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MediaRelease

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Processing techniques drive timber recovery

Stocking rates may have less impact on the quality and quantity of timber harvested than the choice of processing technique, a Tasmanian-based trial of plantation eucalypts has found.

The CRC for Forestry conducted the trial of plantation-grown *Eucalyptus nitens* for Forest and Wood Products Australia (FWPA), with the aim of maximising the recovery and quality of sawn timber. It is the first in a series of processing trials to determine the impact of silviculture on the processing performance of *E. nitens*.

Project manager Dr Russell Washusen, from CSIRO Forest Biosciences (formerly Ensis), said the trial used 21-year-old trees from a thinning trial at Gould's Country, northeast Tasmania.

"Trees with a smaller diameter were back-sawn and larger trees were quarter sawn, and all boards were pre-dried, reconditioned and kiln dried using normal industry practice," Dr Washusen said.

"Although back sawing recovered a higher volume of boards with a greater mean dry board width, surface checking gave rise to a lower percentage of select and standard grade boards. As a result, product value per cubic metre of log input was significantly higher for quarter sawing than from back-sawing.

"Board end-splitting was another factor reducing product yields. However, the grading rules that were used also had a strong influence on the grade recoveries and product value.

"The trees were selected from plots with stocking rates of 100 to 700 stems per hectare, however thinning treatments did not appear to have affected product quality for logs of a similar diameter. The trial indicates that refining processing methods may improve timber recovery and quality more than reducing stocking rates," he said

Dr Glen Kile, Managing Director of FWPA, said this type of research indicated that simplistic notions of merely replacing native forests logs with plantation logs for high value sawn material were misplaced.

"There remain some significant technical and economic challenges to be addressed before this occurs," Dr Kile said. "Follow-up trials are already underway through the Forestry CRC, to identify processing methods that will reduce checking and the impact of log end splitting on recovery."

The full report *E. nitens thinning and spacing trials for wood property assessment, harvest and processing (PN07.3019)* is available from the website www.fwpa.com.au.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

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