

Media Release

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UN call to ‘end plastic pollution’ positions forest industries as future packaging solution

This week’s United Nations’ decision to curb the world’s growing plastic pollution problem further positions Australia’s sustainable forest industries as a major cog in the global solution to provide sustainable fibre for renewable packaging, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA), Ross Hampton said today.

A resolution adopted at the UN Environment Assembly in Africa calls for an intergovernmental negotiating committee to work out the details of a treaty to end plastic pollution by 2024.

“The world has been turning progressively towards wood fibre-based packaging solutions, but this breakthrough to end plastic waste will only accelerate the importance of Australia’s forest, pulp, and paper industries to feed the world’s growing appetite for sustainable packaging solutions,” Ross Hampton said.

“To help lift the load on this massive goal to eliminate plastic waste, Australia needs to shore up its supply of timber to ensure we have the stock available to meet both local and international demand as it grows. Demand for wood fibre is forecast to quadruple by 2050.

“The enormity of the plastic problem is eye watering. Since 1950 more than 9 billion tonnes of plastic has been created globally, with about 7 billion tonnes of that being waste. Unless something changes, by 2050 there will be more plastic than fish in our oceans. Less than 20 per cent of plastic is recycled globally.

“Paper products and packaging are a sustainable and renewable alternative to many problematic plastics and are an immediately available path to reduce plastic waste. More than 60 per cent of fibre is recovered for re-use. So, with wood fibre, not only do we start with a renewable product, we can continue to recover and recycle for new products.

“As we move towards the Federal Election in 2022, AFPA will continue to advocate to shore up timber and wood-fibre supply. We have an opportunity to lead the world in sustainable packaging supply as international momentum increases to knock out plastics once and for all,” Ross Hampton concluded.

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