



Media Release

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Research funding for forestry carbon left out in the cold

The National Association of Forest Industries (NAFI) is pleased the Australian Government is addressing climate change by spending \$32 million to investigate soil carbon and related emissions in Australian agriculture. However, this seems to ignore the carbon sequestration potential provided by forestry and related agricultural land use activities such as agroforestry.

“If the Government’s really serious about tackling climate change it should equally be investing in ways to increase the already substantial carbon sequestration benefits offered by the forest industry, including soil management aspects,” said NAFI CEO Allan Hansard.

“Australia’s forest industries, made up of plantations and sustainably managed native forests, can provide 81 million tonnes of CO₂ abatement each year by 2020, which is around 20 percent of Australia’s total carbon abatement task. With the appropriate government support, the sector will see enhanced growth leading to a contribution of much more than 20 percent – providing more benefits to Australians and the environment.

“Forestry has an incredible amount to offer the environment, and its carbon sequestration capacity isn’t limited to just the growth of trees. There are a number of other areas where, with adequate research and development support from Government, forestry could be contributing even more to Australia’s carbon abatement. For example, bioenergy and biochar produced from existing forestry wood waste may contribute significantly to renewable energy and a lower carbon future for the Australian economy.

“It seems illogical that regulatory barriers still restrict the use of wood waste from sustainably managed forests for renewable energy under the National Renewable Energy Target Scheme.

“Bioenergy generated from wood waste is a low-cost renewable, clean energy option available to Australia; it’s significantly cheaper to produce than wind or solar power. It’s a renewable energy source which reduces our reliance on fossil fuels.

“Biochar is another use for wood waste, and provides multiple benefits. Biochar can be incorporated in biofuel production and may provide significant carbon sequestration with potential for increasing the quality and fertility of agricultural soils.

“I note Minister Wong and Minister Burke met with the agricultural sector recently to discuss their involvement in climate change policy. The forestry industry, as an integrated component of the rural landscape and part of Minister Burke’s own portfolio, was not part of that meeting.

“I’ll be seeking a meeting with both Ministers to outline the concerns of the forestry industry and to highlight where policies and funding should be directed in order to produce the best triple bottom line outcome. Research priorities include renewable energy from wood waste, carbon sequestration across the forest growing and processing chain which includes wood products, and synergies between forestry and agriculture for carbon storage and enhanced productivity,” said Mr Hansard.

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