry and Climate Change Action Plan

During September 2007 funding was announced for the development of the Forestry and Climate Change Action Plan. Objectives include working in collaboration with key stakeholders and helping the industry plan for climate change through mitigation and adaptation, underpinned by research and development, and communication.

The project will result in increased understanding in the following areas:

- The Life cycle contribution of forest sector to Australia's greenhouse gas balance.
- Threats and opportunities to the forestry sector associated with the physical impacts of climate change.
- Threats and opportunities to the forestry sector associated with market responses to climate change.
- Vulnerability analyses will be undertaken to assess exposure to climate factors, the sensitivity of the industry to changes in those factors, and the capacity to adapt to change.

Actions will be identified to minimise threats, and make the most of opportunities, particularly in the areas of research and development and communication.

The plan will cover the following industry sectors and activities:

- Tree planting for commercial purposes (other than exclusively for carbon) at all scales including farm forestry, agroforestry and broad-scale plantations as well as trees planted for a mixture of commercial and environmental purposes.
- Native forests managed for wood production at all scales.
- Processing facilities that rely on raw material as above including sawmills, board plants and pulp & paper mills.

The project is being managed by Australian Plantation Products and Paper Industry Council (A3P) who will be consulting with industry stakeholders and appropriate government agencies. A steering committee has been established and the Forest and Climate Change Committee will contribute to the development of the action plan. The plan is expected to be prepared over the next 12 months for endorsement by the Primary Industries Ministerial Council and the Council of Australian Governments.

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European Consultations

The General Manager of the Forest Industries Branch visited several European countries in October to discuss forest policy issues and participate in a meeting of forest agency leaders.

Bilateral meetings

Discussions were held in the United Kingdom, Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland, with governments, the European Commission, industry associations and World Conservation Union (IUCN) to:

- Establish the current status of processes for assessing forest certification schemes under green procurement policies for timber;
- Provide updated information on the finalisation of the Australian Forestry Standard;
- Provide information about Australia's new policy on combating illegal logging, the Global Initiative on Forests and Climate and the new Asia-Pacific Forestry Skills and Capacity Building Programme;
- Discuss areas of mutual cooperation on combating illegal logging and increasing sustainable forest management capacity in developing countries; and
- Exchange views on international forest forums, including United Nations Forum on Forests, International Tropical Timber Organisation and the Asia Forest Partnership.

Information on Australia's policies and programmes to combat illegal logging was well received, as was updated information on Australian forest certification.

The visit was valuable in guiding Australia's involvement in international forest forums and increasing our understanding of European initiatives. In particular:

- The European Union is expected to issue non-binding guidelines for green procurement early in 2008 with these processes likely to have an increasing focus on the social criteria of sustainability;
- It is probable that differing assessment criteria for certification schemes will persist in Europe; and
- There are significant opportunities to work closely with the United Kingdom and Netherlands aid agencies to enhance implementation of sustainable forest management programmes in Indonesia and Pacific countries.

Megaforestais

The Megaforestais meeting which was held in St. Petersburg aimed to build relationships and information exchange among public forest agencies from the USA, Canada, Russia, China, Indonesia, Cameroon, Brazil and Finland on a range of globally important forest issues.

Productive and frank discussions on forestry reforms and global issues such as markets, climate change and land tenure reforms were held, including:

- Global impacts of the introduction of increased log export taxes by Russia;
- Global scarcity of wood corresponding with increasing competition for plantation land with bioenergy and agriculture;
- Impacts of forest land tenure reforms in China, Indonesia and Russia;
- Fire, pest and disease threats to forests from climate change;
- Opportunities to market avoided deforestation credits on international private sector markets. For example Brazil had reduced deforestation from 5 million hectares per year to 1 million hectares per year; and
- Global expansion of plantation resources with Brazil doubling its area to 11 million hectares by 2020, Indonesia doubling its area to 9 million hectares by 2009 and China expanding at 5 million hectares per year from a base of 53 million hectares.

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Recent economic and social change in the Asia-Pacific region has significantly altered the way forests are regarded and used. In acknowledgement of this the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC), in partnership with member countries and other international organizations, is conducting the second Asia-Pacific Forestry Sector Outlook Study which will try to anticipate forestry conditions in 2020. This study follows up the first study released in 1998 and looking forward to 2010.

In support of the study, APFC held the Future of Forests in Asia and the Pacific- Outlook for 2020 conference in Chiang Mai, Thailand in mid-October. Staff from Forest Industries Branch of DAFF and the Bureau of Rural Sciences attended the conference.

APFC is one of six FAO Regional Forestry Commissions and comprises countries in south and north Asia, ranging from India in the west, through central Asia and north to China, Japan and South Korea, and all South Pacific countries. The APFC regional office is in Bangkok.

The conference was an opportunity to discuss a range of perspectives on emerging changes, probable scenarios and their implications for forests and forestry in the region. These included:

- social, economic, institutional and technological trends in the Asia-Pacific region and their potential impacts on forests;
- opportunities and challenges for forests and forestry in the face of anticipated changes in the way forests are perceived and used in Asia and the Pacific; and
- strategies and tools which may be used under different scenarios in order to address the likely changes in the society-forest dynamic in the Asia-Pacific region.

Over the three days discussions were held around the following themes:

- history of forestry in the region;
- likely future demand for timber and other forest products;
- emerging environmental issues facing forestry including climate change, carbon sequestration, bio-energy, water, habitat etc;
- social needs from forestry including poverty reduction, subsistence use, and tenure issues;
- forest governance (including certification and illegal logging); and
- forestry institutional arrangements and the need for greater coordination with other agendas and organisations.

The conference heard that within Asia Pacific Region:

- deforestation is continuing across the region, particularly in south east Asia;
- there is small overall increase in forest cover in the region but this is mostly due to Chinese reforestation efforts;
- population in the region is increasing;
- there is potential for continuing strong economic growth;
- increasing development fuelling demand for all commodities, including timber and forest products;
- domestic plantation and reforestation initiatives are proceeding, but these are unlikely to meet increased demand in many cases; and
- there is increasing competition for forest resources for other outcomes, for example carbon storage, water, bio-fuels, conservation.

From a national perspective, it is clear from the conference that Australia has significant opportunity to increase all types of exports to meet increasing demand.

The 2020 outlook study will be published towards the end of 2008.

Copies of presentations at the conference can be found at www.fao.org/forestry/site/33612/en (scroll down to past meetings).

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Tasmanian Forest Contractors Association meeting

The Tasmanian Forest Contractors Association (TFCA) held their annual summit and industry dinner on 26 October 2007 in Launceston. Departmental officers attended the event and presented an update of the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement communications programme.

More than 75 delegates attended the summit, providing valuable networking opportunities for policy makers and stakeholders. Attendees included forest contractors, industry interest groups, local political candidates, consultants, state and federal government representatives.

Delegates were presented with a comprehensive morning of presentations including whole of industry related issues such as the changing complexity of the Tasmanian forest industry as part of the world economy and communication strategies for promoting positive views of the Tasmanian forest industry. Contractor specific subjects included succession planning, workers compensation and training.

The success of combining both the summit and dinner has prompted organisers to start planning for a similar event in 2008.

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Asia Pacific Forestry Skills and Capacity Building Programme

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry is seeking expressions of interest for the Asia Pacific Forestry Skills and Capacity Building Programme. An information package on the programme is being distributed by the Forest Industries Branch.

The Australian Government announced the \$15.7 million programme in September 2007. It aims to assist countries in the Asia Pacific region increase their forest management expertise and improve the carbon sequestration performance of their forests by providing opportunities for skills based training, technology transfer, information exchange and research.

The programme will be implemented cooperatively with governments, tertiary institutions, consultants, forest agencies and research centres, within Australia and overseas. Activities will include:

- short-term and specialist training courses
- professional exchanges
- study tours
- systems development
- research to further adoption of sustainable forest management and improved carbon sequestration and
- regional meetings to strengthen networking and capacity building.

The programme will run over four years, from 2007 to 2011. The department, in consultation with relevant agencies, will administer funding through the allocation of single and multi-year activity grants.

\$2.7 million dollars is available in the 2007/2008 financial year. This will comprise of more than \$500,000 for locally delivered training, including specialist training; \$1.5 million for overseas training and exchanges and \$150,000 for joint projects with forest research centres.

In 2007/2008, funding will be directed primarily toward existing activities however, proposals for new activities that can be delivered within this timeframe are also encouraged. Such proposals must demonstrate that funding can be fully committed by 30 June 2008.

Expressions of interest for the first round are required by 5pm (AEST) on 14 December 2007. Short-listed applicants will be asked to provide comprehensive proposals by 18 January 2008. Final offers of 2007/08 grants will be made by 1 February 2008. Expressions of interest received after 14 December 2007 will be evaluated in the second round, likely to be in the second quarter of 2008.

To obtain a copy of the information package or for further information on the Programme please contact **Ursula Ross** at Ursula.Ross@daff.gov.au or phone (02) 6272 5286, or email forestry.contact@daff.gov.au.

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