



Media Release

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SOUTHERN WOOD INDUSTRY PILOTS INNOVATIVE INDUSTRY TRAINING SCHEME

The Southern Wood Council is piloting an innovative training and employment programme in the solid wood industry.

The programme, piloted by the Southern Wood Council members, has been developed in partnership with the forest industries Training Organisation (ITO), FITEC and kicks off this year with a recruitment drive for six people in the southern area.

The programme has been developed to recognise the career opportunities in the timber processing sector and to give career focused individuals a pathway to succeed in gaining the necessary skills and knowledge to reach their potential.

Following an induction programme, each salaried participant will spend six months in succession at three of the companies, completing further training courses between each change over.

Chairman of the Southern Wood Council, Matt Hitchings says the scheme is supported by commitment of \$750,000 from the southern solid wood industry over the next three years.

“Prospective participants will be placed in paid positions for two years while completing training. This means they will be able to secure a long term career in the solid wood sector - without the burden of student debt.

“Our industry has decided to take the lead on this issue by directly investing in 'on the job' training to guarantee the retention of good workers.

“What we offer our recruits is the ability to work for a number of different companies over a two year period so they can gain broad brush experience in the industry and obtain qualifications which can act as a stepping stone to diploma and degree courses.

“Our products are being exported throughout the world. To keep our competitive edge we must develop an enduring workforce with the skills and the passion to enhance our reputation in the global market place.” Mr Hitchings says.

FITEC CEO John Blakey says Southern region was chosen as the first region to roll out the programme due to its proactive stance on training issues.

Companies participating in the pilot programme include Blue Mountain Lumber, Mill Stream Lumber and Wenita Forest Products. Others are expected to join soon.

“Career paths in the wood processing sector have evolved so much in the last twenty years with good opportunities for focused people. This programme will deliver skilled employees, with good decision-making and leadership abilities who have experienced a number of workplace environments,” Mr Blakey says.

Key Facts

- * Experienced wood processors (approx five years' experience) can earn between \$40,000 - \$50,000 per year depending on level of responsibility and regional location.
- * Wood processors who move into management positions earn between \$40,000 and \$100,000 depending on the complexity of the role.
- * As at March 2003, approximately 10,000 people were employed in wood processing occupations.
- * In 2003, New Zealand's lumber products export value was close to \$1 billion.

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