



Fastwood Plantations

There are currently 200 million hectares of plantation forests in the world. The term plantation includes a wide range of commercially planted forests, and trees planted for community use as well as non-production purposes. A small proportion of plantations, often referred to as Fastwood Plantations, and variously estimated at 15-40Mn ha¹ worldwide, are intensively managed and will contribute disproportionately to future industrial wood supply. It is estimated that in Asia, Africa and Latin America, up to 40% of industrial wood supply will come from such sources by the year 2010. However, these Fastwood Plantations are controversial: much of their expansion has come from the conversion of natural forests and other areas of high conservation values such as grasslands and wetlands. Their establishment has in many cases also resulted in significant social consequences due to a disregard for the rights and interests of local communities.

WWF recognizes that well-managed and appropriately located fastwood plantations can play an important role in healthy, diverse and multi-functional forest landscapes, and can thus provide conditions that are compatible both with biodiversity conservation and human needs. In addition the fastwood plantation industry can contribute to economic growth and generate employment. However, without significant changes in policies and practices, in many regions the expansion of fastwood plantations will continue to cause controversy by threatening forest dependant peoples and high conservation value areas.

WWF therefore calls upon the forest products industry, regulators, financiers and other stakeholders to work collectively to develop and promote the adoption of environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable practices in fastwood plantation forestry. These should be communicated through publicly available policies with regular reporting to stakeholders on performance.

WWF believes that key elements of sustainability in fastwood plantation forestry are:

- **Respect for rights of local communities and indigenous peoples:**
 - Development should be based upon a preventive management approach, based on robust consultation processes that recognise legal and customary rights of local and indigenous communities to own, use and manage their lands, territories, and resources.
 - Development should not proceed in areas over which there are unresolved land tenure disputes.
- **Positive social and economic impacts:**
 - Fastwood plantations should enhance social and economic wellbeing of local communities, including workers and contractors. This also involves the strengthening and diversification of the local economy.
 - Out-grower schemes should ensure an equitable distribution of risks and benefits.
 - Workers, including contractors and out-growers, should enjoy the safeguards and rights provided under International Labour Organisation (ILO) standards and national laws.
- **Effective policy and regulatory frameworks:**
 - The role of fastwood plantations and limits to their expansion should be determined by land use planning at a national or regional level. Such planning should be based on meaningful participation of all key stakeholders, including potential out-growers, with the aim of achieving social consensus on the use of land for plantations
 - Government policies, including fiscal and other public incentives should ensure that equal focus is given to social, environmental and economic aspects

¹ Cossalter and Pye-Smith, in *Fast-Wood Forestry* (2003), estimated the area of fastwood plantations at 10Mn ha with an annual expansion of approximately 1Mnha per annum. They defined Fast-Wood Plantations as "intensively managed commercial plantations, set in blocks of a single species, which produce industrial round wood at high growth rates (mean annual increment of no less than 15m³ per hectare) and which are harvested in less than 20 years". Applying a rather broader definition based upon FAO data on potentially fast growing species (eucalypts, acacia and fast growing pines) and not differentiating by management objectives or performance results in rather higher figure of 40Mn ha.

- Plantation development shall respect all national and local laws. However, responsible behaviour will often require standards of performance that exceed the requirements of such laws, especially where regulatory frameworks are underdeveloped or governance is weak.
- Plantation managers should demonstrate high management standards by achieving independent forest certification under the auspices of the Forest Stewardship Council or other credible forest certification system.

- **Maintenance of high conservation values and multi-functional forest landscapes:**

- Plantations should not replace forests or other habitats required to maintain high conservation values. This will normally require well-informed negotiations among a wide range of stakeholders to achieve a consensus on what are high conservation values as well as an optimal integration of plantations within the mosaic of other land-uses to maintain these values.

- The best opportunity for enhancing biodiversity and maintaining ecological processes in plantations is at the landscape level. Plantation design and management should therefore maintain or enhance environmental values at the landscape level by providing ecological corridors, set aside areas and restoration of ecologically significant areas, and remnant habitats. Opportunities should be taken during replanting for the redesign of existing plantations to restore and enhance the biodiversity values within a landscape. Abandoned plantations and those incorrectly sited in the past should be restored to their original vegetation or equivalent habitat type.

- **Sound environmental management practices:**

- Management policies and practices should seek to minimise environmental impacts such as water pollution, fires, soil erosion, reduced soil fertility, and the introduction and propagation of invasive species and pests.

- A moratorium on the use or release of GMOs into the general environment must be kept until ecological interactions are fully researched and safeguards are put in place

- Plantation managers should minimise the use of pesticides and fertilisers. The impact of pesticides on biodiversity should be evaluated and an integrated pest management approach must be applied. The long term health and environmental effects of pesticides must be adequately monitored and mitigated.



Position paper

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WWF will work with local people, governments, private companies, financial institutions and civil society organizations to improve fastwood plantations by:

- Promoting a landscape approach to fastwood plantation management to balance trade-offs between intensive wood production, biodiversity conservation and improved livelihoods
- Working with *inter alia* the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), International Union of Forest Organisations (IUFRO) and The Forests Dialogue (TFD) to seek ways to identify better conservation and social outcomes of plantations
- Collaborating with progressive fastwood plantation developers to improve their environmental and social performance, and set new benchmarks for plantation evaluation, design and management
- Influence companies to adopt responsible purchasing policies that favour purchases from progressive fastwood plantation developers
- Influencing financial institutions' lending and investment policies
- Advocating the re-direction of public funds away from purely commercial production-based activities, and towards the restoration of multi-functional forest landscapes
- Lobbying against socially or environmentally damaging fastwood plantations