

Tuesday 6 October 2020

## FOREST GROWERS LOOK TO THE FUTURE WITH RD&E AND BIOSECURITY FUNDING BOOST

Australia's forest growers are being asked to support a proposed increase to the sector's R&D and biosecurity levy to address the decline in funding and capacity for vital forest science research, development and extension (RD&E) and to tackle ever-increasing biosecurity threats.

A group of forest growers that collectively produce over 90 per cent of Australia's log volume has developed a research strategy that, if supported across the sector through a proposed increase to the Forest Growers Levy, will boost productivity, lower costs, increase resilience and reduce losses from drought, fire, pests and diseases.

The Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) has backed the proposal and urges all Australian forest growers to support the minor increase which will deliver benefits across the plantation and native forest estates through Commonwealth-matched RD&E projects.

"With this proposal forest growers have the chance to increase current investment levels for RD&E and biosecurity to grow our renewable industry over the long term, increase the resilience of our forests, and build much-needed RD&E capacity", AFPA Chief Executive Officer Ross Hampton said.

"Australia's biosecurity threat from exotic pests has never been higher. For example, Giant Pine Scale was discovered in 2015 in Victoria and then South Australia and has since been declared un-eradicable in Australia. This exotic pest may be slow moving, but it has a devastating impact on the trees it infests. Investing in biosecurity will help us improve Australia's success rate in eradicating exotic pests which currently sits at half the success rate achieved globally."

Forest growers are seeking industry-wide support for an increase to the existing forest growers levy of \$0.135 per m<sup>3</sup> of log in two parts:

- an increase to the forestry RD&E levy from \$0.05 to \$0.135 per m<sup>3</sup> and
- an increase to the PHA biosecurity levy from \$0.005 per m<sup>3</sup> to \$0.05 per m<sup>3</sup>.

The proposed levy increase needs to be agreed and voted on by a majority of forest growers who participate. To register to be part of the voting process, and participate in the consultation process, please visit <https://ausfpa.com.au/forest-growers-levy/> or email [forestgrowerslevy@ausfpa.com.au](mailto:forestgrowerslevy@ausfpa.com.au) or call (03) 6163 8901 by the **6<sup>th</sup> November 2020**.

"I encourage forest growers across Australia to become involved in the current consultation process and participate in voting. Achieving this proposed RD&E & biosecurity levy increase is a critical next step to investing the future of our renewable forest industry," Mr Hampton concluded.

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