

19.2 Resource base

The Chilean soil and weather conditions are very favorable for the growth of trees. Indeed, an examination of Chile's soil use capabilities reveals that, out of a total surface of 75.8 million hectares, 44% of the soil (32.8 million hectares) is suitable either for productive or for conservation forestry, with an additional 10.8% (8.2 million hectares) currently used for grazing, which could significantly expand the potential for industrial wood plantations (see Table 1 in the statistical appendix).

There is a sharp contrast, however, between the territory suitable for forestry and the land area currently under plantation or with productive natural forests. Presently, less than 50% of the potentially forestable land supports forests.

Chile's native forests are basically under private ownership; of a total of 15 million hectares, 13.2 million are privately owned, which include 3.5 million of productive hectares. Their economic role in the Chilean forestry sector, however, is not very significant, as native forests represent 5% of the total forest output. This is explained by a variety of factors, including government regulations, public opinion and green movements, isolation of productive forests and smallness of standing volumes due to overmaturity.

During the last century, two main exotic species have been introduced in Chile. These are **Pinus Radiata** (which came from California) and **Eucalyptus Globulus** (from Australia). The former