



Planet Ark Make It Wood position statement

Protection of high conservation value forests

Planet Ark believes that trees play a critical role in our environment as producers of oxygen, a home for wildlife, source of biodiversity and, for people, a connection to our natural world, and that as a result what remains of our high conservation forests should be protected and treasured. As such, Planet Ark opposes clearance of high conservation value forest for wood products and for plantations, as this will have negative impacts on biodiversity. Planet Ark believes that high conservation value forests are too valuable to be harvested for any purpose.

Responsibly sourced wood products as part of the solution to climate change

As we face the growing threat of climate change we need to look to all options for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Responsibly sourced wood is a renewable resource and it stores carbon. As forests grow, they remove CO₂ from the atmosphere through the process of photosynthesis. When the wood is harvested and used to make wood products, the carbon remains locked in the wood for the life of the product. Approximately 50% of the dry weight of wood is carbon, which means that by using more responsibly sourced wood in our built environment in place of more carbon-intensive materials such as steel or concrete, we can reduce carbon emissions and store carbon through this renewable resource. Substituting sustainably sourced wood products for carbon-intensive products such as aluminium, steel or concrete could reduce the embodied emissions of a typical house by up to 18 tonnes over its life¹.

The forestry industry

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

Wood certification

Forest certification has developed as a way of demonstrating the implementation of sustainable forest management practices. To have a forest certified as being sustainably managed, an audit is undertaken by an independent, third party certification body. The audit assesses the forest management practices of a forest manager or owner against the standard for certification. Both native forests and plantations can be certified.

¹ RMIT University study, 31 January 2011, 'A Comparative Life Cycle Assessment of Alternative Constructions of a Typical Australian House Design'

The two major global forest certification bodies are the Program for the Endorsement of Forest (PEFC) scheme and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Both the PEFC and FSC are internationally recognised forest certification networks that provide for the mutual recognition of regional and national standards that meet their criteria for sustainable forest management.

In Australia, forest managers and owners have the option of certifying their forests under either the Australian Forest Certification Scheme (now known as Responsible Wood), which is recognised under the PEFC, or the FSC. Responsible Wood uses the Australian Forestry Standard (AFS) as the relevant standard for certifying forest management, and FSC has also introduced its first Australian FSC National Forest Stewardship Standard, developed by Australian stakeholders representing environmental, industry, and social interests to meet Australian needs.

Wood and wood-based products sourced from certified forests are tracked through the supply chain using chain-of-custody certification provided by both forest certification schemes. This provides consumers with an assurance that the wood product they are purchasing comes from a sustainably managed and certified forest. For consumer products these are then labelled with a chain of custody certificate number.

Like the Australian Government, Planet Ark supports all credible internationally recognised forest certification schemes that provide for legal and sustainable forest management and believes that the choice of forest certification scheme(s) is a decision for forest owners/managers.

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 sustainably 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, certified forests and plantations provides an effective response to climate change and is likely to be 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 last 20 years despite the growth in wood use is a sign that this is also possible in Australia².

² State of Europe's Forest 2015 Report - <http://foresteurope.org/state-europes-forests-2015-report/>