



**Media Release**  
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### **COUNCIL CONCERNED OVER LAND USE AND CLIMATE CHANGE OPTIONS**

Recently in an attempt to implement some of New Zealand's obligations under the Kyoto Protocol, the Government released a policy options paper on "Sustainable Land Management and Climate Change". This is currently in consultation phase with public meetings scheduled in Invercargill on 6 March and Dunedin on 8 March.

The Southern Wood Council (SWC), an organisation of leading forest owners and timber processors in Otago and Southland, is extremely concerned about the implications for the Forest Industry if any of the policy options around:

- Deforestation tax
- Tradeable deforestation permits
- RMA controls on land use
- Govt nationalisation of forestry carbon credits,

are adopted.

SWC representative, Grant Dodson said rather than encouraging the expansion of the forest industry for the benefit of New Zealand's Kyoto Carbon balance and soil and water conservation values, it is feared that these Government options will bring about an increase in deforestation driven by a lack of investor confidence, subsequently leading to carbon emissions and pollution, exactly what the Government is trying to prevent.

"The SWC has a vested interest in developing and expanding the forest industry within the region, fostering employment, responsible land stewardship, improving soil and water conservation values and encouraging the social and recreational benefits forestry brings to communities.

"Rather than focus on the negatives of deforestation and the various penalty options proposed by Government, we would like to see a positive approach taken to incentives and the development of forestry recognising all the benefits that this land use brings to

New Zealanders and our environment. Such incentive measures would encourage new plantings and if successful remove the need to manage deforestation at all. Although some incentive proposals are included in the Government's options paper these are assessed as being largely inadequate and are overshadowed by the negative options mentioned above.

"The forest industry has spent considerable time consulting with Government about how this could occur and has adopted a 6 point plan." Mr Dodson said.

The forest industry's 6 Point plan recommends

- Removal of the inequitable deforestation cap.
- Allow land owners to financially benefit from the value of carbon their forests remove from the atmosphere.
- Introduce broad based carbon charges, ensuring that emitters of greenhouse gasses face the same opportunity cost.
- Ensure that NZ's Kyoto policies have the best outcomes for NZ even if they don't exactly mirror current Kyoto rules.
- Develop a regime that puts a value on the environmental attributes of forestry thereby encouraging investment in the sector.
- Act immediately, because forestry will inevitably form part of any rational climate change policy developed for New Zealand, forest policies should be developed now to help the country meet its carbon emission obligations in the first Kyoto commitment period.

"Unfortunately these points have not been incorporated within the Government's policy options which continue to focus on the nationalisation of tree owners carbon credits, various forms of deforestation penalties with very little in the way of meaningful incentives to encourage new plantings.

"If you would like New Zealand to do something meaningful about Kyoto, land use and climate change or if you are concerned about implications for your forestry investment come along and have your say," said Mr Dodson.

Ends

Key facts:

- The Southern Wood Council was established in 2001 to promote, encourage and co-ordinate the sustainable economic development of the forestry products industry in Otago and Southland.
- The Southern Wood Council members include all major forestry companies, saw mills and wood processes, local body council representatives and port authorities.
- The industry employs 2443 people in the southern region (Southland, Otago and South Canterbury).
- There is an estimated 248,000ha of planted production forests in the southern region.
- Consultation meeting details

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| Southland | Working Men's Club, 154 Esk Street, Invercargill | 06 March |
| Otago     | The Dunedin Centre, 1 Harrop Street, Dunedin     | 08 March |

Meetings will run from 9:45 am to 1:15pm, followed by lunch.

For further information contact Grant Dodson on 027 654 6554.