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ABARES confirms forest industry growth but new trees are needed

Australia's sustainable forest products industries had a record plantation log harvest in 2015-16, increasing in both value and volume, according to statistics published today by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES).

The ABARES report for the September and December quarters 2016 shows growth in demand for Australia's sustainably managed timber and wood products resulted in a record harvest of softwood and hardwood plantation logs of more than 30 million m³, worth over \$2.3 billion. The report does highlight challenges for industry including the recent surge in new house construction slowing.

Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) Chief Executive, Mr Ross Hampton, welcomed Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources Anne Ruston's supportive statement today that the Government is committed to the forestry sector and recognises industry's significant contribution to the environment, regional jobs, communities and economies.

"ABARES' latest figures underscore the need for government policies that incentivise and support new plantation investment and associated forest product industries," Mr Hampton said.

"Demand for wood-fibre in the Asia-Pacific region continues to expand, creating huge potential for our sustainable forest industries. Australia is well placed to meet this demand for wood-fibre, if opportunities are grasped and our industries are supported."

"All levels of government need to support new plantation investment. New plantings have been going backwards due to continuing commercial pressures to not replant some areas. The good news is that if governments act now, it is not too late to support the establishment of new plantations, provide wood supply certainty to industry, and support regional jobs and investment," Mr Hampton said.

"AFPA also continues to work closely with the Federal Government on new policy initiatives to support Australia's renewable forestry industry, such as the National Institute for Forest Products Innovation and the development of a National Wood and Fibre Plan, and through ongoing efforts to have the forestry sector included in the Emissions Reduction Fund and the inclusion of bioenergy in renewable energy policy development."

AFPA represents forest growers, harvesters, and manufacturers of timber and paper products.

Media Contact: Bernadette Cording
AFPA Communications Manager
(m) 0409 962 250 (e) bernadette.cording@ausfpa.com.au