

## **Wood for Bioenergy**

### **IFA Forestry Policy Statement 8.1**

The Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) advocates the use of wood from native forests and plantations for biomass energy, provided that it is managed sustainably and maximum value recovery is sought from all trees harvested.

#### **The Issue**

Wood and other biomass are potentially renewable energy sources that can be used to replace fossil fuel energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, there is community concern about the potential impacts of large-scale use of wood for bioenergy on other forest values such as biodiversity. There is also evident reluctance to accept energy generated from wood as genuinely renewable.

#### **Background**

Bioenergy is energy derived from biomass. Biomass can be produced from agricultural crops, plantations and native forests, or the by-products of processing of forest or agricultural products.

Wood remains the primary energy source for much of the world's population. It is generally an inefficient way of producing usable energy, but with improving technologies, wood can now be more widely used to produce energy.

With the growing concern over greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, wood can be a sustainable energy choice for mitigating climate change. If a balanced cycle of growth and harvest is sustained, wood can be used for bioenergy without increasing atmospheric carbon dioxide levels.

There is a considerable biomass energy resource available from Australian forests and plantations, especially from the residues of plantation and native forest harvesting operations that are otherwise burnt or left to rot on the forest floor. Plantations can also be grown specifically for bioenergy purposes. Developing bioenergy facilities can potentially provide additional financial returns from plantations and native forests through new markets for low quality wood. These facilities can provide regional economic development and employment opportunities.

#### **Policy**

The IFA supports the use of wood for biomass energy provided that:

- Harvested areas are regenerated or replanted to ensure that forest greenhouse gas balances are maintained for the long term.

The IFA considers that:

- Development of bioenergy facilities should involve extensive community involvement and be consistent with local planning and environmental regulations
- Financial incentives for the production of energy from all sources (fossil fuel and other sources) should be equitable, transparent and efficient
- Government regulations controlling accreditation of biomass energy sources should be easily understood and based on sound science and market principles
- The community needs to be educated on the benefits and disadvantages of using wood for energy
- Accounting for greenhouse gas benefits of bioenergy should be scientifically based and recognise emissions from all components of the forest ecosystem and fossil fuels used in energy production
- Investment is needed for research to support efficient energy generation from wood and to quantify greenhouse gas balances.