

Media Release

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AFPA congratulates international Blue Sky Award recipients

Australia's forest industries congratulate the winners of the international Blue Sky Young Researchers Innovation Awards, while also commending Australia's applicant for the competition, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA), Joel Fitzgibbon said today.

The Blue Sky Young Researchers Innovation Awards for the Global Forest Products Sector is an initiative of the International Council of Forest & Paper Associations (ICFPA). The competition collects proposals from aspiring scientists and young researchers from around the world who have conceived innovative solutions that can help further decarbonise the forest products sector. Finalists are then assessed by an international judging panel after the initial process where they are put forward by national associations.

The [2022-23 winners](#) are Ivana Amorim Dias from Brazil, Ilona Lappänen from Finland and Leane Naude from South Africa.

Joel Fitzgibbon said, "Forest industries in Australia and globally are at the cutting edge of innovation, especially in the climate change mitigation space. That's only because the sector encourages investment in effective R&D, including initiatives like the Blue Sky Award so we can realise our potential. This is why Australia's new \$100 million National Institute for Forest Products Innovation (NIFPI) is so important and that its rollout best supports local industry.

"I congratulate the international Blue Sky winners and commend our AFPA sponsored Australian applicant, Dr Sam Van Holsbeeck from the University of the Sunshine Coast who is undertaking tremendous research into improving productivity of sandalwood plantations."

Dr Van Holsbeeck's research focuses on the use of wood fibre from host trees that are required for sandalwood plantations to grow effectively, and maximising the use of that fibre to reduce waste and increase output.

"The world needs forest industries, not just for the essential products we create, but for the climate mitigation power we have. The Blue Sky Award is an excellent initiative that AFPA, along with the broader forest sector in Australia will continue to support while continually making the case for public investment in R&D," Joel Fitzgibbon concluded.

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