

Supplementary submission to the Inquiry into Forestry

Further to my submission (No 69), I would like to comment a little further on one aspect included in that submission. That is to do with agriculture and forestry and the potential for agroforestry.

Agriculture and forestry

I refer to the experiment reported in my submission and to the copy of the scientific paper attached to the submission. After the experiment had run for about 4 years, it was clear that a follow-up experiment was necessary to move from the pure research phase to a practical cost study to highlight the major findings from the experiment. This approach received support and an offer of funding from the Queensland Department of Primary Industries. However the offer was not accepted by the CSIRO Division of Forest Research, so the offer and plan lapsed.

From memory the follow-up experiment was to have trees planted at about 800 stems per hectare, sheep used to graze on the pasture and a thinning of trees down to 300 stems per hectare planned at about age 3 years. It was planned to have the thinnings treated with Koppers-type preservatives and the product made available for garden use, in that case in the Brisbane area. There were offers of technical support from other CSIRO Divisions to ensure that there was good monitoring and management of the pasture, sheep, and tree components of the system. It was anticipated that after 5 years, useful leads would be available on practical aspects such as:

- tree growth, form, merchantability, canopy cover, potential for use of thinnings,
- pasture production, pasture composition and quality, pasture maintenance requirements,
- sheep production and health.

It is a pity that this experiment was not established as it would have provided some useful guides to the potential for production from both elements of the agroforestry system. This approach had the possibility of reducing the tension between agriculture and forestry and produce a win-win option for farmers. The flexibility and buffering by having their land used for two very different products could lead to many farmers being able to continue in their operation even when agriculture was going through a 'bad time'. Reference has been made to the 'lonely tree' approach used by an Australian forester in south America and this is really just the application of the strategy in another part of the world. The Australian Government has also been involved in these types of projects such as support given to the Cattle Under Trees Projects in the Solomon Islands in the 1980's.

An experiment of the type proposed is still necessary and planning should be commenced with guidance from the Commonwealth on how and where it could be installed. Good linkages would be necessary between a university, the timber industry and the grazing industry. Perhaps such a development could be considered within the Regional Development options likely to flow out of the Clean Energy Future Plans and a suitable location could be in the Lismore-Casino-Grafton region.

Innovation

During the Public Hearing in Grafton, innovation was mentioned as one aspect requiring attention and there is one point I would like to add to my submission. That is to do with investigating the possibility of improving the genetic mix of the eucalypt species used in northern NSW and southern Queensland. *Eucalypts dunnii* was mentioned as a pulpwood species used extensively in MIS plantations in the region and from industry comments it is not at the top level of acceptability for sawlog production. However it is showing promise in peeling trials and needs further evaluation. Some species with higher acceptance for sawlogs are *E. cloeziana*, *E. siderophloia*, *E. pilularis* and *E. microcorys*. However little if any research has been done in Australia on how these species could be hybridised and how useful the resulting genotypes would be for quality timber production. A mix of these species for this region could improve their productivity, versatility and timber properties but it is necessary to carry out the breeding work to check on possibilities. If left to industry, it is likely that such research will not be undertaken for many years. I believe the Commonwealth could provide the stimulus for this type of research and as mentioned above there are likely partners in this region.

David Cameron