

MEDIA RELEASE

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Plantation Forestry is good for regional Australia

The managed investment plantation sector welcomes the report, *The Socioeconomic Impacts of Plantation Forestry*, launched today by the Federal Forestry Minister, Senator Ian Macdonald, at the Australian Local Government Association National Assembly in Canberra.

Australian Forest Growers Chief Executive, Warwick Ragg, said: “The report demonstrates that plantation forestry enhances the social infrastructure of those regions where it has reached a critical mass, and it dispels many of the myths surrounding the industry.”

Treefarm Investment Managers Australia Executive Director, Alan Cummine, said: “The study confirms what we have believed for some time. Plantation development is helping arrest the long-term trend of rural decline, and this is something the plantation industry can take pride in.”

The set of five reports, by the Bureau of Rural Sciences, examines the real impacts of plantation forestry in two focus regions – the South West Slopes of NSW (a major pine plantation growing and processing region centred on Tumut/Tumbarumba) and the Great Southern of Western Australia (a maturing, predominately blue gum, resource in the Albany area)

The report shows that plantation forestry has a positive socio-economic impact during its establishment phase, becoming even more positive when the industry matures and major processing capacity is established.

It shows that plantation industries contribute to employment and local businesses, attract more working age families, and increase the demand for community services.

For example in the South West Slopes, 0.5 jobs have been generated for each 100 hectares under plantation management, harvesting and haulage and 1.03 in processing.

In the Great Southern, for every \$1 million spent by the plantation sector, more than 17 jobs have been created. Areas with high rates of plantation expansion experienced either growth in rural population, or a smaller decline than in nearby areas.

The report also sets out a peer-reviewed, robust methodology for measuring the socio-economic impacts of plantation forestry over time, which can be applied to other regions.

Mr Cummine said: “We are pleased with the outcomes in the report, and commend it to the attention of those concerned about the impact of plantation forestry on rural communities and other industries.”

Mr Ragg said: “It is important the community recognises that plantation forestry is a legitimate land use and can be a major factor in rural renewal. It’s time to stop the ‘Chicken Little’ routine every time someone wants to buy some land and establish a plantation.”

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The reports are available for download at either www.fwprdc.org.au or www.brs.gov.au