

North East Victoria: Jobs and forest-based industries

Timber production - hardwood

In 1996-97, the estimated gross production value of commercial forestry, sawmilling and residual log processing-based industries using hardwood from the North East region was \$20.6 million, providing 212 direct jobs.

Taking into account flow-on effects, sawmilling and residual log processing are estimated to contribute around \$34 million and \$7 million respectively to the Victorian economy. Together with associated forest management, logging and haulage, they provide around 485 direct and indirect jobs both within and outside the region.

The region's native hardwood also contributes to a range of manufacturing-based activities such as furniture manufacturing, joinery and craft wood. In 1996, 585 people living in the North East region were employed in furniture and joinery based industries using both hardwood and softwood resources.

The region accounted for around eight per cent of total State sawlog production and 1.3 per cent of total State residual log production in 1996-97, producing 64,275 cubic metres of sawlog, and 13,601 cubic metres of residual log.

It contributed around \$1.9 million in log royalties in 1996-97, or 5.4 per cent of total State forest log royalties received in that year.

Alpine ash and mountain ash forests are the most productive forest types, occupying 39,870 hectares (33 per cent) of the total net productive area for the Forest Management Areas. The mixed species forests are also important for timber production and occupy 80,180 hectares (67 per cent) of the net productive area.

Softwood plantations

While Victorian RFAs focus mainly on public native forests and where necessary private native forests, they also analyse the industry development potential of a region's plantations.

The region contains about 53,000 of Victoria's 240,000 hectares of plantations, aggregated into three major zones: Benalla-Mansfield, Ovens, and Shelley-Koetong. The Victorian Plantations Corporation (VPC) holds most of this area (45,000 hectares), with the rest in private ownership.

They support major regional softwood industries in Myrtleford, Wangaratta and Benalla. These industries process sawlogs, veneer logs, and residual roundwood which is converted into a range of forest products, including sawn timber, veneer, plywood, wood-based panels and pulp and paper. Smaller firms in Eura and Benalla process sawlogs, preservation roundwood and residual roundwood.

Products also flow to NSW in the form of sawlogs to Tumbarumba and roundwood to Albury, and as roundwood to the export facility at Geelong through Radiata Exports-Softwood Plantation Exporters Pty Ltd.

In 1996-97 the softwood industry used more than 850,000 cubic metres of softwood sawlogs, pulplogs and residues. A survey for the CRA put employment

in the softwood sawmilling industry at 706 people, with another 135 people working in harvesting and hauling.

Tourism

With its rich history, its mountains, snowfields, forests, lakes and rivers, the North East is one Victoria's most popular tourist destinations as part of the 'Legends, Wine and High Country'. A 1996 survey found that the region received approximately 1.5 million visitors in 1995, or 10 per cent of all visitors to Victoria. Only the Great Ocean Road and the Goldfields received higher visitor numbers. Most tourists to the North East are intrastate travellers, with only 12 per cent from outside Victoria.

In 1995-96, recreational, personal and other services employed over 5,400 people in the region, or 8.4 per cent of its total employment. Tourism also makes a significant contribution to the retail and wholesale industries and these industries combined were the region's second largest employer in 1995-96, employing approximately 11,500 people, or 17.7 per cent of the total workforce.

Tourism makes a significant economic contribution to many local centres, with visitors estimated to have spent a total of about \$93 million in Albury in 1994-95. Expenditure in the 'Legends, Wine and High Country' region was approximately \$219 million in 1995-96.

Minerals

While there are no significant metallic mineral mines operating in the North East, about \$9.3 million was spent on exploration in 1996-97, with 31 active licences distributed among 23 companies. About \$6 million of this was to locate feldspar in granite in the Beechworth district. The other major commodity target was gold, with a little interest in base metals.

Many old gold deposits have attracted recent exploration interest. The Golden Mountain prospect in the Hell's Hole gold field appears to be the most significant, and the ACI feldspar mine opened recently at Beechworth.

Quarrying is a major activity, with 25 construction material quarries producing at least \$20.5 million of construction material in 1994-95.

Other forest products

The forests of the North East supply a range of products and benefits as well as timber production and tourism. These include forest produce such as posts and poles, other hewn timber, firewood, wood chop blocks and specialty timbers as well as honey and water. Grazing of domestic stock also occurs on public land throughout the North East.