

Plantations in Rural Landscapes

IFA Forestry Policy Statement 2.3

The Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) advocates the continued development of plantations in rural landscapes to meet the 2020 Vision target, provided this development balances environmental, social and economic benefits.

The Issue

The development and expansion of plantations needs sufficient areas of cleared land. Remnant native vegetation may impact negatively on the establishment, growth and management of plantations. However, clearing of substantially intact areas of native vegetation can threaten regional conservation objectives.

Background

Large areas of mostly cleared land are needed to expand plantation resource to meet the goals outlined in *Plantations for Australia: The 2020 Vision*. In the past, many of Australia's plantations were established by clearing native forest. In recent years, most plantations have been established on marginal agricultural land that has already been cleared. Most agricultural land suitable for plantation forestry also includes areas of remnant native vegetation that varies in size from single trees to substantial areas. These areas of remnant native vegetation and their impacts must be considered in new plantation developments.

Australia has legislation that aims to protect significant native vegetation from clearing. However, this can be complex to implement locally and can prevent plantation development on agricultural land. The challenge for plantation developers is to find a balance between retaining native vegetation and clearing for plantations.

Policy

The IFA supports and encourages:

- Expansion of plantations on cleared farmland where long-term economic, employment and environmental benefits outweigh the social and environmental impacts
- Industry Codes of Forest Practice and environmental management systems in plantation development
- Industry communication to promote community understanding of the potential impacts and benefits of plantation development
- Ongoing research and development into appropriate species and management practices that will enhance plantation development.

The IFA considers that:

- The benefits of plantation development in rural landscapes can be maximised and the impacts minimised through:
 - Development of opportunities for downstream processing
 - Forest industry support for local businesses and communities
 - Industry contribution to fire prevention and suppression
 - Appropriate infrastructure planning on a regional, rather than industry, basis
 - Plantation industry contribution to road maintenance
 - Integration of forestry plantations into farming enterprises where appropriate.