

Woodchips from Australian Forests

IFA Forestry Policy Statement 8.2

The Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) advocates the use of woodchips from Australian plantations and native forests if sourced according to the principles of sustainable forest management and under the strict guidelines of relevant Codes of Practice.

The Issue

Woodchips are produced from native forests and plantations in Australia. They provide a financial return on wood that would otherwise be wasted. A market for woodchips encourages the use of essential silvicultural operations and promotes a more complete use of harvested trees.

Woodchips are an issue in native forests as they have expanded the intensity of harvesting in native forests, leading to a public perception that all wood chipping is undesirable. There are also concerns that woodchips are being exported rather than being processed into products in Australia.

Background

Woodchips are the basic raw material for many products in daily use, including paper and other reconstituted wood products such as chipboards, hardboards and fibreboards of various kinds.

Woodchip markets offer silvicultural and commercial benefits to forest owners and managers. They also:

- Provide a market for small-size logs from hardwood and softwood plantations, and from regrowth native forests
- Provide opportunities for silvicultural operations and for a more complete use of harvested trees
- Enhance the financial viability of harvesting native and planted forests, which may be otherwise uneconomical to harvest
- Provide opportunities to rehabilitate native forests designated for wood production with high levels of poor quality trees and those damaged by fire, insects or disease.

Many believe the environmental impacts of more widespread and/or more intensive harvesting of native forests outweigh the benefits generated by harvesting woodchips from these forests.

Policy

The IFA supports and encourages:

- Public policy and private sector investment to develop Australian processing industries that add value to the woodchips produced in Australia's native and planted forests.

The IFA considers that:

- Woodchips should only be taken from plantations or native forests on private and public land that is sustainably managed and adheres to the relevant Codes of Practice
- Maximum value recovery should be sought from all trees harvested in both native and planted forests.