

Use of Chemicals in Plantation Forestry

IFA Forestry Policy Statement 2.5

The Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) advocates responsible use of approved fertilisers, herbicides, insecticides and other chemicals in plantation management. Chemicals should be used with thorough planning, application and monitoring procedures and appropriate controls to minimise the risk of off-site contamination.

The Issue

Chemical use (including fertilisers, herbicides and insecticides) is common at various stages in the development of plantation forests. Concerns are often raised about the residual nature of some chemicals and the risk of spreading chemicals outside the target area.

The continued use of chemicals, often essential for economic timber production, depends on responsible use and adoption of “best available practice” by plantation growers.

Background

A range of chemicals are used on plantation forests including fertilisers, herbicides, insecticides and pesticides. The type of chemical chosen depends on its suitability to conditions, the application method, cost and purpose. Chemical use and application methods are required to meet standards outlined in Codes of Forest Practices and government guidelines.

Chemical application may be through aerial spraying or ground-based methods. Due to the size of plantations, aerial spraying is often the most cost effective method of application. Community concern is often raised with this technique, with worries over residues in soils and the risk of drift of chemicals outside target areas, particularly in waterways. However, strict environmental standards (including the use of buffer zones) are used to ensure chemicals are accurately applied within the target zone.

Chemical application techniques in forestry are constantly being refined. Chemical use is also being minimised, with broadcast application techniques often being replaced by strip or spot spraying and the use of granular herbicides. No spray zones or buffers next to waterways are used to reduce unintended off-site contamination.

Policy

The IFA supports and encourages:

- An integrated approach to weed and pest management that aims to minimise the use of chemicals
- Ongoing research and development into chemical use and alternative control measures in the plantation forestry sector.

The IFA considers that:

- Chemical use in plantation management should comply with all relevant legislation and Codes of Practice and adopt best practice principles to avoid adverse environmental impacts and impact on sustainable land use
- Chemical application techniques should be appropriate to the circumstances, take account of community views, protect water and environmental values, and minimise off-site spread of chemicals
- Chemical use in plantation management should be minimised and aim to balance economic, environmental and social outcomes.