

current annual wood usage per person averages nearly 0.7m^3 . This means that the world's annual wood demand increases by 2m^3 every second.

or 120m^3 every minute
or 7000m^3 every hour
or $173,000\text{m}^3$ every day
or 64million m^3 every year.

On recent trends even this increase is probably conservative. The actual increase in the wood harvest for 1987 (the year for which we have the most recent information) was 98million m^3 and the annual increase in the world harvest over the last five years averaged $85\text{million m}^3/\text{year}$.

Given the environmental pressures all around the world to restrict, or even prohibit, felling of much of the remaining indigenous forests, and given the very limited contribution that plantation forests are currently making (and can make in the future) the implications for the world's future wood supply are serious.

Wood has few substitutes, as almost all require energy and alternative energy sources seem, at least for the foreseeable future, limited to either fossil fuels or nuclear power.

Where can the world's additional wood supplies come from?

Plantations are the obvious answer but the scale of new planting is massive and the delay is long.

To supply a 60million m^3 annual wood harvest the world requires the production from the equivalent of three million hectares of radiata pine plantations every year! The ongoing world demand for just one year's increase in the world's population requires the maximum sustainable yield and harvest from the total area of ALL the existing radiata pine plantations in New Zealand, Chile, Australia, Spain and South Africa COMBINED. For next year's population increase the world will need the equivalent of another eight million hectares of radiata plantations,

and a further three million hectares of radiata the year after that! And all that assumes that the existing harvest level and quality requirements can be sustained from the existing forests of the world.

World thinking tends to focus on the food demands resulting from the population increase. The wood demand could be even more critical, given the high capital requirements, the need for fertile well-watered land, and the long lead time – all of which assumes we already have appropriate fast-growing species and the appropriate management technology.

We are a favoured country indeed!

W.R.J. Sutton



Ministerial briefing

The Ministry of Forestry's (MOF) briefing document for the new Minister and Associate Minister of Forestry, prepared in February 1990, gives an over-

view of the forestry sector and the issues it faces.

It describes in summary form: the forest resources; the wood-based industries; current international, national and local issues; a "situation analysis" for the sector; the structure and role of MOF and the issues it is facing. These, of course, include the reorganisation of the Forest Research Institute following its review by Professor Ferguson and the likely response to the radical changes in the Government's research and science policy. It concludes that "FRI or part of FRI will be forced to adopt a SOE (State Owned Enterprises) status or some other type of company form". Given the fate of other SOEs, this would not seem to be a good omen.

One slightly unusual point is the way the future place of forestry exports in the economy is dealt with: "Industry predicts an increase to 30% of total exports by the year 2010". MOF does not appear to have its own projection for this, presumably because there are no realistic export projections for other sectors (or for forestry?) 20 years ahead. The question then is: how does industry arrive at this figure, and should MOF give it the stamp of authority by briefing their Minister with it? And should the Minister be using it in public statements?

Apart from this niggly, the briefing (which is publicly available) gives a good potted summary of the sector and is a useful reference document.

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