



## **Australia's Voluntary National Contribution to the United Nations Global Forest Goals – 2 April 2019**

### **1. The sustainable management of Australia's forests**

Australia has 134 million hectares of forest, equivalent to 17% of our land area, making us the 7<sup>th</sup> most forested country in the world. These forests—dominated by native species such as the iconic eucalyptus and acacia—provide for a range of values and uses such as biodiversity conservation, cultural significance, carbon sequestration, water security, recreational amenity, non-timber forest products, and wood harvesting. Australia delivers a careful balance of these values, securing our forests for present and future generations.

Australia has more than 500 national parks, providing conservation outcomes and showcasing the natural wonders of our land. At the same time, Australia's commercial forestry sector directly employs more than 50,000 people across forest growing and processing. In 2015-16, the value added by the forest and wood products industries to Australia's economy was A\$8.6 billion, contributing 0.52% to Australia's gross domestic product (GDP), and the value of production of wood products industries (sales and service income) was A\$23.7 billion.

Australia's forest industries are underpinned by ecologically sustainable forest management (SFM) of both plantation and native forests on public and private land, integrating the environmental, economic and community values and uses of forests. Australia's commitment to SFM, at both the national and state and territory levels of government, was re-affirmed in the [2017 ministerial forestry statement](#).

Australia's policy framework and actions seek to:

- **ensure** that Australia's forests continues to be managed sustainably for present and future generations.
- **drive** recognition of timber as the ultimate carbon-capturing renewable resource which can support broader initiatives including the United Nations Rio Conventions.
- **combat** the global trade in illegally logged timber products while promoting the trade of legal timber products.

### **2. Australia's commitment to the Global Forest Goals**

Australia supports the vision established in the United Nations Global Forest Goals (GFGs), as detailed in the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030, to secure the long-term health and productive capacity of our forests.

Australia's voluntary national contribution (VNC) sets out our ambitious contribution in supporting the achievement of the GFGs, and captures and builds on Australia's long-standing commitment to the delivery of SFM.

#### ***Increasing our productive forests***

Wood, the ultimate carbon-capturing renewable, is one of the most commonly traded commodities, and global demand is forecast to quadruple by 2050.<sup>1</sup> Australia is committed to a high-tech, carbon positive and renewable forestry future. [Australia's 2018 Forest Industries Plan](#), *Growing a better Australia – A billion trees for jobs and growth*, aims to **establish a billion new plantation trees** over

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<sup>1</sup> Indufor (2012). *Strategic Review on the Future of Forest Plantations*. Report prepared for the Forest Stewardship Council. Helsinki.

10 years, to the benefit of forest industries, regional economies, forest-dependent communities, and the environment.

Farmers, indigenous communities and private landowners will be central to achieving this increase in plantation trees and to help secure the future of Australia's renewable timber and wood-fibre industries.

Australia is committed to reducing barriers to forestry expansion and the planting of more trees, and has committed A\$20 million for:

- creating Regional Forestry Hubs, to support growth in forest industries;
- developing research centres under the National Institute for Forest Products Innovation;
- delivering policy mechanisms and on-ground support for farm forestry, private native forestry, and Indigenous owned or managed forests;
- making smarter use of our forestry resources, including undertaking innovative research and development activities; and
- improving community understanding of forestry, to build public support for renewable and sustainable forestry activities in Australia.

These initiatives will ensure that Australia's forests continue to provide products that are recyclable and renewable, making them an excellent substitute for more carbon-intensive materials.

### ***Ongoing commitment to ecologically sustainable forest management***

Australia is committed to the ongoing sustainable management of its productive native forest estate by completing long-term extensions of the [Regional Forest Agreements](#) (RFAs). The RFA framework delivers certainty for Australia's forest industries while enabling nature conservation and securing recreational amenities.

Australia is also committed to increasing native vegetation through the 20 Million Trees Program. The Program supports local environmental outcomes by improving the extent, connectivity and condition of native vegetation that supports native species and will contribute to Australia reducing its greenhouse gas emissions. The Program is on track to plant 20 million trees by 2020, to re-establish green corridors, urban forests and threatened ecological communities.

Through our investment in initiatives such as the Mechanical Bushfire Fuel Load Reduction Program, Australia seeks to innovate forest management practices to mitigate against bushfires as part of our broader disaster resilience strategies.

### ***Emissions reductions through forest management and monitoring***

Australia continues to support foreign governments in taking action to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. By supporting policy development and implementation of robust forest monitoring systems, we are helping countries to achieve their forest and climate-related commitments. Australia does this through bilateral initiatives, regional initiatives such as the Asia-Pacific Rainforest Partnership, and as a founding partner of the Global Forest Observations Initiative (GFOI).

Domestically, Australia further supports tree planting and native forest regeneration and protection through the Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF). The ERF provides economic rewards for reducing carbon emissions or storing carbon through defined activities.

### ***Combatting illegal logging and associated trade***

Australia has taken strong action to combat illegal logging and associated trade, while also promoting the trade in products sourced from legal supply chains. The [Australian Illegal Logging Prohibition Act 2012](#) requires importers of regulated timber products, and processors of Australian-grown raw logs, to undertake effective due diligence to minimise their exposure to illegal timber.

The Australian Government works directly with Australian importers and processors, overseas markets and the broader international community to improve understanding and transparency in timber supply chains, while promoting trade in legally sourced timber products. We work with research institutions to develop and implement new technologies, such as DNA fingerprinting, to support timber verification and law enforcement.

Australia continues to play a role in contributing to and influencing dialogue on illegal logging, supporting our trading partners, and building capacity.

### **3. Monitoring our progress**

Australia reports on our forest estate through the five-yearly [\*Australia's State of the Forests Report series\*](#)—reflecting our commitment to SFM through the Montréal Process<sup>2</sup> and the Global Forest Resources Assessment of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations. The Montréal Process framework provides a common basis to describe, monitor, assess and report on forests, assess performance against the principles of SFM to support the continued improvement of the forestry sector and its regulatory environment.

Australia will report to the United Nations Forum on Forests on its progress towards supporting the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 and the United Nations Forest Instrument through our Country Reports on the Global Forest Goals.

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<sup>2</sup> The Montréal Process, officially known as the Montréal Process Working Group on Criteria and Indicators for the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Temperate and Boreal Forests