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Australian plantation harvests increase sustainably

Australian plantation harvests and wood product exports grew sustainably in 2006/07 despite soft domestic demand, according to latest ABARE figures.

The *Australian Forest and Wood Products Statistics* report shows plantation softwood harvest increased by 1.1 per cent in 2006/07 and plantation hardwood harvest increased by 6.9 per cent. Despite soft domestic demand, sawnwood exports also increased by 43 per cent.

A3P CEO Mr Neil Fisher said, "A3P welcomes the growth in plantation harvests and wood product exports as evidence of the competitiveness of our industry.

"Industry is seeing a delivery on the investment in plantation expansion supported by the joint industry and Government strategy *Plantations for Australia: the 2020 Vision*".

Despite encouraging growth, the report once again confirmed a disturbing trend; Australia continues to export relatively unprocessed raw materials such as logs and woodchips and imports high-value processed products such as paper and wood panels.

In 2006/07 imports increased in wood based panels (up \$50 million), paper and paperboard (up \$83 million), paper manufactures (up \$44 million) and pulp (up \$40 million).

"A3P is concerned about the continuing trend for Australia to import high value processed wood and paper products. Many of these products are produced in countries where forest management, environmental protection, employment and financial arrangements are less rigorous and sustainable than in Australia.

"A3P looks forward to working with the new Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry the Hon Tony Burke MP and Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, Senator the Hon Kim Carr to identify strategies that support high value wood and paper processing facilities in Australia.

"Continued investment in new and existing processing facilities is essential to maintaining the competitiveness of Australia's plantation products and paper industry and addressing Australia's \$2 billion trade deficit in wood and paper products", he said.

Mr Fisher acknowledged the significant contribution A3P members made to the development of the ABARE report by providing key production statistics which assists in the development of sound industry policy.

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Further information

Neil Fisher, CEO A3P - 0412 637 550

Jess Wurf, Communications Officer A3P – 0448 808 366



LEVEL 3
TOURISM HOUSE
40 BLACKALL STREET
BARTON ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

T +61 2 6273 8111
F +61 2 6273 8011
W www.a3p.asn.au