Only new and big markets like biomass energy can return native forest logging to historic levels

Plantation wood supply from existing 2 million ha estate with average mean annual increment of current 16 m$^3$/ha/yr

Plantation wood supply from existing 2 million ha estate with average mean annual increment of 18 m$^3$/ha/yr

Government projected plantation wood supply

Native forest wood production

Plantation wood production

Commonwealth loans and grants for softwood plantations

MIS tax subsidies for mainly hardwood plantations

RFAs signed

Native forest woodchip exporting starts

Japanese paper market slows (early 1990s)

Plantation Vision

Plantation MIS company collapses (& earlier)

Biomass energy

Current trend

Quantification of trends in Australian forestry since 2000

1. Over the period 2000 to 2012, plantation wood production increased by 44%. Native forest wood production declined by 59%.

2. In 2012, plantations supplied 81% of the industry’s wood (19.2 million m$^3$), its highest market share ever.

3. In 2012, native forests supplied 19% of the industry’s wood (4.5 million m$^3$), its lowest level of production since 1936.

4. Despite the collapse in native forest wood production and its main wood products markets (chip exports and domestic sawn timber), Australia’s wood products industry has certainly not collapsed. Rather, it has taken advantage of the growing plantation wood resource and shifted Australia’s sawn timber, wood panels, paper and chip exports to a more competitive plantation base. This is very good for industry.

5. Given current industry realities, wood production from native forests for sawn timber and chip exports will continue to contract.

6. According to ABARES data, in 2012 Australia’s plantations supplied as much wood (19 million m$^3$) as was used to make all the wood products we consumed irrespective of whether they were made domestically or imported. For those concerned about a wood deficit, Australia has none. Plantations alone are doing the job.

7. Productivity in Australia’s plantation wood industry (m$^3$/ha) has considerable room for improvement. Even without productivity improvements, Australia’s plantation wood supply will continue to increase. If the industry lifts its productivity (even mildly) it can further increase wood supply to processors whilst avoiding the high cost of land acquisition for plantation expansion.