

# Forestry Policy

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## Introduction

Originally over 80 percent of New Zealand was covered in forest. Indiscriminate clearing of forest and conversion to farmland, together with the introduction of exotic animal and plant species has caused significant environmental degradation, with increased erosion, loss of biodiversity and more severe flooding in deforested catchments. This degradation has arisen in part because New Zealand's geology, geomorphology and soils differ from that in Britain, where our farming culture originated.

Forests also act as an important carbon sink and expanding the area of land in forest will help New Zealand meet its Kyoto commitments in the medium term. Wood products play an important role in replacing high-energy high carbon products such as steel and concrete.

NZ has developed a very efficient and productive plantation forestry system, mainly based on radiata pine, and to a lesser extent, Douglas fir. Commercial forestry is now critically important to the economy. Forestry is New Zealand's third largest export sector, earning 7% of New Zealand's export revenue.

However, in recent years the commercial forestry sector has struggled to compete with more profitable land uses such as beef and dairying. This, along with the high exchange rate, high cost of shipping and transport, few processing facilities and uncertainty about the regulatory environment, means that current replanting rates have fallen to very low levels. Alongside the economic value of forests, forests are important for ecological, environmental, recreational, spiritual, social, medicinal and cultural reasons. All of these values and uses need to be promoted and encouraged.

Although steps have been taken over a number of years to preserve and restore our remaining native forests, more needs to be done. The effects of world forest destruction reinforce the need for us to preserve, protect and extend ours and to act internationally to improve the stock and health of the world's forests.

The Green Party [Conservation](#) policy contains detailed policies relating to protecting the conservation values of publicly owned indigenous forests.

## Definitions

**Continous cover forestry:** the use of silvicultural systems where the forest canopy is maintained at one or more levels without clear felling. Harvesting is carried out continually by single tree or small coupe fellings through the whole forest area, followed by regeneration. It is usually suited to slower growing high value species.

**Plantation or production forests:** forests that are planted for production purposes where the trees are managed primarily for timber and/or other tree crops. These can include native species.

**Protection forests:** forests that are managed primarily for the ecosystem services that they provide including; soil conservation and erosion control, flood protection,

biodiversity and carbon sequestration. Harvesting of trees may or may not occur. Note that production forestry can be undertaken with a protection role and vice versa.

**Silviculture:** the care and cultivation of forest trees, including planting, thinning and pruning.

**Sustainable forest management** - management of an area of plantation forest so that the forest can continue to provide forest products in perpetuity while at the same time maintaining the health of the ecological systems of the land on which it is planted, including protection of soil, water and biodiversity.

**Sustainable management of indigenous forest:** the management of an indigenous forest for forest products or services in a way that maintains a range of natural ecological processes and biodiversity in perpetuity. In New Zealand privately owned indigenous forest can only be harvested if done so in accordance with a "sustainable forest management plan" or "permit". These plans or permits require property owners to manage the indigenous forest in a sustainable way that '...maintains the ability of the forest to provide a full range of products and amenities in perpetuity while retaining the forest's natural values'.

**Kyoto Forest:** Forest established from 1st January 1990 on previously non-forested land .

**PFSI - Permanent Forest Sink Initiative:** Forests (other than pine) established from 1st January 1990 on previously non-forested land and not intended for clear felling that meet specific criteria for management and are therefore eligible for carbon credits under 2006 legislation.

## Vision

The Green Party's vision for forestry in Aotearoa/New Zealand is that:

- Aotearoa/New Zealand has large areas of land in healthy, productive, sustainably managed forests, which contain a diversity of species, both indigenous and exotic.
- Forestry is recognised and encouraged as one of normal suite of possible land uses by all landowners
- Marginal and vulnerable land that is prone to erosion is largely in permanent protection forests and the proportion of forest in indigenous species has greatly increased.
- We have a viable, innovative and stable forestry industry where plantation forests are managed and harvested on a sustainable basis to provide a range of timber and other wood products, while at the same time respecting and enhancing the cultural, ecological, economic and social values that people place on forests.
- Protection forests, shelterbelts, shade trees and small to medium sized multipurpose woodlots are an integral and valuable part of farming operations and the rural landscape.
- Internationally, New Zealand is a world leader in sustainable management of its forests and plays a key role in promoting the sustainability and protection of indigenous forests around the world.

## Key Principles

1. To protect, maintain, enhance and increase our indigenous forests.
2. To significantly expand both our protection forests and our plantation forests in diversity of species, and to manage and use them sustainably.

3. To protect soil, water and associated dependent indigenous ecosystems.
4. To develop and maintain a viable, innovative, and environmentally and socially responsible commercial forestry sector.
5. To retain and expand government ownership of state forests, unless they are required for treaty settlements.
6. To support the appropriate regional implementation of the RMA in order to ensure that forestry is treated fairly along with other land uses.
7. To ensure that all timber and other wood products (both imported and domestic) used or sold in New Zealand are sourced from legal sustainably certified forests.
8. To maintain and improve the environmental, recreational and cultural values New Zealanders derive from our forests.
9. To contribute to the sustainable management of the world's forests and to support a global increase in all types of forest cover and the rights of forest dependent communities.
10. To honour all Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations related to New Zealand's forestry resources.

## Specific Policy Points

### 1. Ensuring Wood Products are from Sustainably Managed Forests

At the moment there is some illegal harvesting of indigenous trees and forest occurring on private land in New Zealand. Overseas the problem is much worse and many countries are struggling to stop the illegal harvesting of their indigenous forests. Any illegal activity undermines international efforts to place harvesting of indigenous and tropical timber on a more sustainable basis.

In New Zealand illegal harvesting of indigenous forests occurs because Department of Conservation (DOC) and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) are currently inadequately resourced to carry out their enforcement responsibilities. The importing of large amounts of timber from overseas sources that has been illegally harvested exacerbates the problem, and undermines the efforts of the honest operators. It also has a negative impact on the NZ forestry industry as it depresses prices for sustainably managed, legally harvested wood and wood products.

Currently there is little consumer pressure on timber and other retailers to supply a sustainable product because the level of public awareness of the issue is low. And even when consumers are aware, they are not always able to confidently discriminate between unsustainable and sustainable product in their purchasing decisions. This is because there is no requirement for product to be certified as coming from a sustainable source.

It is also important that our plantation forests meet minimum sustainability criteria, particularly in relation to soil conservation New Zealand cannot afford the economic or the environmental costs of forests that are not sustainably managed. The New Zealand forestry industry has a relatively good reputation as being a sustainable producer. However it is important that this reputation be strengthened and backed up with credible third party certification and that sustainable management systems such as continuous cover forestry are supported where practical and appropriate.

The Green Party will:

1. Protect the honest operators in the forestry sector by:
  - a. Placing an immediate ban on the import and sale of all illegally harvested timber and wood products

- b. Within five years, requiring all wood products from indigenous forests (both domestic and imported) on the domestic market to be independently certified by a credible third party as being sourced from sustainably managed and harvested forests.
  - c. Requiring all timber and wood products to have clear country of origin labelling.
  - d. Reviewing the penalties applying under the Forests Act and the Conservation Act to ensure they provide an effective deterrent to illegal and unsustainable harvesting, processing and clear felling of indigenous forests.
  - e. Significantly increasing funding of DOC, Ministry for the Environment (MfE) and MAF so that these agencies can effectively enforce existing legislation to protect Crown owned indigenous forests and to ensure that indigenous forests on private land are managed sustainably.
  - f. Providing support to a national standard setting process for the Forest Stewardship Council certification scheme.
  - g. Requiring all state forests and local council forests to obtain Forest Stewardship Council certification once this scheme is in place.
  - h. Encouraging all larger plantation forests in New Zealand to gain Forest Stewardship Council certification.
2. Until 1.1.2 and 1.1.8 is fully implemented, promote a public education campaign in partnership with the forestry industry to encourage New Zealand consumers to only buy timber and wood products that have been certified as sourced from sustainably managed and harvested forests.
  3. Actively promote the use of locally grown Forest Stewardship Council certified timber in the construction industry, particularly for government and other public buildings, as a less energy intensive alternative to concrete and steel.
  4. Work in partnership with both NZ and foreign companies on an international marketing program for New Zealand wood products that are certified as sustainably grown.

## **2. Protecting, Maintaining and Increasing our Indigenous Forests**

There have been concerns over the performance of the plans and permits approved by MAF for the harvesting of indigenous forests, in particular regarding levels of harvest, silviculture and levels of set aside areas.

It is also vital that the health of our indigenous forests is restored and maintained by protecting them from introduced pests and weed species, and to monitor and manage the increasing pressures of recreation, tourism and other competing resource uses.

The Green Party would like to ensure public access to public indigenous forests for all these other uses including for the harvesting of products other than timber, however it is critical such activities are carried out in an ecologically sustainable basis.

In achieving these objectives we need to ensure that the rights of Māori guaranteed by Te Tiriti o Waitangi are upheld.

To help achieve our vision the Green Party will:

1. Require a review of the performance of the plans and permits approved by MAF, in particular regarding approved levels of harvest, silviculture, and levels of set aside areas.
2. Ensure effective management within strict ecological guidelines of:
  - introduced species especially wilding tree species;
  - human access; and

- harvest of non-timber resources e.g. sphagnum moss and honey.
3. Increase the level of funding to DoC, MfE and MAF for pest control and to raise awareness among land owners and local and territorial authorities about the importance of investing in the long-term rehabilitation of damaged native forest estate by replanting or silviculture treatment to encourage natural regeneration.
  4. Review and increase incentives for private land owners with indigenous forest on their property to protect, maintain and expand their forests by:
    - a. Assisting landowners (by information) to be part of the Permanent Forests Sink Initiative so that they can claim the carbon credits from their forests.
    - b. Ensuring that the Q E II Trust and Nga Whenua Rahui are adequately resourced so that land owners are able to protect and manage areas with high conservation values and to support local and territorial authorities to do so as well.
    - c. Working with all forest owners where there are concerns about unsustainable management of privately owned indigenous forests.
    - d. Fairly compensating individuals or groups if forests used in treaty settlements and managed for the purpose of sustainable harvesting, are affected by subsequent changes to sustainability standards within 25 years of the deed of settlement.

### **3. Supporting a Viable, Stable and Sustainable Forestry Industry**

Commercial forestry is a key contributor to the economy and is critical to the livelihoods of many New Zealanders either directly or indirectly. Production forests are also valuable for the ecosystems they support and the "ecosystem services" they provide, including carbon sequestration, soil conservation and water quality.

An expanding and healthy commercial forestry sector is critical to slowing the pace of climate change, and providing products that can replace more energy intensive products (concrete and steel) in the building industry as well as providing a carbon neutral source of energy. For these reasons we need to ensure that forest owners are given strong incentives to plant and expand forests and that there is a viable market for the wood produced from these forests.

As we phase out fossil fuels for reasons of climate change and resource depletion, wood will become an increasingly important source of energy, and this will provide an additional source of income for foresters, particularly when waste products can be used.

The Green Party supports the use of waste wood, pellets and woodchips for domestic heating in clean wood burners, and for industrial boiler fuel, particularly where it can replace coal. Second generation biofuels, particularly cellulosic ethanol and other fuels from purpose grown or waste wood may be a sustainable source of transport fuel, unlike fuels made from food crops. Wood can be grown on land less suitable for food production and does not need the inputs of nitrogen and water that crops such as corn do. (See [Energy](#) policy for further detail).

It is also important to recognise that our commercial forests are particularly vulnerable to biosecurity and climatic threats due to the current dominance of *Pinus radiata* as a plantation species. Currently *Pinus radiata* makes up 90 per cent of production forests. The Green Party believes that there is a need to promote greater genetic and species diversity in our forest estates as well as a need to increase biosecurity border control in order to protect against threats such as Pine Pitch Canker.

Management of rural fire services needs to be on a regional basis, rather than a centralised model, in order to meet the specific regional needs of the forestry and rural sector.

The Green Party acknowledges that inappropriately sited forestry can be detrimental to local cultural or scenic values and that poorly managed, intensive harvesting operations can have a negative impact on erosion control, water quality, local biodiversity and other factors. The recently developed Forest Owners Association Environmental Code of Practice provides a basis for improving performance in this area. We believe that it is important that the forestry industry protects its reputation as a 'sustainable and responsible' operator by continuing to work constructively within the RMA framework.

To secure this commitment from the commercial forestry sector, and to improve sustainability, the regulatory and policy environment in which the sector operates needs to be fair. That is, it should not discriminate against forestry relative to other competing land uses, especially dairy farming. For example, issues surrounding the current mechanisms for regional funding of roading and transport infrastructure need to be resolved so that the forestry industry is not subsidising other land uses.

In order for New Zealand to realise the economic gains from the expected increase in wood harvesting, the industry needs to develop and retain a skilled and experienced workforce. New Zealand also needs to produce a far greater proportion of value added products and to target high value markets.

To help achieve our vision the Green Party will:

1. Support research & development of benefit to the forestry industry, including
  - a. Funding research and development of projects which use wood and wood waste as an energy source.
  - b. Developing and promoting wood as an alternative to energy intensive building products, such as steel and concrete, both of which create high levels of emissions in their manufacture.
  - c. Funding research and development into converting lignin and cellulose from wood into fuels, chemical feedstock and other products to replace oil and coal derived materials.
2. Promote and encourage longer rotation plantation species as an alternative to *Pinus radiata*.
3. Support increasing the diversity of tree species grown for timber, especially encouraging those that provide high value timber and those that do not need to be treated chemically (e.g. *macrocarpa*, cedar, totara, eucalyptus).
4. Work with industry to have at least 30% of the plantation forestry portfolio in superior high value species in 10 years.
5. Facilitate a greater level of collaboration between growers, researchers and industry so that the exchange of new information on the propagation, establishment, care and maintenance of forests in alternative species is hastened and information is made more accessible to small operators
6. Investigate ways of restoring genetic diversity to our plantations, as currently there is a high level of dependency on cloning which exposes our plantations to climatic and biosecurity threats.
7. Maintain a high level of biosecurity protection (as outlined in our [Conservation](#) policy). In particular, the Green Party will investigate the biosecurity implications of turning Rotorua airport into an international facility as it is situated in the middle of a major forestry region.
8. Provide incentives for the planting of forests on farms by increasing funding to the Government Afforestation Grants scheme, while changing the scheme to ensure more long-term sequestration (see section 3.1.2 of the Green New Deal on Forestry, Pest Control and Wilding Conifers).

9. Provide greater investment certainty to the forestry industry by introducing a floor price for the value of carbon for new planting, and charging a very modest premium to foresters for this security (see section 3.1.1 of the Green New Deal on Forestry, Pest Control and Wilding Conifers).
10. Improve the Permanent Forest Sinks Initiative to encourage afforestation of private land (see section 3.1.3 of the Green New Deal on Forestry, Pest Control and Wilding Conifers).
11. Facilitate the planting of new and diverse permanent and harvestable forests on non-conservation and State Owned Enterprise land (see section 3.1.4 of the Green New Deal on Forestry, Pest Control and Wilding Conifers).

The Green Party's position on GE is that our food and our environment must be kept GE free. Genetically engineered trees are no exception to this position as they also have the potential to have unforeseen impacts on our forests and wider environment.

In line with its GE policy, the Green Party will:

12. Ban the commercial release and growth, development and field-testing of GE trees.
13. Maintain zero tolerance to all GE derived seed and plant imports.
14. Allow genetic engineering experiments to continue in secure containment subject to assessment by the Environmental Risk Management Agency, while ensuring ERMA's processes for evaluating the risks and benefits are sufficiently objective to protect public safety.

To support and encourage regional based forestry the Green Party will:

15. Promote and encourage farm forestry and woodlots on agricultural land, especially lower productivity, erosion prone land and sensitive catchments, by encouraging the dissemination of information to farmers and landowners. This can be through organisations such as the Farm Forestry Association and Landcare Research.
16. Encourage the establishment of collaborative marketing strategies for small lots of high value timber species.
17. Support the industry move to producing a higher level of value added products and to move away from producing low value export product such as logs. For example, we will work with industry to address the need for a substantial amount of new investment in large-scale manufacturing capability.
18. Investigate current rating mechanisms for forestry to ensure that the contribution of forestry to regional transport funds is being determined fairly when compared to other land uses.
19. Support the regional organisation of fire services for the management and control of rural and forest fires.
20. Ensure that the economic and social benefits of forestry are enjoyed by local communities by:
  - a. Encouraging national coordination of regional training and research programmes to develop skills in all aspects of forestry and provide trade certification assessment in consultation with agencies such as The Logging and Forestry Industry Training Organisation and NZQA.
  - b. Assisting regional forestry communities to develop so that nursery work, planting, environmental assessment, training, pruning, logging, processing and marketing can all be carried out by suitably qualified local people.
  - c. Encouraging the processing of timber products in the region in which they are grown.

21. Support the use of State pension funds to invest in NZ forestry as opportunity arises including buy back of forests.

#### **4) Promoting the Environmental, Recreational and Cultural Values of our Forests**

All forests, whether planted or naturally occurring, are important to New Zealanders for a range of cultural, social, aesthetic, recreational and environmental reasons. The forests are also a key part of our heritage as New Zealanders. Given this it is important that government actively promote the values that can be enjoyed and appreciated from use of the forests.

To help achieve our vision the Green Party will:

1. As part of environmental education, ensure that curricula, at all educational levels, teach the value of trees and forests, the ecosystems they support, and their contribution to biodiversity and carbon sequestration.
2. Support and increase public campaigns to educate all New Zealanders in the importance of trees and forests and using wood products instead of concrete, steel or plastic.
3. Encourage volunteers and public participation in tree planting, forest development and management.
4. Encourage local and regional councils to provide greater opportunities for their communities to create new areas of woodlots and forest reserves for soil and water conservation, recreation and biodiversity.
5. Encourage the integration of research programmes, landowner's experience and educational institution's programmes to improve the development and implementation of locally appropriate tree planting and appreciation of their ecological values.

#### **5) Contributing to the Sustainable Management of the World's Forests**

New Zealand has a responsibility to contribute to the sustainable management of the world's forests and to support a global increase in all types of forest cover. Currently much of the world's wood is being produced on an unsustainable basis. Of particular concern is the large-scale destruction of tropical forests as deforestation accounts for 17% of global carbon emissions. According to the International Tropical Timber Organisation only 4.2% of natural tropical forest worldwide is under sustainable management.

As consumers New Zealanders either knowingly or unknowingly contribute to this destruction. New Zealand's imports of cheap wood products have increased three-fold in the last decade. Much of this product is from timber that has been logged illegally or unsustainably. Not only does this contribute to global deforestation and to a reduction in biodiversity, but it undercuts New Zealand operators who are producing product from sustainably grown timber.

To help achieve our vision the Green Party will:

1. Actively work with others countries to combat unsustainable logging and trade.
2. Ensure New Zealand consumers do not contribute to global deforestation by the initiatives in section 1 of this policy (policy points 1.1.1 to 1.1.3 and 1.2)
3. Enable developing countries to protect their forests by actively advocating in international forums (i.e. on forestry and on climate change) for the establishment of a compensation and development fund resourced by developed countries that:
  - a. Compensates local communities in developing countries for the foregone revenue from timber and from agriculture on converted forestry land;

- b. Assists developing countries, where human health and survival is dependent on income from forest clearance, to establish alternative economic activity to provide for their needs.
- c. Encourages training opportunities to foresters from developing countries in order to assist and promote sustainable management of forests.
- d. Investigate establishing and funding a collaborative international research project that works with developing countries whose forests are threatened with extinction (as a result of deforestation and global pollution). This project will work to establish gene banks for the rehabilitation of their forests when or if their problems are solved. This project would initially be New Zealand led but would be expanded to include international researchers and third party investment as support grows.