

Where the Australian forest resource will show substantial increases in the future will be in the area of softwood plantings. From the current resource of 857,000 hectares it will have grown to around 1.36 million hectares by the year 2030. This represents an annual planting rate of some 13,000 hectares. Although the first softwood plantations were established in South Australia in 1876 today more than half of the resource is less than 15 years of age and 70 percent less than 20 years of age. About threequarters of all plantation softwood in this country is radiata pine (known as Monterey pine in North America).

The rotation age of softwood is decreasing in some areas to as low as 30-35 years. As a consequence, there is a progressive trend to smaller log sizes, a trend which is increasingly noticeable in hardwoods.

Current log removals and estimates of future log availability (in '000 cubic metres, net volume under bark) on a total, national, basis are shown in the Australian Forestry Council report as follows :-

	Removals 1986/87	Projections				
		1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
Coniferous						
Sawlogs	3189	4111	6806	8608	9675	9742
Other	2071	4953	5076	5159	5393	5404
Broadleaved						
Sawlogs	4216	4061	3527	3514	3626	3494
Other	6116	8601	8649	9179	8591	8750

The above tables clearly show the growing importance attached to softwood plantation resource in Australia and the accompanying decline in the availability and importance overall of the native hardwood species.

2.1 A GROWTH PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

The value of production of Australia's forest products is \$2.5 billion with employment running at around 106,000. However, because it had no indigenous softwood resource, Australia has traditionally imported wood and wood products from several countries, with a total value of \$1.4 billion.

In an effort to redress this imbalance in trading, create new employment opportunities and provide much-needed value added production for its current and future resource, a study was prepared in 1987 for the Forests and Forest Products Industry Council (FAFPIC) and submitted to the Government. FAFPIC is a tri-partite organisation consisting of representatives from industry, government and the trade unions and is part of a much larger group known as the Australian Manufacturing Council.

The FAFPIC plan called for the creation of 125,000 new jobs and for the industry's balance of payment deficit of \$1 billion to be reduced to \$350 million by 1995 and into a surplus by the year 2010. The plan called for increased softwood plantings as well as additional hardwood plantations being developed for sawlog and pulpwood requirements. The study highlighted the capability and the potential within the industry to make major investments totalling \$11 billion (in 1988 Australian dollars) in world scale plants for the production of pulp and paper, timber and reconstituted wood products over the next 40 years.