



An eNewsletter from Forest Industries Branch

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Bringing Down the Axe on Illegal Logging

The Australian Government has released a new policy to eliminate trade in illegally-sourced forest products. The policy provides practical measures to help protect the diminishing forests of our region, and reduce the estimated nine percent of our timber product imports that come from suspected illegal harvesting activities.

As a world leader in sustainable forest management and forest certification Australia will take a leadership role to help stamp out illegal logging.

The Australian Government has considered regulating the supply of legal forest products carefully, but this was found to be impractical as it would impact unfairly on legitimate forest product suppliers as well as on developing countries that use their forest resources to promote development. Other difficulties included low uptake of forest certification and chain-of-custody schemes. It was also found that stakeholders, including industry and environment groups, did not support the use of 'bans' on timber imports.

The Government is therefore aiming to work with industry, government and non-government stakeholders to develop a voluntary scheme to independently verify the legality of forest products traded in Australia as a step towards the Government's ultimate goal of ensuring that all forest products are sourced from legally and sustainably managed forests.

A multi-stakeholder working group will coordinate the development and implementation of voluntary measures for industry to verify the legality of imported forest products.

The Forest and Wood Products Council will also provide guidance on domestic policy measures and report on progress to the Government.

At the regional and international level, the Australian Government will promote bilateral and multilateral engagement with timber exporting and secondary processing countries to develop voluntary approaches to stop the trade in illegally sourced forest products.

The policy will also be regularly assessed for its effectiveness.

The policy builds on the \$200 million Global Initiative on Forest and Climate—a landmark programme to promote sustainable forest management in the region and establish effective regulatory and law enforcement arrangements to protect forests.

The Asia-Pacific Forestry Skills and Capacity Building Programme will also assist in improving the capacity of Asia Pacific countries to achieve sustainable forest management.

The Government is confident that, with the support of all stakeholders and the international community, the policy will effectively address trade in illegally-sourced forest products within Australia and promote trade in certified forest products from sustainably managed forests.

The policy can be downloaded at <http://www.daff.gov.au/forestry/international/illegal-logging>.

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Australia's Asia Pacific Forestry Skills and Capacity Building Programme

On 2 September 2007 the Australian Prime Minister announced the \$15.7 million Asia Pacific Forestry Skills and Capacity Building Programme.

The Programme will help countries in the Asia Pacific region increase their forest management expertise and improve the carbon sequestration performance of their forests. It will incorporate a number of components including skills based training, capacity building, technology transfer, information exchange and research.

The Programme is currently being developed and countries or organisations are encouraged to register their interest in the Programme.

For more information email forestry.contact@daff.gov.au, visit <http://www.daff.gov.au/forestry/international> or contact Neil Hughes (02) 6272 4213 or neil.hughes@daff.gov.au

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National Forest and Rangelands Fire Management Policy

In recent years fires in Victoria, NSW, Tasmania and Western Australia destroyed homes and livestock and devastated large areas of farmland.

Large areas of bush in national parks and state forest were also burnt, impacting on wildlife, water quantity and quality, recreational values and timber supply.

In acknowledgement of community concern at the impact of such fires, the Primary Industries and Natural Resource Management Ministerial Councils have asked their Natural Resources and Forestry sub-committees to develop a national forest fire management policy.

The group leading the policy development comprises Commonwealth, State and Territory government agencies responsible for forest fire management, including forest management, environment and conservation authorities.

It is expected that the National Forest and Rangelands Fire Management Policy will be presented to the Primary Industries and Natural Resource Management Ministerial Councils when they meet in early 2008.

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Launch of *Australia: Sustainable Forest Management*

Australia: Sustainable Forest Management was officially launched at the Australian Embassy in Tokyo in August this year.

Developed specifically for a Japanese audience, the package was funded as part of the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement communications programme and includes a series of fact-sheets on Australian and Tasmanian forestry issues as well as a booklet and DVD.

Stakeholders at the launch included senior executives from Japanese paper companies and trading houses, customers of the paper companies and senior members of the Japanese paper industry.

Four technical seminars were also hosted at the Australian Embassy, providing further detail on the package. They included a step-by-step explanation of sustainable forestry in Australia.

Along with the paper companies and their customers, Japanese environmental non-governmental organisations and consumer trade groups were invited to the seminars.

All attendees of the launch and seminars received a copy of the package and copies were also sent to the major paper companies and their customers.

Copies of *Australia: Sustainable Forest Management* are available from <http://www.daff.gov.au/forestry/national/cfa>.

Limited printed copies are available on request.

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13th Meeting of the Indonesia-Australia Working Group on Agriculture, Food and Forestry Cooperation

The 13th meeting of the Indonesia-Australia Working Group on Agriculture, Food and Forestry Cooperation (WGAFFC) was held on 29 August 2007 at the Gold Coast, Queensland. More than 80 delegates attended the meeting, including Australian and Indonesian government officials, industry representatives, consultants and academics.

Forestry issues were discussed for the first time under the newly-formed Forestry Task Force. The Task Force was developed following a decision at the 12th meeting of the Indonesia-Australia Working Group on Agriculture and Food Cooperation that was further supported at a meeting between the Indonesian and Australian Ministers for Forestry in Bali last year.

The two countries discussed common interests in sustainable forest management, including forest conservation, fire management, illegal logging, participation in international fora and benefits of plantations to small communities.

Representatives from the National Association of Forest Industries and the Australian Plantation Products and Paper Industry Council also made presentations to the Forestry Task Force.

The 14th WGAFFC will be held in Indonesia next year and will provide another opportunity to further develop Australia's positive relationship with Indonesia on forestry matters.

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Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement update

The *Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement* has now been in effect for just over two years. It has successfully improved the economic, social and environmental sustainability of forest management in Tasmania.

To date, 77 projects have been approved under TCFA-related programmes which include the *Tasmanian Forest Industry Development Programme*, the *Tasmanian Softwood Industry Development Programme* and the *Tasmanian Country Sawmills Assistance Programme*.

Grants totalling \$39.7 million will support more than \$140 million in investment in harvesting, sawmilling, processing and treatment of Tasmanian timbers.

In addition, 12 projects have been funded under the \$4 million *Alternatives to 1080 Program* to reduce the use of 1080 as a control for browsing animals on private land. These include demonstration projects and research into areas including integrated non-lethal control, land-holder attitudes, trapping, shooting, and humane herbivore control. Two project officers are also progressing work in shooting and trapping.

The Australian Government is now targeting grant funding to address focus areas not covered in the first round, including the use of repellents, fencing, and animal behavioural studies.

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National Indigenous Forestry Strategy update

In March this year, Government and industry partners signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to implement the National Indigenous Forestry Strategy (NIFS).

The Strategy aims to address the issues of Indigenous unemployment and skills and labour shortages in the forest industry. It also aims to provide economic opportunities for Indigenous people in regional Australia by increasing access to Indigenous land for forestry activities. This work is being coordinated and implemented by a steering committee.

Several training and employment projects have been supported by NIFS over the last 12 months, including:

- an Indigenous Forestry Contracting team in the Great Southern Region of Western Australia;
- a Cyclone Larry farm clean-up training and employment programme; and
- an economic development officer for forest Indigenous eco-tourism in the Wet Tropics of Queensland.

In recent months the NIFS coordinator has made a number of regional visits to raise awareness of the potential for forest industries to provide training and employment and business opportunities for Indigenous communities.

The coordinator has visited a number of regions over the past few months, including Central Queensland, North Queensland, Northern Territory and the Great Southern and South West regions of Western Australia.

The focus for the year ahead is to identify regions with both significant forestry activities and large Indigenous communities that have an interest in employment and business development. NIFS will seek to link forest industry companies, Indigenous communities and organisations with government agencies that can assist them with training, employment and business development.

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Forestry and Biofuels

The forestry sector is the only carbon positive sector in the Australian economy, and therefore has an important role to play in mitigating the effects of climate change. The Australian Government, in conjunction with industry and research institutions, has identified the importance of forestry to the emerging biofuels sector.

Current estimates indicate there is enough wood waste in Australia from existing forestry operations to produce 3 million MWh of electricity per annum — enough to permanently reduce CO2 emissions by 3 million tonnes, and meet 30 per cent of Australia's Mandatory Renewable Energy Target (MRET). For more information visit http://www.nafi.com.au/bioenergy_factsheets/WWFS03.pdf.

The Australian Government and the National Farmers' Federation recently commissioned the report *Biofuels in Australia – issues and prospects*. The report, which was prepared by the CSIRO, outlines the issues and opportunities for Australia's agriculture and forest sectors if they move to greater biofuel energy production to meet Australia's domestic energy needs. The report can be found at www.rirdc.gov.au/reports/EFM/07-071.pdf.

The Bioenergy Atlas of Australia is also an excellent point of reference for those seeking information on existing and potential biomass energy resources, as well as existing industry locations, infrastructure and other key data. The online atlas was developed jointly by the Bureau of Rural Sciences and University of Adelaide, and funded by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation under the Joint Venture AgroForestry Program and the Australian Greenhouse Office. The atlas can be viewed at <http://adl.brs.gov.au/mapserv/biomass/index.phtml>.

If you would like regular updates on developments in the biofuels sector, you can subscribe to Bioenergy Australia's newsletter at www.bioenergyaustralia.org. Bioenergy Australia was established in 1997 as a government-industry forum to foster and facilitate the development of biomass for energy, liquid fuels, and other value added bio-based products.

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Australian Government response to the Senate inquiry into Australian forest plantations

In 2002 the Private Forestry Consultative Committee reviewed *Plantations for Australia: The 2020 Vision*, a strategic partnership between the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and the plantation timber growing and processing industry. Former Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation, Senator the Hon Ian Macdonald, requested a Senate Inquiry to investigate plantation forestry in Australia.

The Senate Committee for Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport tabled its report in September 2004. It assessed:

- the impediments to achieving the *Plantations* strategy;
- if there were opportunities to achieve natural resource benefits from plantation forestry; and
- whether Government action was needed to encourage longer rotation plantations.

The Committee's report made 17 recommendations for both governments and industry, covering the above aspects of industry development.

The Australian Government's response to the report was tabled in the Senate in September this year, and supported most of the recommendations.

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