

Forests, forestry and forest management

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1. Better recognise and value non-timber and non-pulp values of native forests.
2. Stop logging old growth forest immediately.
3. Improve the forest reserve system – including its management.
4. Improve and better develop ecologically sustainable logging systems.
5. Re-assess sustained yield calculations for production forests to avoid resource over-commitment.
6. Make a proper long-term commitment to, and investment in, forest monitoring.
7. Better recognise that logging can influence fire regimes in forests.
8. Develop new ways to better integrate farm forestry with on-farm management and on-farm biodiversity conservation.
9. Ensure that native forests and woodlands are not cleared to establish plantations.
10. Carefully consider the consequences of biomass burning as a source of energy.

Introduction

Australia supports a forest estate that is relatively limited in size compared with that of many other continents (FAO 2010). Despite its size, the nation's forest estate is nevertheless diverse and supports vast numbers of endemic species. It is perhaps not surprising then that the exploitation and management of Australia's forest estate has proved to be contentious, particularly over the past four decades. Debates over forest resources have been often socially divisive (especially in states such as Tasmania and, more recently, Victoria) and discussion on the issues frequently polarised. Parts of these debates are contests between those who wish to see an end to all native forest harvesting (not unlike what has happened in New Zealand), and those who wish to see continued access to Australia's forest resources for the production of timber, pulpwood and woodchips. Politicians have used land allocation in an attempt to resolve this debate. That is, they have created reserves and production areas in a kind of 'land apartheid' system. This has partially resolved some issues, but significant others remain. Thus, the 10 key issues discussed in this chapter encompass issues that extend well beyond politically derived land tenure boundaries, spanning the divide between reserve and off-reserve forests. They also span the public-private tenure debate as well as the research and management domains.