

Timber Production and Biological Diversity

IFA Forestry Policy Statement 1.4

The Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) advocates that maintaining biological diversity is vital to sustainable forestry management. This can be achieved in native forests and plantations managed for timber production by applying scientifically based management plans, forest certification standards and Codes of Practice.

The Issue

Government and private sector forest managers have policies and practices for managing native forests and timber plantations that aim to preserve biological diversity and landscape values. Using internationally recognised practices can reduce the impact of timber production on biological diversity. However, unplanned short-term impacts may demand remedial action.

Background

Conservation of biological diversity is an important goal of managing forests in an ecologically sustainable way. Australia is a signatory of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which aims to conserve biological diversity, use its resources sustainably and share the benefits of use (commercial and other) of genetic resources. Australian States have legislation and policies providing for biodiversity conservation that can be independently audited for environmental, social and economic management.

Forest biological diversity is defined as the variability that occurs among forest-living organisms and the ecological processes they are part of; this includes diversity in forests within species, between species and of ecosystems and landscapes. Forest diversity plays important economic, social and cultural roles, providing a range of goods and services (such as timber and clean water), as well as providing jobs and livelihoods. Timber production can be based on plantations or native forests (or a combination of both). Short term impacts include aesthetic, environmental, water values, fauna habitat, potentially flora species and off-forest impacts.

Policy

The IFA supports and encourages:

- Sustainable management of native forests and plantations through relevant principles of the CBD and relevant objectives under the National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biodiversity
- Establishment and management of a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) conservation reserve network, along with the management of biodiversity outside forest reserves
- Using scientifically based management systems to protect biodiversity values, including threatened species
- Consideration of the ecosystem and landscape approaches for maintaining biodiversity in large areas of native forest
- Development, implementation and monitoring of Codes of Practice for timber production and associated harvesting plans that recognise and protect biological diversity
- Mitigation of unplanned short-term impacts and rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems (including off-forest) where long-term impacts are identified in native forest harvesting
- Ongoing research and development on adaptive management to protect biological diversity.

The IFA considers that:

- Timber production is a renewable, low energy use industry that need not threaten biological diversity
- Excluding timber production from native forests does not guarantee protection of biological diversity
- Native forest ecosystems can recover from disturbance caused by timber harvesting and fire.