



Media Release

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Pesticide use in Australian forestry plantations marginal

The plantation forest industry is responsible for only a tiny proportion of chemical pesticide use in Australia, according to a major study funded by the Forest and Wood Products Research and Development Corporation (FWPRDC).

The study, 'The use of chemical pesticides by the Australian plantation forest industry', reviewed and quantified chemical pesticide use by the Australian plantation forest industry through analysis of relevant statistical information, extensive interviews with industry experts and a survey of forestry managers responsible for more than 92 per cent of the Australian plantation estate.

A summary report launched today at the 2006 Australian Forest Growers International Biennial Conference in Tasmania shows that:

- plantation forestry is a minor contributor to Australian chemical pesticide use, with annual expenditure accounting for only 0.7 per cent of the \$2.4 billion annual national total and less than 20 per cent of that spent on household insecticides;
- herbicides including adjuvants constitute 99 per cent of Australian plantation forestry chemical pesticide expenditure and insecticides represent 1 per cent;
- most chemical pesticides used by the Australian plantation forest industry are also used in Australian agricultural food production systems;
- industry survey results indicate most chemical pesticides are used at less than half of the allowable maximum application rate; and
- aerial application of chemical pesticides by the plantation forest industry accounts for a maximum of 0.5 of the total 10 million hectares of land aerially treated with a range of chemical products across Australia each year.

The study results show that the plantation forest industry's adaptation of chemical pesticides developed for other uses, in accordance with Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) regulations, has gradually improved efficiency in target species control, reduced environmental impacts on non-target species and water bodies, and reduced costs. The industry's use of licensed application contractors also provides additional regulatory cover.

Study findings further highlight the Australian plantation forest industry's limited use of chemical pesticides,

This release can also be viewed on the FWPRDC website

www.fwprdc.org.au

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which is usually confined to the first two years of a crop cycle and pest or disease outbreak management thereafter. In contrast, the agricultural cropping industry commonly applies chemical pesticides multiple times each year or to each crop.

The report also shows that environmental monitoring is generally conducted on a risk management basis by individual plantation managers, and that the only systematic programme of water monitoring relevant to plantation forestry – in Tasmania – has reported few chemical pesticide detections.

FWPRDC Executive Director Dr Glen Kile said the study was the most detailed analysis of chemical pesticide use undertaken for the plantation industry. He said it additionally provided an in-depth comparison of chemical use in plantation forestry and agriculture.

“Use of chemical pesticides is important for plantation production but that use is small, well managed, actively regulated and environmentally responsible,” Dr Kile said. “The industry continues to carry out research and development that ensures the most efficient, cost-effective and environmentally friendly use of chemical pesticides. Where possible, it is also developing safe alternatives that meet forest certification needs while lowering production costs.”

The study was undertaken by Sylva Systems Pty Ltd and GreenTree Forestry Services on behalf of the FWPRDC.

The summary report and complete study report are available online at www.fwprdc.org.au.