

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2015

Agriculture

Question: 2

Division/Agency: Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division

Topic: Climate Science – RFAs

Proof Hansard page: 139 (23.02.2015)

Senator RICE asked:

Senator RICE: I have one more question on climate, particularly on how climate science has progressed significantly in the years since the first RFAs were struck and climate has not been considered in the reviews so far. I want to know how it is intended that the impacts of climate change and the value of forests for carbon sequestration are going to be taken into account in the review and progress reports to come.

Mr McNamara: We will have to take the question on notice.

Answer:

Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) establish a sustainable forest management framework for the region they cover. Sustainable forest management includes maintenance of forest carbon stocks, and is able to contribute to climate change mitigation through maintaining or increasing carbon stocks. This is supported by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, *Climate Change 2007 – Mitigation of Climate Change*, which states:

“In the long term, a sustainable forest management strategy aimed at maintaining or increasing forest carbon stocks, while producing an annual sustained yield of timber, fibre or energy from the forest, will generate the largest sustained mitigation benefit.”

State-based forest management systems implement the RFAs, and are designed to ensure the conservation and sustainable management of forests. These forest management systems allow for adaptive management in light of new information and in accordance with issues that are region-specific.

Each RFA state has its own sustainability indicators on which it periodically reports. These are broadly based on Australia’s Sustainable Forest Management Framework of Criteria and Indicators, which are based on the international Montreal Process criteria and indicators. There are seven criteria for measuring sustainable forest management, and criterion 5 is “maintenance of forest contribution to global carbon cycles”.

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Agriculture

Question: 3

Division/Agency: Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division

Topic: FSC Certification

Proof Hansard page: 139-140 (23.02.2015)

Senator LEYONHJELM asked:

Senator LEYONHJELM: I have previously asked whether small importers who felt they had little option but to use FSC certification due to onerous due diligence requirements in the regulations would inevitably be contributing to WWF's coffers. In reply, the department stated that it was not aware of any evidence that suggested that the costs incurred in FSC certification financially benefited WWF International. Does FSC International make any payment to WWF International? If the department does not know, will the department find out and report the answer.

Mr Padovan: In our response we were not aware of any payments we have made. That is certainly something that we could take on notice.

Answer:

The Department of Agriculture has no information that suggests the costs incurred in FSC certification financially benefits WWF International.

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Agriculture

Question: 4

Division/Agency: Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division

Topic: Regional Forest Agreements

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator RICE asked:

In regard to the Hawke review of the EPBC Act in 2010, the commonwealth decided not to adopt the recommendations of the review with respect to Regional Forest Agreements, but acknowledged that accountability issues had been identified. The government stated it would deal with these issues as part of the renewals process for the East Gippsland and Tasmania RFAs. How is this being dealt with?

Answer:

The Australian Government has committed to maintain its support for long-term Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs).

The RFA extension process will consider a range of issues including possible improvements to the existing RFA framework. Any proposed changes that emerge from this process will need to be discussed and agreed to by both the Australian Government and relevant state government as the RFAs are bilateral agreements.

Therefore, this will be a matter to settle between the governments as part of the RFA extension negotiations when they formally commence.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Agriculture

Question: 5

Division/Agency: Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division

Topic: FSC International

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator LEYONHJELM asked:

Does FSC International make any payment to WWF International? If so, what is the size, frequency and form of such payment?

Answer:

The Department of Agriculture has no information that suggests the costs incurred in FSC certification financially benefits WWF International.