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## **National Farmers Federation joins forest industries on mission to investigate optimal farm forestry practices**

Representatives from the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) and the National Farmers Federation (NFF), including AFPA Chair Greg McCormack and NFF President Fiona Simson, visited New Zealand last month to examine farm forestry operations near Rotorua.

The joint delegation of members from both peak bodies investigated farm forestry operations that have realised the benefits of the practice across the Tasman.

“New Zealanders do farm forestry really well. It’s very much accepted and respected among NZ farmers. Australia can certainly learn a lot from our neighbours on this issue,” Mr McCormack said.

There are a multitude of benefits to farm forestry including; investment and income diversification for traditional farmers, protection for stock and crops and improved water quality on properties.

“In Australia, we haven’t been as accepting of the practice, but hopefully with the NFF taking a strong and unprecedented interest, feelings will continue to change,” Mr McCormack concluded.

“It’s always great to be able to see the ways in how different countries produce a whole range of agricultural products. With farm forestry, we are seeing some excellent operations in New Zealand,” Ms Simson said.

“In New Zealand, more than 578,000 hectares or 34 per cent of plantation forest is owned by private individuals with parcels of no more than 10,000 hectares,” Ms Simon said.

By contrast in Australia, there are 150,000 hectares of small scale planted forest established by farmers. Furthermore, in places like the United States and Sweden, more like 50 per cent of forests are owned by farmers, families and small landholders.

Current research on farm forestry in Australia is also pointing to real benefits. Early results from the CSIRO show that when 5 to 10 per cent of a farm is under trees, it can increase the productivity of other agricultural products on the farm.

“There’s a way to go, but the more we talk about it, the more we talk up the benefits, the more the take-up of farm forestry will improve in Australia,” Ms Simson concluded.

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

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