

Public submission

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13 October 2024

NSW Government Independent Planning Commission
Level 15, 135 King Street SYDNEY NSW 2000
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Re: NSW Forestry Industry Action Plan

NSW Farmers is Australia's largest state farming organisation, representing the interests of its farmer members in the state and is the only state-based farming organisation that represents farmers across all agricultural commodities. We speak up on issues that matter to farmers, whether it's the environment, biosecurity, water, animal welfare, economics, trade, workforce or rural and regional affairs.

NSW Farmers welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the NSW Forestry Industry Action Plan. The environmental and economic benefits of Private Native Forestry (PNF) and Farm Forestry in Australia are often undervalued. Policy reforms must promote long-term investment in forestry to sustain timber as a renewable resource and decrease dependence on non-renewable alternatives.

Carbon Sequestration

In light of the NSW state and Federal government's commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, it is crucial that the carbon sequestration potential of PNF and farm forestry be fully acknowledged and valued equivalent to other emissions reduction sources. A 2021 report prepared by Principal Economics for the Australian Forest Products Association thoroughly explored the carbon sequestration of Australian plantations forests and determined that once fully developed, 400,000 hectares of new pine plantations could sequester up to 388 million tonnes of carbon dioxide.¹ This projection reflects the potential carbon sequestration increase that can be achieved once the cycle of planting, harvesting, and replanting reaches equilibrium. Young trees absorb more carbon as they grow, while mature trees serve as long-term carbon storage units.

Australia's total emissions for the year ending December 2020 were 499 Mt of carbon dioxide, with agriculture contributing 73 Mt CO₂. The establishment of 400,000 hectares of new plantations could offset up to five years' worth of national agricultural emissions at current levels.

¹ Principal Economics. (2021). *Potential for carbon sequestration in Australian plantations forests to contribute to Australia's 'Net Zero by 2050' target*. Australian Forest Products Association. <https://ausfpa.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Potential-for-carbon-sequestration-in-Australian-plantations-forests-to-contribute-to-Australias-net-zero-by-2050-target.pdf>

Timber Industry and Alternatives

PNF and farm forestry also provide economic benefits that extend beyond carbon markets in many regions of NSW. PNF can be successfully integrated with beef cattle operations through Silvopasture techniques.² The plantation sector supports employment, contributes to local economies, and provides long-term timber supplies, benefiting both industry and landholders. It is important to recognise that both PNF and Farm Forestry operate under robust codes of practice positioning the sector well ahead of many others in terms of sustainability and ESG considerations.

The ongoing supply of high-quality domestic timber is essential to industries such as construction and infrastructure development. Without sustained support for farm forestry, Australia risks becoming more reliant on alternatives such as concrete, steel, and plastics. Policy adjustments should, therefore, focus on encouraging landholders to invest in long-term forestry operations, ensuring that timber remains a renewable and economically viable resource.

Emissions Accounting Methodologies

PNF and farm forestry have the potential to significantly contribute to meeting international climate commitments through carbon sequestration. However, current methodologies do not fully account for the sequestration potential of new plantations. It is essential that emissions from sustainable forestry activities are excluded from carbon reporting schemes unless their sequestration contributions are fully recognised. This ensures that forestry's role in reducing emissions is accurately represented and prevents the imposition of penalties that overlook its carbon capture benefits.

Research and Development

Further research into carbon sequestration in forestry, particularly across various soil types and climates, should be prioritised. Research performed by the Research by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) on Australia's plantation industry highlights that carbon sequestration potential varies significantly depending on forest management practices, soil composition, and local climates.³ The report stresses the importance of investing in models that better quantify carbon capture, which would support participation in carbon credit markets and promote sustainable forestry.

If further information is required, please contact [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED]

Your sincerely

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² Jose, Shibu, and Jeanne Dollinger. "Silvopasture: a sustainable livestock production system." *Agroforestry systems* 93 (2019): 1-9.

³ Legg, P., I. Frakes, and M. Gavran. "Australian plantation statistics and log availability report 2021." *Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences: Canberra, Australia* (2021): 119.