

Jobs and forest industries

The RFA provides 20 years' certainty for forest-based industries, including forestry and wood products, minerals and water production as well as grazing, beekeeping, firewood, and speciality crafts. Forest-based tourism is covered in a separate fact sheet.

Timber production

Native forests

The hardwood timber industry using wood from the West region directly generated about \$53.3 million in 1997-98 and contributed almost \$100 million to the Victorian economy, taking flow-on effects into account.

The RFA will provide industry with 77,900 cubic metres of D+ sawlogs per year. The necessary reduction in supply levels, arising from new reserves and revised estimates of sustainable yield, will be phased in over two years. Further analyses of sustainable yield will be carried out in consultation with industry and community stakeholders as new data from Victoria's SFRI program becomes available, with priority given to the Midlands FMA.

Although the area available for timber production will be reduced under the RFA, the certainty of resource supply provided by the RFA, combined with financial assistance from the Commonwealth and State governments, will ensure that there are no net job losses in the West Victoria region as a result of the RFA. It will also encourage:

- An increased proportion of timber that is kiln-dried;
- Increased processing of residual logs;
- Networks between timber processors to facilitate investment;
- Strengthening links with the furniture industry; and
- Identifying and expanding markets for West Victoria timbers.

Victorian Forest Industry Structural Adjustment Package (VicFISAP)

The Commonwealth and Victorian Governments have jointly provided an additional \$15 million for Vic FISAP, bringing total funding for Vic FISAP to \$42.6 million, to assist the continued development of Victoria's hardwood timber industry and any adjustment arising from the Regional Forest Agreement process. VicFISAP assists industries to take advantage of new opportunities, to increase value adding and downstream processing, to set up new equipment and technology and expand local manufacturing.

Additional funding of \$20 million to assist timber industry and regional development will be provided by Victoria. Initiatives include:

- increasing forest productivity through thinning regrowth forest stands;
- stand improvement projects aimed at reducing competition in established regrowth stands;
- enhanced forest resource information including an acceleration of the SFRI program;
- assistance for local government in implementing *the Code of Forest Practices for Timber Production* on private land.

Plantations

West Victoria contains about 92,300 hectares of plantations. The area of plantations is expanding significantly. The RFA provides for native forest industries to complement the region's increasing plantation estate.

The RFA recognises the future potential of plantations and the need to facilitate expansion of the estates and product diversification, including sawlogs. The Governments will provide additional funding for the continuation of Regional Plantation Committees to guide this development.

Initiatives aimed at enhancing plantation development include:

- additional funding for plantation development;
- socio-economic assessment of plantation development;
- additional funding for development of farm plans integrating plantations with other farming enterprises;
- expansion of farm forestry in the Wombat Forest area; and
- funding to assist implementation of effluent-irrigated plantations.

Other forest Industries

Under the RFA, the forests of the West region will continue to supply a range of products and benefits including forest produce such as posts and poles, other hewn timber, firewood, and specialty timbers as well as apiculture, prospecting, mining and water values. Grazing of domestic stock also occurs on public land throughout the region. A three-year phase out of firewood harvesting in new reserves has been agreed to assist regional communities in adjusting to new sources of firewood. Victoria will provide assistance to develop a statewide strategy for firewood and assistance for development of firewood plantations.

Minerals

Mineral exploration and mining will be permitted in certain parts of the CAR Reserve system but only where the identified conservation values are not incompatible with exploration and mining. Consistent with previous Victorian RFAs, mineral exploration and mining in the reserve system will be subject to the normal Victorian legislative controls. Mine rehabilitation will also be subject to Victorian legislation and will aim to achieve world best practice.

Apiculture

Apiarists use the region's forests to produce honey, beeswax, pollen and royal jelly. Crop pollination is another important benefit of apiculture. Access to public land for beekeeping will continue under existing State policies and plans, and beekeeping will continue to be generally permitted in State forest Special Protection Zones.

