



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

February 2008

11th Edition



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An eNewsletter from Forest Industries Branch

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Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement second five-yearly review

The 1997 Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement (RFA), is required to be reviewed every five years to determine how well the commitments and milestones are being met by governments. The RFA's inaugural review was undertaken in 2002 by the Tasmanian Resource Planning and Development Commission.

The second five-yearly review, which is being undertaken by independent reviewer John Ramsay, is close to completion. His report is expected to be delivered to the Australian and Tasmanian governments early next month (March 2008).

Both governments are expected to respond in due course. In addition, the report is expected to be tabled in the Australian Parliament by mid-2008.

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UNFF Region Led Initiative

The governments of Australia and Switzerland co-hosted a Region Led Initiative (RLI) on regional input in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) from 28-30 January 2008.

Forestry experts from 31 countries attended the meeting to discuss ways to enhance the contribution of regional and sub-regional forestry organisations to sustainable forest management through the UNFF.

Some of the key outcomes included:

- a better understanding of the role of the UNFF, and how improved interaction at the global and regional levels can help boost sustainable forest management
- new networks and improved relationships between regional and sub-regional organisations, enabling them to better communicate their priorities and challenges, and identify emerging issues
- a willingness by the participants to be involved in similar initiatives in the future, and
- acknowledgement of Australia's efforts to promote sustainable forest management at the global and regional level.

A detailed report on the RLI's outcomes is available on the UNFF website at <http://www.un.org/esa/forests/gov-unff.html>

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Legally Binding Instrument for Sustainable Forest Management: Canada Meeting

Canada hosted a meeting of 29 'like minded countries' in Toronto late last month (23-24 January) on the development of a legally binding instrument for sustainable forest management.

Australia attended the meeting —the third hosted by Canada on this issue — as an observer, and was represented by Tony Bartlett, the General Manager of Forest Industries Branch in the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

While in-principle support for a legally binding instrument was high, there was some concern over the timing of the proposed negotiations and the effectiveness of such an instrument to tackle difficult forestry issues.

Several countries indicated their preference for a greater range of countries to be involved in the process, particularly some of the larger forested nations. There was also support for such a legally binding instrument to be negotiated within the framework of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

The number of countries willing to contribute to a Global Forests Fund may ultimately determine whether or not the initiative proceeds.

There was considerable support for implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests — a measure agreed by the United Nations Forum on Forests in April 2007 following lengthy negotiations.

Canada will prepare a notional 'roadmap' for the legally binding instrument process, and will explore options for hosting a final, preparatory meeting, possibly before July 2008.

Further information: Erika Oord (02) 6272 4937 or erika.oord@daff.gov.au

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Private Forest Development Committees Media Workshop

Executive officers with Australia's Private Forest Development Committees (PFDCs) will undergo specialist media training later this month (February 2008).

The training, funded by the Natural Heritage Trust and organised by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), will include sessions covering the electronic, print and radio sections of the media.

It will also provide participants with an opportunity to determine which of their projects would benefit from media coverage. And the training will enable a full meeting to take place between the executive officers, DAFF and the various state contacts.

There are 19 PFDCs in forest-growing regions around Australia. They are jointly funded by the Australian government (through the Natural Heritage Trust) and participating state governments.

Their goal is to encourage sustainable commercial private forestry through a range of activities, including feasibility studies for establishing plantations, setting up stakeholder networks, and providing general information on private forestry to farmers and other interested landholders.

Further information: <http://www.daff.gov.au/forestry/plantation-farm-forestry/pfdc> (PFDCs), or Ian McWhirter on (02) 6272 5341 or ian.mcwhirter@daff.gov.au

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Forestry and Climate Change Action Plan

An action plan for forestry and climate change will get underway this month (February) with the first in a series of stakeholder consultations.

The action plans are a Council of Australian Governments (COAG) initiative designed to help industry plan for climate change using mitigation and adaptation strategies, underpinned by the latest research and development, and effective communications.

The forestry action plan is being developed by the Australian Plantation Products and Paper Industry Council, which plans to consult with industry stakeholders and government agencies.

The plan will cover tree planting for all commercial purposes (except carbon storage) including:

- farm forestry
- agroforestry
- broad-scale plantations, and
- environmental purposes.

Also covered are native forests managed for wood production, as well as processing facilities such as sawmills, board plants, and pulp and paper mills.

The action plan will determine the 'life-cycle' contribution the forest and forest products sector makes to Australia's overall greenhouse gas balance.

The threats and opportunities associated with climate change, and the associated market and policy responses, will also be assessed.

The aim is to minimise the threats and realise the opportunities, particularly those in the areas of R&D and communications.

The action plan is expected to be endorsed by COAG within 12 months.

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A strategy for developing market opportunities for Australian forest products in India

A report prepared last October (2007) for the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry highlights the market and investment opportunities for Australian wood processors in India.

It also provides an overview of India's forest products needs, and Australia's exports to that country.

The report outlines a three-point strategy to better link Australia with India's forestry and wood products sectors, and can be downloaded from: <http://www.daff.gov.au/forestry/international/market-access>

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Australian Hardwood Log Price Index

Representatives from the hardwood industry and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) met in Melbourne on 30 January to discuss a proposed log price index.

The proposed index, developed by VicForests and KPMG, will boost transparency, as well as the availability of market information to members of the native and plantation sectors.

The index under consideration is based on the Australian Pine Log Price Index (APLPI), which is compiled by KPMG from data provided by soft-wood growers in 11 growing regions.

The APLPI details changes in the stumpage prices large-scale commercial plantation owners receive for the common grades of pine logs they sell to domestic processors.

And while the hardwood industry has given in-principle support to a similar index its final format is still being considered.

A follow up meeting scheduled for April will continue to progress the index.

Further information: Andrew Wilson (02) 6272 3750 or andrew.wilson@daff.gov.au

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Meeting with the Banking and Finance sector

A seminar in Sydney on 7 February (2008) provided representatives from the finance sector with an update on the current and emerging issues for Australian forestry.

Presented by officers from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's Forest Industries Branch, the seminar covered a range of issues, including:

- Australia's sustainable forest management credentials
- Regional Forest Agreements
- the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement
- forest certification, and
- illegal logging.

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