

FMG and Valmet dominate the forwarder market which runs at sales of 25 to 30 a year and has a current population of around 250 units, some of which are quite old. A tractor manufacturer in western Victoria, Waltanna, has begun building a forwarder but, from all accounts has not been very successful in their marketing campaign.

There are about 700+ skidders in use with sales of around 30 units a year. There appears to be a good market potential for a grapple skidder, especially in softwood thinnings. The market is evenly shared between Caterpillar, Timberjack and John Deere. The re-emergence of the "FMC" skidder, under the Kootenay KMC marque, will provide some stimulus to the market in that it complements the rubber-tyred machines in most cases.

Where unique Canadian expertise has shone, is in the supply of large cable systems. There are about 10 units in operation, mostly in Tasmania. However, as environmental pressures mount regarding logging in sensitive areas and as the timber resource is gradually being taken from steeper terrain, a good market is opening up on the mainland, especially in southern New South Wales and northern Victoria.

Current population of log trucks and trailers is around 2500 and this number is not expected to increase dramatically due to ongoing pressure to increase maximum loads and to shift to B-doubles in some areas. The B-double system of dual trailers has a permissible load limit of 58 tonnes for public roads. European trucks, such as Volvo, Mercedes and Scania dominate the market, with the US-Mack achieving good results.

2.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW EXPORTERS

The first and most important step that a Canadian exporter new to the Australian market must do is appoint a good, reliable agent. This company preferably should have national distribution and must be able to provide ready availability of spare parts and service support. Where an agent may not have total national coverage a local contact point for information, spares and service is essential. Overseas equipment which can be used in the bush up to 400 kilometres from a major town, airport or shipping facility requires a first-class infrastructure support which recognises the contractor's needs to keep that machinery producing.

Another key factor that has to be recognised is the training of operators. In each state there exist training organisations which, although set up initially to train chainsaw operators, are now able to train in machine use techniques. Moves are underway to have all in-field personnel certificated and to ensure that they carry this certificate at all times. It is designed to improve the professionalism of the workforce.

Exporters must maintain close contact with their agent/distributor and to be seen at the pitface level frequently. This enables them to become aware of any problems that may be occurring and will help to contain, and alleviate, such problems.

In the price-competitive world that exists today, exporters must be prepared to pare their costs to the bone in order to break into new markets, or offer inducements that their competitors cannot match.

Finally, equipment suppliers must be continually updating their technical and marketing techniques in order to keep one step ahead of the competition.