

SEAVIEW FARM

686 Germantown Road St. Marys Tas. 7215

Ph. 63722341 Mob. 0417382876

julia.seaview@intas.net.au www.seaviewfarm.com.au

The Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural
and Regional Affairs and Transport
P.O. Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT 2600

Dear Sir,

We would like to submit the following objections to the proposed bill underpinning the legislation in relation to Carbon Sink Forests.

As farmers we are fully aware of all the issues in relation to arable land, farming practices, plantations, managed investment schemes and carbon sinks. We study it, we read about it but, moreover, we live it every day.

Our major concern is not only the conversion of arable land into plantations but also the degradation of the finite land available.

As populations grow so does the need for food. The amount of world wide arable land is not only limited it has also taken a considerable beating from poor farming methods. In the west we have seen mass degradation of land due to:

- over use of chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides;
- destructive farming practices such as mass poisoning of land before re-sowing;
- failure to increase the bacteria/fungi content in the soil;
- failure to care for and develop the humus in soil;
- failure to develop a balance in the soil to increase mineral content;
- poor irrigation practices;
- broad acre farming that wipes out habitat for beneficial bird/insect life.

Increasingly we see good farm land being sold for conversion to plantations. This must not be linked with the necessity for carbon sinks. If there is a serious proposal for carbon sinks then keep native forests intact. It is submitted that any cleared land

-2-

planted with trees be converted to a wide variety of trees and plants which cannot be cut down for a good many more years than the 15 to 20 required for plantation timber.

In our local district we have seen first hand the conversion of many hectares of agricultural land to plantations. But even marginal land can be brought back into production as a result of changed farming practices.

One local example of a disastrous loss of food production is that of Evercreech Dairy near Mathinna in the North East of Tasmania. This dairy ran hundreds if not thousands of cattle on many hundreds of hectares of rich river flats adjoining the South Esk River. The property was bought by Gunns and converted to a single species (euc.Nitens) plantation. Seventeen farm workers lost their employment in a low socio economic area in which employment is very difficult to find.

The destruction of Evercreech which produced other crops as well as milk together with the the loss of employment would appear to be nothing short of a criminal act considering that we live in a world where there is an increasing need for food, a breakdown in environmental systems (Murray/Darling - a major threat to one of the country's largest food sources), and the likelihood of increasing areas of drought. But it is a good example of what disastrous results occur when only market forces are in control.

The only employment offered by putting in the plantation was in the planting of trees, spraying of atrazine (on the banks of a major water catchment for Launceston) and the harvesting in fifteen or twenty years time. This employment was casual as opposed to the permanent, sustainable and productive employment provided by the dairy.

Plantations also have a detrimental affect on water sources. Eucalypts act like water pumps so when they grow uniformly they lower the water table and nearby properties are in danger of losing their spring fed dams. A number of growers in Tasmania have been affected in this way. (These cases can be verified.)

Furthermore, the introduction of plantations has created widespread negativity and depression in surrounding communities. Many people experience helplessness in the face of big business and outside interests that make severe and detrimental changes to their local environment over which they have no control.

The unexpected arrival of a plantation in a rural area creeps up on communities with frightening speed. Some have registered objections and taken action in the Resource Management Planning and Appeals Tribunal but this is small fry, and to take such an

action is extremely stressful, time consuming and expensive and one which individuals find a million times more difficult than big companies with many resources behind them.

-3-

It is often a David and Goliath fight with David fighting for his own personal space in the face of a Goliath with the backing of faceless city dwelling shareholders living hundreds of miles away. In the majority of cases Goliath wins.

What happened with Evercreech is only one example of what is happening statewide and no doubt nationwide. The alarming and quite frightening unchecked growth of plantations could put at risk the future of many small rural communities.

In the face of this obvious insanity it doesn't take an Einstein to recognize that it defies common sense not to protect and nurture any piece of available land we have for food. How will woodchips be marketed for nourishing food? No doubt there are still those around, like the climate change deniers, who believe technology will prevail. Unfortunately there is no alternative to producing food.

We believe that very great care needs to be taken otherwise it is highly likely we will be facing dire problems in the near future. Imported food is likely to be either non existent or prohibitive due to increased transportation costs. Even if imported food is available there are no controls over the chemical content or quality of such food. We need to look to our own production and quality.

We have a water crisis. We have a food crisis. We have poor farming practices.

We need a government that will end plantation growth on farming land. We need a government that will also encourage, help and subsidize our farmers to increase productivity by using methods that will return soils to productive health.

If we need carbon sinks then look towards protecting native forests.

Sincerely,

Julia Weston
Frank Giles
Seaview Farm
St Marys
Tasmania, 7250

