

Private Forestry Guidance Materials

Information Sheet 11: Murray Region Forestry Hub

About the Hub

The Murray Region Forestry 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. It is home to one of the largest plantation softwood industries in Australia, with about 188,000 ha of predominantly radiata pine (*Pinus radiata*) plantations. The region covers a large area of southern New South Wales and north-east Victoria east of the Hume Freeway, west of the Great Dividing Range, south of Gundagai, and east of Seymour. Key forestry towns in the NSW part of the Hub are Tumut, Batlow, Tumbarumba, Gundagai and Adelong. In the Victorian Hub area, the main centres for the industry are Corryong, Tallangatta, Myrtleford and Wangaratta.

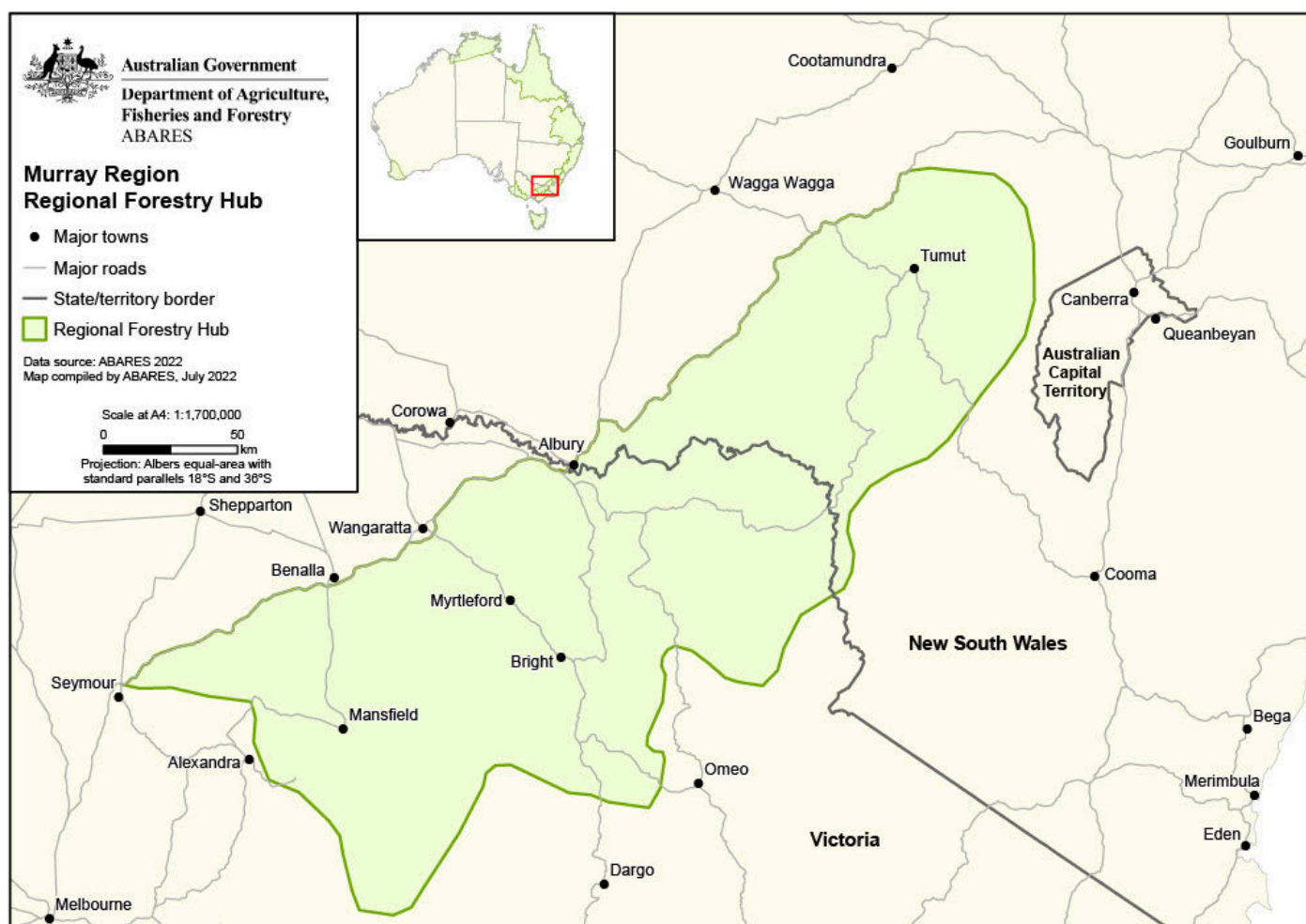


Figure 1: The Murray Region Forestry Hub location

Industry overview

The industry is a significant component of the regional economy, with a gross value of \$1.3 billion in 2015/16 (up to and including primary processing) and increasing to \$2.6 billion when flow-on effects are included (Schirmer 2020). The industry directly employs about 2,500 people in the region, with 63% of jobs generated by primary wood and paper processing. The direct and flow-on employment generated by the Hub's softwood plantation industry provided jobs for 7,067 people within the region and 7,799 across NSW and Victoria as a whole (Schirmer 2020).

The forest estate

The softwood plantation industry in the region represents a significant component of Australia's total softwood plantation estate and associated processing. The 188,000 ha hectares of softwood plantation represents about 18% of Australia's softwood plantation estate and about 11% of all Australian plantations. There is also a small area (6,000 ha) of hardwood plantations. Forestry Corporation of NSW and Hancock Victoria Plantations own the majority of the plantation estate. There is also a small but important proportion of smaller private ownership of plantations in the region.

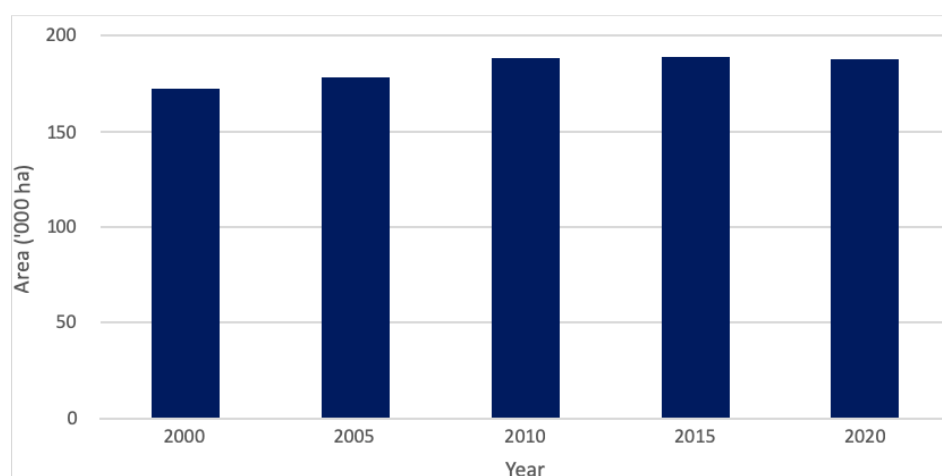


Figure 3: Murray Region Forestry Hub changes in plantation area, 2000-2020 (Source: ABARES)

Markets and products

Log volumes

The Murray Valley Region has significant plantation log production potential – up to 4.5 million m³/yr. However, volumes are expected to be quite variable over the next 15 to 20 years, as the impacts of significant fires since 2010 are resolved through plantation re-establishment and growth.

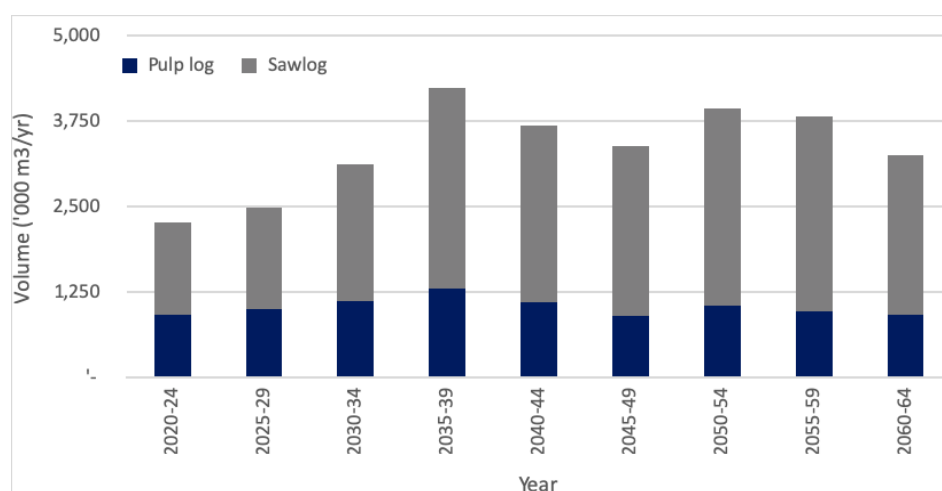


Figure 4: Current and future indicative log harvest levels for the Murray Valley Region. (ABARES, 2022)

Markets

The region is home to three world-scale softwood processing facilities, including the Hyne and AKD sawmills at Tumbarumba and Tumut and the Visy pulp and packaging manufacturing mill at Tumut. Other processing facilities include medium density fibre board (Alpine MDF), particle board (D7R Henderson) and plywood (Carter Holt Harvey) as well as cross laminated timber manufacturing plant by XLam at Wodonga.

Opportunities for independent growers

The Murray Valley Region has a long history of smaller-scale, independently owned commercial plantations, stretching back to the 1960s. There are significant opportunities for landowners to engage in commercial plantation forestry, supported by a mature industry with significant demand for log products.

Establishing new plantations

Victoria

Local government authorities must be notified about the establishment of new plantations in Victoria. Forestry in Victoria is overseen by a significant body of legislation, although the Victorian planning scheme states that forestry plantations are 'permit exempt' providing they comply with the Code for any commercial plantations in excess of five hectares. The Victorian Planning Provisions include a series of overlays, some of which can have significant impact on forestry plantation operations. Overlays often require permits for specific actions.

Victoria's Code of Practice for Timber Production (2014) applies to timber production (harvesting) from all forest types on all tenures and provides for regulation by local government, subject to the relevant Victorian Planning Provisions. In relation to new plantations, the Code requires that plantations on private land are designed, managed and operated in accordance with the Code and that local government is appropriately informed of any new plantation development on private land by lodgement of either a Plantation Development Notice or a planning permit in accordance with the Code.

New South Wales

Planning, approval and regulation of private plantations fall under the Plantations and Reafforestation Act (1999) and the Plantations and Reafforestation Regulation (2001), administered by the Department of Primary Industries. The Regulation is in the form of a Code of Practice. These instruments were introduced to streamline the approvals and regulatory processes for plantations. Plantations must be assessed by an authorised person (Department officer) following an application for an authorised plantation. Plantations under 30 ha are exempt.

More information

<https://murrayregionforestryhub.com.au/>



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry