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Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

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Forestlinks

An eNewsletter from Forest Industries Branch

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Countries agree to strengthen the International Arrangements on Forests

The sixth meeting of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) was held in New York in April this year. After three years of negotiations on how to improve the existing arrangements, consensus has emerged on the future International Arrangement on Forests (IAF).

The agreed elements of the IAF include: a commitment to make progress on four "Global Objectives on Forests"; new operating modalities for the UNFF including a reduction in the frequency of UNFF global meetings from annual to biennial meetings, with the focus on regional meetings in the intervening years; a process to develop a voluntary non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests over the next year; and a strengthened commitment to provide financial resources to developing countries to implement sustainable forest management.

The UNFF was established in 2000 to "promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and to strengthen long-term political commitment to this end".

A hot topic debated by delegates was whether to have a legally or a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests. Only a few countries supported the legally binding arrangement.

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Australia participates in talks to reduce illegal logging

Australia was the only Pacific country present at the recent Asia Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) meeting in Manila.

Eighty delegates representing governments, international agencies, industry and non-government organizations attended the meeting on 7-9 March, but the key timber consumer countries, Japan and Korea, were not represented at government level.

Progress on a regional action plan for forest law enforcement and governance was limited and is unlikely to make much headway before the planned ministerial meeting, to be held within the next year.

Australia will, however, continue to link with regional initiatives to exchange information on Customs documentation and wood-numbering systems for importing and exporting timber.

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Decisions on grants applications expected soon

Assessment of applications for funding under the three Tasmanian forest industry assistance programmes is continuing. The programmes are part of the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement.

The Australian Government has allocated \$56 million to the three programs – the Tasmanian Forest Industry Development Programme, the Tasmanian Country Sawmills Assistance Programme and the Tasmanian Softwood Industry Development Programme.

Eighty-nine applications have been received under the two hardwood programs and a further 14 have been received under the softwood program.

An advisory committee has been meeting about once a month to consider the applications and expects to make its first batch of funding recommendations to ministers in April.

The committee has also visited sawmills, processing plants and other operations to get a better understanding of the Tasmanian forest industry.

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1080 operating plan approved

Australian Forestry Minister, Senator Eric Abetz, and the Tasmanian Minister for Economic Development and Resources, Bryan Green, have approved the operating plan for the alternatives to 1080 programme under the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement.

The new plan – which aims to control the damage done by browsing animals in private forests and on agricultural land in Tasmania in addition to assisting the phase-out of 1080 use on private land – will supplement current state-level research and development activities, and include extensive demonstration trials.

A technical panel, set up to support the programme, met for the first time in February. An independent expert will be appointed to review existing research into the use of 1080 and the adoption of alternatives.

A workshop will be held in Tasmania on 20 - 21 April, which will enable stakeholders to contribute to the review of research priorities.

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Action on clearfelling in old-growth forests

The Australian and Tasmanian governments will cooperate on a program to help significantly reduce clearfelling in old growth forests.

The program is part of the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement, signed by the two governments last May.

Both governments have agreed to reduce, by 2010, clearfelling to no more than 20 per cent of the total area of old growth harvested.

Australian Forestry Minister, Senator Eric Abetz, and the Tasmanian Minister for Economic Development and Resources, Bryan Green, agreed to plans to implement alternatives to clearfelling in old growth forests in February.

A technical panel of State and Commonwealth representatives will be formed to analyse alternatives and to advise stakeholders on research and extension programs.

The panel will also support a review of the Warra Long Term Ecological Research program and help convene an international conference in September 2007 for this purpose.

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