

## **Forest Certification**

### **IFA Forestry Policy Statement 2.1**

Independent certification of forest management and timber production is valuable to demonstrate the sustainability of forestry and forest products to consumers and the community. Efforts should be improved to fully adopt and promote certification within the Australian forest industries.

#### **The Issue**

The community is increasingly seeking assurance that forest products are sourced legally and sustainably. Certification schemes provide a strong incentive for sustainable forest management and continual improvement. Development and application of certification should be scientifically based and reward best practice management in native forests and plantations.

#### **Background**

Forest certification includes the development of agreed standards for sustainable forest management; accreditation of certification bodies by an independent body; auditing and certification of forest management practices; statement of certification and a period for review; and guidelines for continual improvement.

The key criteria for forest certification schemes are that they are credible to consumers; include all types of wood and non-wood products; are applicable to small and large forest estates on public and private land; are objective and measurable standards; include independent third-party auditing by independently accredited auditors; are transparent to external stakeholders; are voluntary in participation; cost effective and practical; and result in net benefits to the forest manager.

There are two forest certification schemes in Australia: the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) scheme and the Australian Forestry Certification Scheme (AFCS). Around nine million hectares of forests in Australia have been certified under these two schemes (including plantations and native forests).

#### **Policy**

The IFA supports and encourages:

- Forest certification schemes that are based on the best science and knowledge of forest management, and that foster best practice management in native forests and plantations
- Appropriate stakeholder engagement in the development of forest certification.

The IFA considers that:

- Improved efforts are needed so that Australian forests used for timber production are certified and all Australian forest industries achieve Chain of Custody certification
- The development, use and promotion of forest certification within Australia will promote ongoing improvement in sustainable forest management
- The IFA should promote the Australian forest certification key criteria, as this is vital for sustainable forest management and the long-term role of forests in delivering wood and non-wood benefits.

The IFA will support the AFS and FSC where they reflect the above criteria and do not impose arbitrary restrictions on forest use and management. They should:

- Be scientifically based, consistent with relevant legislation, be practical and cost effective, focused on desired outcomes rather than processes, and recognise the diversity of forests and ownership
- Promote mutual recognition of other Australian forest certification schemes and relevant international schemes.