

Planet Ark Make It Wood position statement

Protection of high conservation value forests

Planet Ark believes that forests play a critical role in our environment in regulating the climate, providing habitat for wildlife, source of biodiversity and, for people, a connection to our natural world. As forests have been cleared and/or degraded around the world, Planet Ark believes that what remains of our high conservation forests must be protected and treasured. As such, Planet Ark opposes the logging of high conservation value forest for wood products and clearance for plantations, as this will have negative impacts on biodiversity¹.

Wood products as part of the solution to climate change

As we face the growing threat of climate change, however, we need to look to all options for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, including the use of responsibly sourced wood as a renewable resource that stores carbon. As forests grow they take carbon out of the atmosphere through the carbon cycle. When the wood is harvested and used to make wood products, the carbon remains locked in the wood for the life of the product. Some 50% of the dry weight of wood is carbon, which means that by using more responsibly sourced wood in our built environment over carbon intensive materials such as aluminium, steel or concrete, we can reduce carbon emissions and store carbon through this renewable resource. Substituting wood products from well managed forests and plantations for carbon intensive products could reduce the embodied emissions of a typical house by up to 18 tonnes over its life (*Ref: RMIT University study, 31 January 2011, 'A Comparative Life Cycle Assessment of Alternative Constructions of a Typical Australian House Design'*).

The forestry industry

Planet Ark recognises that globally areas of forests are not responsibly managed. However some forest managers and companies are managing forests and plantations to provide for environmental and social values as well as providing for wood products. This must be strongly encouraged and it will require concerted campaigning to demand good forest management and strong efforts to end illegal logging. Planet Ark is committed to working in these critical areas.

Wood certification

Planet Ark believes that certification is the best way to encourage good forest management and prevent illegal logging. It allows consumers to choose wood products that they know are from well-managed forests. There are two primary certification schemes in Australia – the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Australian Forest Standard (AFS).²

¹ Planet Ark believes that high conservation value forests are too valuable to be harvested for any purpose.

² The Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) is an international certification scheme that provides endorsement of individual national forest certification schemes, such as the AFCS. Forest managers, processors and merchants certified under the AS 4707 (AFS Chain of Custody Standard) can use the PEFC logo in addition to the AFS.

FSC is currently the stronger scheme and Planet Ark recommends choosing FSC wood products over those with AFS or no certification at all for the best environmental outcomes.

AFS has a number of limitations and Planet Ark is committed to working to improve its requirements through the scheme's review process, now underway. All NGOs are encouraged to participate in these efforts to ensure that Australian consumers can purchase certified wood products in Australia with confidence.

How to meet increasing demand for wood products from well-managed forests and Plantations

Planet Ark believes that growing demand for wood products that are sourced from well-managed forests and plantations, which also sequester carbon, can be met with the help of low-carbon market incentives, strong certification schemes and educated consumer demand. With these in place, we believe the demand for well-managed forests and plantations on marginal or cleared land will greatly increase. Returning this land to forests will have added climate change and environmental benefits if managed correctly.

To the future

Looking to the future, the increased use of wood sourced from well managed forests and plantations provides an effective response to climate change and is likely to be a driver for more certified wood products and drive improvements in forest and plantation management in Australia and globally. These positive outcomes can only be achieved by the continued move towards better forestry practices and educating consumers and the design and building industry about the carbon storage capacity of wood. The fact that Europe's forests have expanded over the past 20 years despite growth in wood use is a sign that this is possible in Australia (*ref: 'State of Europe's Forests 2011' report*

<http://www.foresteuropa.org/?module=Files;action=File.getFile;ID=1640>