

Media Release

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Shortage of vital timber pallets highlights just how essential forest industries are

The national shortage of timber pallets used to transport all sorts of consumer goods, from food to electronics and even beer, further demonstrates just how important our national forest industries are to provide timber and fibre products, CEO of the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA), Ross Hampton said today.

“In the lead up to Christmas, Australia’s consumer goods supply chain is reporting a shortage of timber pallets to move goods. Like many essential timber and fibre products that are sourced from Australia’s sustainably managed plantations and native forests – you don’t realise how badly you need them until they aren’t there!” Mr Hampton said.

“Timber pallets are manufactured from both hardwood and softwood timbers and provide an essential, cost effective and carbon friendly means of transporting goods through Australia’s logistics supply chains. They in fact support all but a small percentage of movements through Australia’s major supermarket retailers like Coles, Woolworths, ALDI, IGA and Costco.

“We produce over 2 million pallets each year to support movement in Australia’s food supply chain. They’re made from sustainable native and plantation timbers that aren’t suitable for construction or appearance-grade products such as decking. These pallets can be repaired up to 50 times during their 6–10-year lifespan and last 20 to 30 trips between repairs. The average weight of a standard pallet is 30-40kg.

“Combined with national timber supply constraints, the COVID-pandemic has led to goods businesses increasing sitting stock levels to manage disrupted supply lines while the return of pallets has also reduced because of COVID protocols. These factors contribute to the pallet shortage.

“The way to future-proof these supply issues is by growing Australia’s plantation estate and guaranteeing supply security for sustainable native timber industries so we can continue to manufacture essential products like timber pallets in this country.

“Australia’s forest industries provide essential timber and fibre products for use in everyday life, from house frames to pallets to tissues. If there’s one good thing to come from supply pressures of these products, it’s that the federal and state governments need to work together to ensure supply security for the future,” Mr Hampton concluded.

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