



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

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Forestlinks

An eNewsletter from Forest Industries Branch

- **Government Timber Procurement Policies**
- **Alternatives to 1080**
- **New policy on importing legally-sourced wood products**
- **Reporting Indicators for Australia's Forests**
- **Australia commits to sustainable forestry**
- **Industry votes to establish new R&D entity**
- **TABMA and TMA to Merge**



Government Timber Procurement Policies

Forest certification schemes are under greater scrutiny following the implementation of government procurement policies for wood and wood products in the United Kingdom, Belgium and Japan. The policies have been introduced to promote legal and sustainable purchasing of wood products, principally with which Australia agrees.

The Australian Government, industry representatives and the Australian Forestry Standard Limited are continuing to work with these governments to ensure the industry retains market access for products certified under the Australian Forest Certification Scheme. At this point the Australian Forest Certification Scheme has not been found to be unacceptable to any government and the Australian Government strongly supports the integrity and credentials of this Forest certification scheme.

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[Top](#)



Alternatives to 1080

The Australian Government has provided \$4 million to fast-track research, set up demonstration sites and encourage greater research into practical alternatives to 1080.

The new program, Research into alternatives to the use of 1080, was launched by Australian Forestry Minister Eric Abetz and Tasmanian Minister Bryan Green in Hobart on 2 May, 2006.

A two-day workshop in Launceston in April gave stakeholders the chance to provide their views and air concerns. Farming, private forestry, animal welfare and conservation groups and other parties all agreed to support reducing the use of 1080 by finding and using commercially viable alternatives.

Independent reviewer, Landcare Research, has been appointed to investigate further. Landcare Research will prepare a report by the end of June, using feedback from the April workshop.

The company will also meet with private landholders, interest groups and members of the broader community to identify related research and extension activities as part of a wider plan to reduce 1080 use in Tasmania.

If you want to contribute to the review or need further information contact the Project Manager, John Dawson on (03) 6233 2256 or email John.Dawson@dpiw.tas.gov.au

[Top](#)



New policy on importing legally-sourced wood products

During the 2004 election, the Coalition announced in its policy statement A Sustainable Future for Tasmania, that increasing the protection of Australia's high conservation forests should not lead to increased demand from overseas for unsustainably harvested rainforest timbers. To meet this commitment, the Government is working with major Australian timber wholesalers and retailers and other industry and non-government stakeholders to examine options, consistent with our international obligations, to ensure that forest products sold in Australia are sourced from sustainably managed forests.

As Australia does not have sufficient forest products to meet its domestic needs, we are reliant on imports from our Asia Pacific neighbours. However, there is currently inadequate international supply of certified legal and sustainable forest products to meet Australia's demand for timber. It is estimated that illegal or suspected illegally-sourced timber and timber products account for 9% of Australia's imports, or around \$400 million in value. In the future, Australia is likely to be self-sufficient in paper and paperboard, but import demand is likely to remain for sawnwood, wooden furniture, and miscellaneous timber products, such as doors, mouldings and specialty panels.

Senator Abetz, Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation, recently announced that the Government would be developing a policy to address the importation of illegally-sourced forest products. The problem, however, is complex and involves a range of issues that will need to be addressed along the timber supply chain from the forest concession in the country of origin to the point of sale in Australia. The Australian Government will seek to identify practical and achievable options that can address the key issues at domestic, regional and international levels.

A draft policy paper for consultation is to be released by Senator Abetz at the end of August 2006.

For further information contact James Hoare on 02 6272 5479 or at james.hoare@daff.gov.au

[Top](#)



Reporting Indicators for Australia's Forests

Australia's Montreal Process Implementation Group (MIG) has reviewed the indicators used to assess sustainable forest management in Australia.

A national set of Criteria and Indicators of sustainable forest management was developed in 1998 and governments have been collecting data on many of these indicators for use in the State of the Forests reports of 1998 and 2003.

The Forestry and Forest Products Committee endorsed a refined set of 44 indicators in May. These will be used to report against in the 2008 Australia's State of the Forest Report.

The review streamlined the initial 74 indicators used to compile the 2003 report. Removing areas of duplicity and ambiguity, the review also scrutinised the indicators to ensure national and regional relevance.

The review was supported by a series of consultations, a three day workshop in Canberra attended by representatives from all states and territories and four meetings of the MIG.

For further details contact: MIGSecretariat@affa.gov.au

[Top](#)



Australia commits to sustainable forestry

A recent report to the United Nations shows Australia's high level of commitment to sustainable forest management.

Results from Australia's 2005 assessment were presented earlier this year in New York at the sixth meeting of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), now known as the United Nations Forum on Forests.

The UNCSD established the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and the United Nations Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) in 1997 to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forest. The IPF and IFF represent the world's highest level political agreement on forest policy.

Both the IPF and IFF examined a wide range of forest-related topics over a five year period and recommended more than 270 proposals for implementation at international, regional or national levels. These initial proposals were summarised into 100 proposals for action (PFA) by Australia, with the support of the World Bank Program on Forests (PROFOR).

Australia is monitoring the progress of its domestic programs and international programs relevant to those proposals for action and has now conducted two national assessments of progress. Australia completed its first national assessment in 2001.

The 2005 assessment shows that of the 66 PFA relevant to Australia, all have either commenced, are well underway or show substantial progress. Of the 95 PFA relevant to Australia in the international component, 86 have been adopted.

Implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action in Australia available at www.daff.gov.au

Further information on Australia's progress against the PFA: andrew.wilson@daff.gov.au or 02 6272 3750

[Top](#)



Industry votes to establish new R&D entity

Proposed changes to the management of national forestry research and development, as well as to facilitate a national approach to marketing and promotion, were put to the vote by Australia's forest and wood products industry during March.

The proposed changes involve:

- converting the statutory authority Forest and Wood Products Research and Development Corporation (FWPRDC) into an industry-owned company Forest and Wood Products Australia (FWPA)
- introducing a levy of five cents per cubic metre of all logs, to be paid by forest/plantation growers and timber plantation Managed Investment Scheme (MIS) managers, and
- increasing the existing hardwood sawlog levy from 22 cents per cubic metre to 29 cents per cubic metre.

There were 1,118 eligible voters made up of existing levy payers (including importers) and growers/MIS Managers who registered specifically for the ballot conducted by the Australian Electoral Commission. 434 ballots were admitted for scrutiny.

The majority of the industry supported the establishment of an industry-owned company FWPA, with 310 votes in favour to 118 against. The growers/MIS managers supported the proposal to raise a levy but hardwood saw-millers were split on the proposals. The National Association of Forest Industries (NAFI) has come forward on behalf of its members to support both the FWPA proposal and an increase in the hardwood levy.

In light of the ballot results, the four industry associations – A3P, Australian Forest Growers (AFG), Australian Timber Importers Federation (ATIF) and the National Association of Forest Industries (NAFI) have asked the Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation, Senator Eric Abetz, to progress with introduction of the new legislation.

Further information: Peter Grist (02) 6272 5624 or email: peter.grist@daff.gov.au

Top



TABMA and TMA to Merge

The Timber and Building Materials Association (TABMA) and the Timber Merchants Association of Victoria (TMA) announced their intention to merge as of 1 July 2006.

The new organisation, TABMA (Australia), will be a national association representing building materials suppliers, timber merchants, timber importers and service providers.

For further information contact Andrew Wilson on 02 6272 3750 or at andrew.wilson@daff.gov.au

Top

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