

Concerns over Institute stance at key forestry policy conference

Sir,

Industry members were anticipating some 'curve balls' at the 20-22nd May, 2001, multi-stakeholder National Initiative meeting in Rotorua to begin the process of developing national forestry performance standards. But we did not expect to see the New Zealand Institute of Forestry throwing them. I am writing to express my concerns at the NZIF positions and actions during that meeting.

My discontent arose around two issues: firstly the position being advocated by NZIF, and secondly the ill-considered attempt by NZIF reps to be members of the Environment Chamber. The continuous delivery of objections by NZIF reps to proceedings throughout the meeting served to heighten the impact of these issues.

Since the meeting I have become aware that NZIFIC asked NZIF to nominate members to provide an Institute viewpoint at the meeting. As an Industry representative and an Institute member, I was taken aback by the viewpoint presented; that only one set of forestry standards covering plantation and indigenous forestry would be acceptable, as only this approach has scientific validity. The Institute was also taking the position that if separate standards were to be prepared for indigenous and plantation forestry, the date of completion for both had to be the same. In the ensuing debate it appeared to me that Institute was advocating for a position that only a portion of its members would support, linking indigenous forest and plantation forest standards. The point of view being advocated by NZIF had such a strong indigenous bias that I felt a need to review my membership of NZIF. I pondered over the strength of industry support at the recent NZIF Conference and the complete lack of industry support from NZIF evident in this meeting. It might have been appropriate to seek a mandate from the wider membership on the position to represent at this meeting given how controversial this topic has been even leading up to the National Initiative meeting.

If the NZIF representatives had not been so outspoken it would not have been so evident that they (and the NZIF Board) did not come with a common understanding of the Chamber in which the Institute is best placed. Nor did they come with a common understanding as to the Mission and Objectives of the NZIF. First NZIF attempted to join the Environmental Chamber (no prior discussion with other Environment Chamber mem-

bers). NZIF actions in this regard came close to de-railing the entire National Initiatives process. There followed a debate on the Chamber definition, phone calls to Mexico (FSC) for guidance, and an unwillingness by NZIF to acknowledge that it is well-placed within the Economic Chamber. This, despite primarily representing professional foresters, and despite their own very strong arguments that standards are needed to ensure harvesting of indigenous forests - for economic gain; clearly, an economic argument. The Economic chamber includes both indigenous and exotic plantation interests and is the most appropriate Chamber for NZIF representation regardless of the particular scientific concerns and positions being adopted by its representatives. The scientific debate is still to come.

The Institute did not come through this meeting looking particularly professional, or well prepared. I suggest that the NZIF re-consider its role in the National Initiative process, and the appropriateness of its current membership in the Social Chamber.

Elaine Birk

Carbon measure query

Sir,

I take issue with Peter Berg's statement (May 2001) that "It is technically possible to measure, account for and verify carbon stocks in harvested wood products. Failure to recognise and give due weighting to these matters could seriously disadvantage New Zealand's commercial forest industry...."

As the only person who (to the best of my knowledge) has ever attempted to estimate New Zealand's carbon stocks in harvested wood products (HWP), I strongly disagree. I would also love to know how he intends to measure, account for and verify the carbon in my house or chicken shed, work out the age and decay rate of each component, and perhaps whether they came from a pre-1990 or post-1990 forest that was planted on non-forested land in an Annex 1 country.

The flows into and out of the Products Pool can be estimated by making arbitrary assumptions about inputs and decay rates (the flows approach), but for accurate accounting and verification it would be necessary to assess changes in inventories at two points of time (the stocks approach). Here are some calculations to put the issue of carbon in New Zealand's HWP in perspective:

1. Dwellings increased by 99,722 between the census of 1991 and 1996, an increase of 19,944 per year. (Iona Bingley, Stats Dept, pers comm.)

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