

Integration of sawn timber and pulpwood production

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Abstract

This chapter reviews the state of research into eucalypt and pine sawn timber and pulpwood production in areas of medium-low rainfall in the Murray–Darling Basin for existing and potential processors. While more work is needed to develop appropriate resources, it is clear that it is technically feasible to process sawn timber and pulp and paper from plantation-grown resources with good stand management, site and genetic selection. In a few situations it may be possible to develop plantations dedicated to either sawn timber or pulpwood production. However, given the volumes of wood produced on a whole plantation basis and the likely transport distances to processors and markets, the best opportunity for a viable resource appears to be where the wood is suitable for both sawn timber and pulpwood production. Some species and plantation management strategies are recommended that have good potential to produce high-quality wood for both processing sectors.

In the case of sawn timber, while some species grown under optimum conditions are suited to existing processing systems and markets, most will produce products with different characteristics, and new markets may need to be developed. For this reason resource development should be limited to a few species.

Introduction

The future growth of plantation forestry in the Murray–Darling Basin, especially in low-rainfall areas, depends on growing trees that meet processing industry and market requirements. Decisions about what species to plant and how plantations are to be managed to meet these requirements while providing sustainable returns to growers need to be made now.

This chapter reviews the available information on potential new plantation-grown resources that may be utilised by a wood processing industry. Most of the research described is focused on plantation-grown eucalypts, a new resource for sawlogs in Australia, about which little is generally known concerning processing performance, product quality and value.

The issues relating to the production of timber and pulpwood, which are the two markets with the greatest potential to take logs from growers, are examined. These two industries have differing log and wood quality requirements and so are discussed separately in the chapter. Recommendations for future research and development are also made.

Solid timber

A substantial timber industry already exists in south-eastern Australia, utilising both plantation-grown pine and native forest eucalypts (Figure 9.1). The majority of these mills are supplied