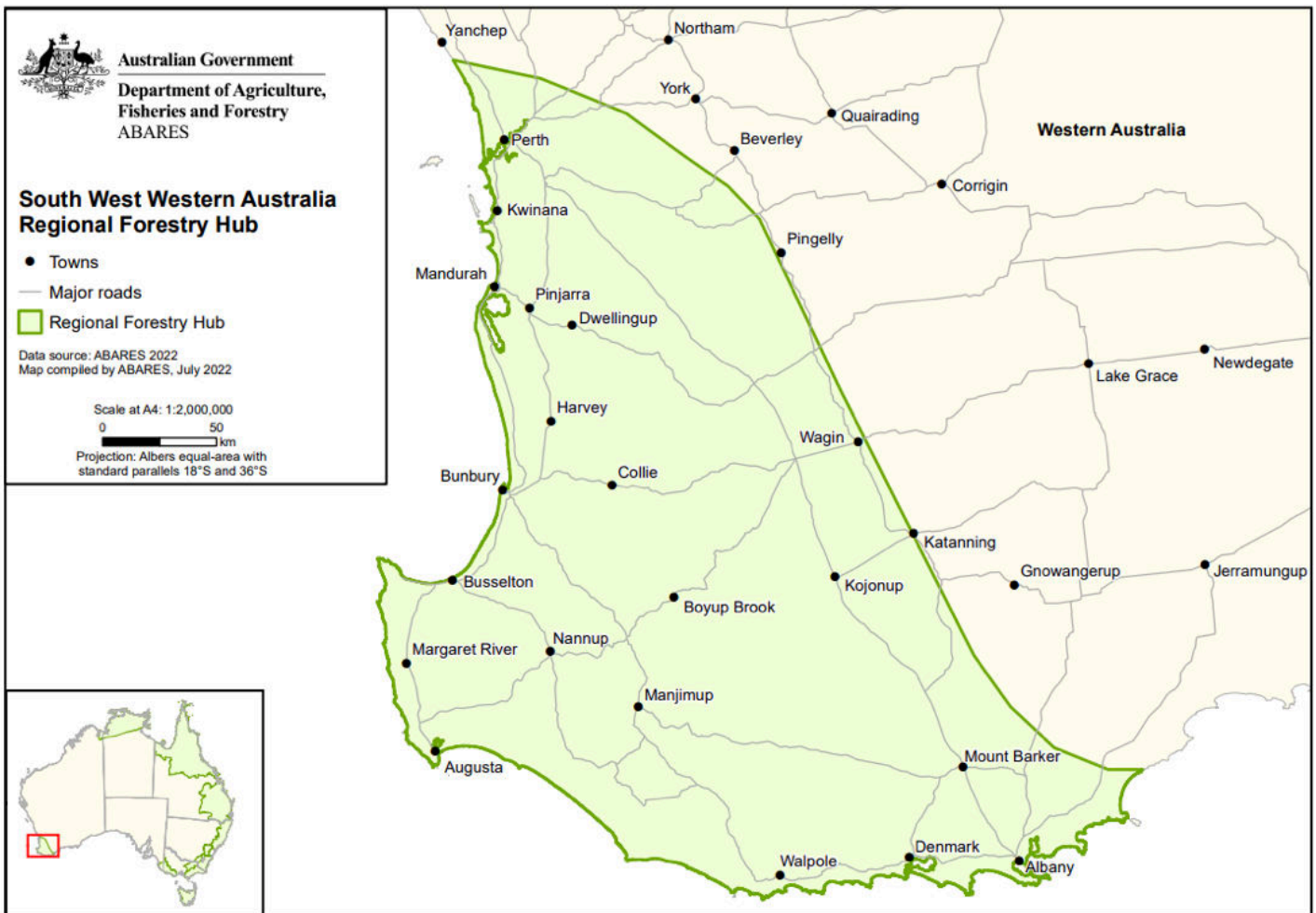


Private Forestry Guidance Materials

Information Sheet 07: South West Timber Hub

About the Hub

The South West Timber Hub is one of 11 similar organisations funded by the Australian Government to provide it with advice on supporting growth in the forest and wood products sector in key regions. The Hub, in south-west Western Australia, encompasses the region from Perth in the north to Albany in the south-east. The region is home to a significant hardwood and softwood plantation resource. The industry is centred on the export ports of Albany and Bunbury, with important domestic markets in Perth. Commercial tree plantations have an important role in managing broader agricultural productivity in the region and the distance from the eastern states means that the region's plantations are locally important.



Industry overview

The timber industry in Western Australia is a crucial contributor to the State's economy. In 2020, it generated \$1.6 billion in revenue and provided employment to more than 6,000 people. Within the South West Timber Hub region, the forestry industry provides direct employment to 1,310 individuals and indirectly supports a further 1,523 jobs through flow-on activities. The industry makes total annual contribution of \$766 million to the regional economy.

The Hub is the state's largest timber processing region, encompassing a range of businesses engaged in sawmilling, timber treatment and manufacturing. It is strategically located to leverage export opportunities to the Asia-Pacific region, through the Port of Bunbury and the Port of Albany, which both have direct shipping routes to vital markets such as Japan, China and South Korea. Additionally, the high-quality timber produced in the region is sought after for a diverse range of applications, including construction, furniture and flooring.

The forest estate

The plantation forest estate in the region is important both locally and at the national level. There are about 194,000 ha of hardwood plantations and 98,000 ha of softwood plantations in the region (ABARES, 2022), although the total plantation estate has declined considerably over the past 10 years.

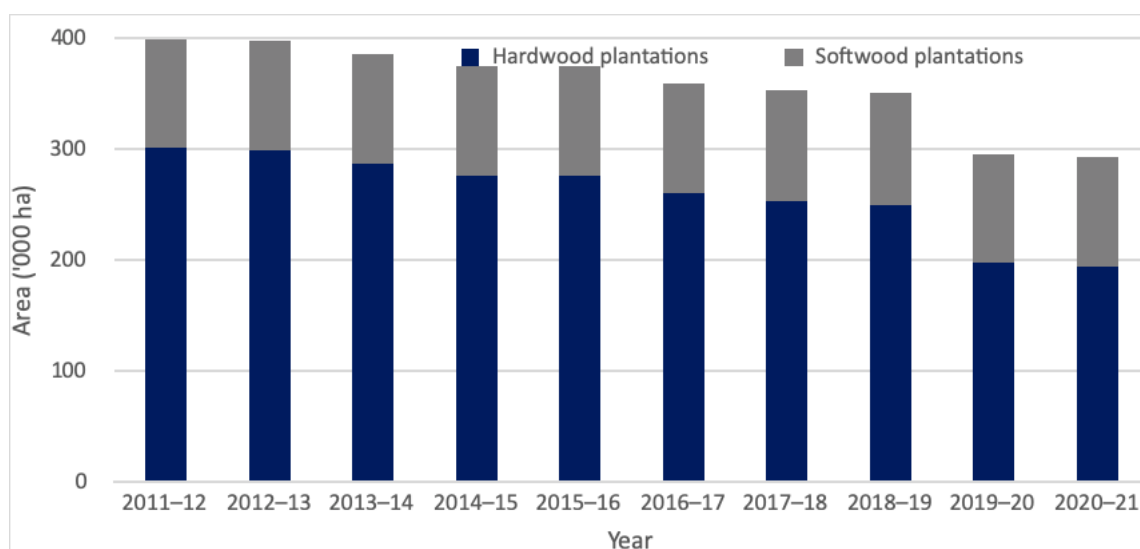


Figure 2: South West Timber Hub plantation area 2011/12 - 2020/21. (Source: ABARES, 2022)

Hardwood plantations are predominantly Tasmanian blue gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*) grown on short rotations for export as woodchip to Asian markets. Softwood plantations comprise radiata pine (*Pinus radiata*) and maritime pine (*Pinus pinaster*). Plantation ownership includes a number of large industrial companies as well as the State-owned Forest Products Commission of Western Australia. A substantial area of plantations is owned by smaller independent growers, with plantations integrated into other agricultural land uses in a range of configurations.

The region is known for its unique native forests, including jarrah, karri and marri trees, which have been sustainably managed for more than a century. These forests produce timber that is known for its strength, durability and beauty. The State Government has announced an end to large-scale commercial timber harvesting in public native forests effective from 2024.

Markets and products

Log volumes

In 2019/20, the region produced about 3.3 million m³ of log products from hardwood and softwood plantations and native forests, with a value of \$314 million (ABARES, 2022).

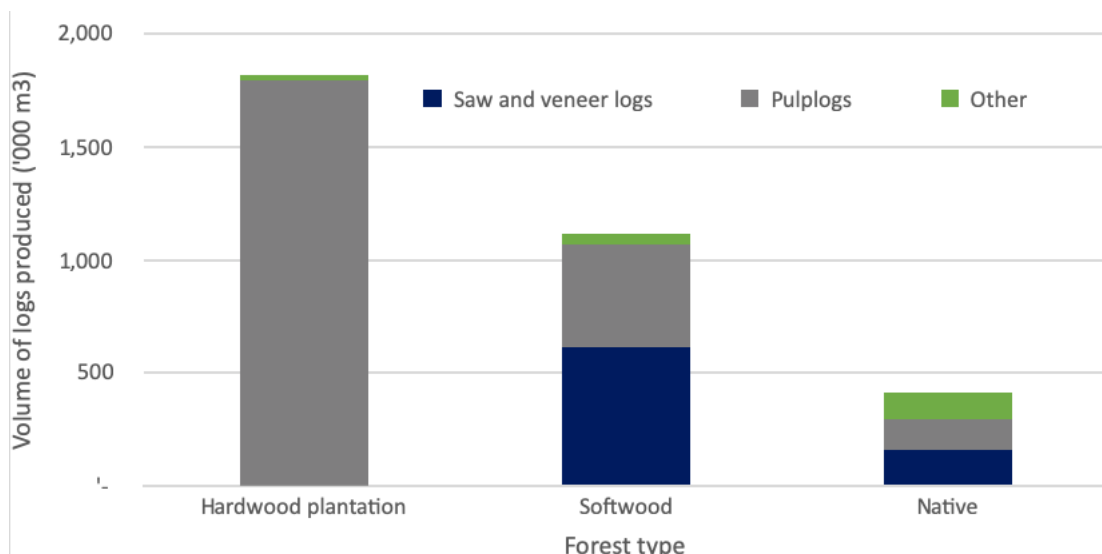


Figure 3: Log production by forest type, 2019/20 (Source: ABARES, 2022)

Markets

Pulp logs from all forest types are mainly exported by sea from Bunbury and Albany to the Asian woodchip market for manufacture of paper, cardboard, tissues, cellulose and rayon. Sawlogs are processed domestically to produce structural timber, appearance-grade timber, engineered wood products, fencing and landscaping timbers. There is also an important timber preservation market for softwood logs, producing rounds and other material for fencing and agricultural, as well as landscaping markets.

Opportunities for independent growers

South-west Western Australia is well suited to small-scale independent forestry. Plantations have been successfully integrated with other agricultural land uses in the region for decades. As well as providing an additional income stream for land owners, plantations offer other benefits, including management of water tables and salinity, and habitat connectivity to improve biodiversity outcomes, as well as providing the opportunity to participate in carbon markets.

The South West Timber Hub is focused on opportunities for the local timber industry to expand and grow in a competitive global market. It has developed a range of resources to assist landowners to understand and get involved with expanding the private forestry estate, with a target of more than 50,000 hectares of pine planted over the next 5-10 years.

Establishing new plantations

Local government authorities in Western Australia are responsible for the development and implementation of local planning schemes that set out the way land is to be used and developed. This includes land use classification and provisions to coordinate infrastructure and development within the local government area under the *Planning and Development Act 2005*.

Plantation establishment proponents must submit a plantation development application to the relevant local government authority. Considerations about whether a plantation project is approved include amenity, development of prime agricultural soils, community demographics and water management.

The ***Code of Practice for Timber Plantations*** is a guide for development of plantation management plans that form the basis of operational activities. The Code applies to all land tenures and is non-prescriptive. It identifies both mandatory and desirable practices and outcomes.

Harvesting and sale of private native forest timbers

Harvesting of private native forests is regulated by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions under the Environment Protection Act 1986 and sale of produce under the Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2018. Landowners require a valid clearing permit and a private land supplier's licence to harvest and sell private native forest produce.

More information

<https://www.swtimberhub.com.au/>