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ASH agreement welcomed, but long-term certainty needed

The Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) welcomes the Victorian Government's in-principle agreement with Australian Sustainable Hardwoods (ASH) shareholders to buy the Heyfield sawmill.

AFPA CEO, Mr Ross Hampton, said it was good news for the Heyfield community and the Victorian hardwood industry that the mill will no longer be closing, but the region's forest industry needs long-term resource certainty from the Victorian Government to prevent further job losses.

"ASH is a major employer in the region and a key part of the forest industry value chain in Victoria that supports tens of thousands of jobs," Mr Hampton said.

"While today's announcement is welcome, there remains a great deal of uncertainty about long-term security of resource. Without a firm commitment from the Victorian Government to our sustainable forest industry, there will be the ongoing threat of job losses in regional Victoria."

Mr Hampton said the Victorian Government must prioritise the renewal of the key East Gippsland and Central Highlands Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs), in partnership with the Federal Government.

"It is vital that we see a 20-year extension across these RFAs without further delays to provide the certainty of resource supply necessary for industry to remain competitive, encourage investment and innovation, and underpin jobs."

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

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