



## Farm Forestry

Supporting the Western Australian forest industry  
now and into the future



**fpc** Forest Products  
Commission

## Farm forestry

Successful farm forestry operations provide an income for farmers, can deliver multiple environmental and community benefits and help secure resource supply to Western Australia's forest industry to meet a growing demand for wood products.

The *Djarlma Plan for the Western Australian Forestry Industry* (2018) establishes a strategic framework to transform and support the forest industry now and in the future. The Djarlma Plan acknowledges the "potential to expand farm forestry" by "promoting well-planned farm forestry based on commercial scale planting, identified market needs, sound business models and technical advice from qualified agricultural advisers and foresters".

The Forest Products Commission's (FPC) *Softwood Industry Strategy for Western Australia* (2016) recognises the role of farm forestry in adding to and helping to secure the plantation resource.

The Western Australian Planning Commission's *State Planning Policy 2.5 - Rural Planning* (2016) supports tree planting on rural land to provide economic and environmental benefits.

Further, the Australian Government's National Forest Industries Plan - *Growing a Better Australia - A billion trees for jobs and growth* (2018) highlights the importance of integrating farm forestry "into existing commercial supply chains" and for "new tree plantings which will complement existing farm activities".

### Right:

Farm forestry is an important tool in securing Western Australia's future plantation resource.



## What is farm forestry?

The generally accepted definition of farm forestry is the incorporation of commercial tree growing into farming systems.<sup>1</sup>

Tree plantings are integrated into or complement a farm's existing land uses and are managed to produce wood products that can be sold to existing and emerging markets. The trees provide a direct commercial return to the farmer.

Under this definition, the focus of farm forestry is primarily commercial, although other objectives can be achieved, including shade and shelter for stock or crops, natural resource management and habitat conservation.

Tree planting can take many forms, including plantations on farms, woodlots, timber belts, alleys and wide-spaced tree plantings. Farm forestry can also entail managing and harvesting native forests and woodlands on farmland.

In contrast to sharefarming, where the risk of establishing a tree crop may be shared between a landowner or farmer and a third-party, the risk and return of planting the tree is largely borne by the farmer.

## Benefits of farm forestry

Other than diversifying a farmer's income with the sale of wood, farm forestry can provide community and regional benefits through employment and supply of environmental services.

There is also potential for farm forestry to play a broader role in carbon sequestration, water quality improvement, salinity mitigation, biodiversity improvement, and achieving other landscape and aesthetic values.

More than 300,000 hectares of native forest in Western Australia's south-west occurs on privately owned land, and there is a growing awareness of the importance of managing these forests. These areas can be managed for landcare and biodiversity objectives alongside the commercial value of the wood resource.



<sup>1</sup> Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment: [www.agriculture.gov.au/forestry/australias-forests/plantation-farm-forestry](http://www.agriculture.gov.au/forestry/australias-forests/plantation-farm-forestry)

## Criteria for successful farm forestry

To realise the full potential of farm forestry in Western Australia some conditions will need to be met. These include planting the right trees in the right location, access to existing or emerging markets and ensuring infrastructure is in place to economically harvest and haul timber to customers. In other words, the types of trees being planted need to reflect environmental conditions and market demand for specific products.

The Djarlma Plan recognises industry collaboration through a regional forestry hub can help deliver a sustainable forest industry and improve plantation investment. The FPC is working closely with industry and other stakeholders through the South West Timber Hub to improve supply chain efficiencies in both the native forest and plantation sectors.

Developing and expanding viable farm forestry projects can be supported by collaboration across a network of stakeholders. Community champions and the association of like-minded people become the foundation for supporting farm forestry in a region. The FPC is one part of this farm forestry network.

Planting trees as part of a farm forestry operation will need to comply with relevant State or local government legislation or policies. For example, clearing of native vegetation is regulated under the Environmental Protection (Clearing of Native Vegetation) Regulations 2004. Some local governments may have bylaws and guidelines relating to tree planting on land designated for farming to align with the intent of State Planning Policy 2.5 - Rural Planning.

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Several factors including growing conditions, scale and industry requirements should all be considered for farm forestry to be successful.



## Farm forestry initiatives and support

Expanding the farm forestry estate aligns with State Government priorities to create jobs and deliver on stronger regional economies and communities. Also, the FPC's goals of healthy forests for future generations, a vibrant forest industry and the long-term economic health of the forest industry are supported by encouraging sustainably managed farm forestry operations.

As at June 2020, a range of initiatives and programs are available to support farm forestry, some of which are listed below.

### Farm Forestry Assist

The FPC directly supports farmers with small forestry operations through its Farm Forestry Assist program. Free radiata or pinaster pine seedlings from the West Manjimup nursery are provided to eligible farmers or private landowners.

Each year, farmers or private landowners are asked to register their interest in planting pine. To be successful, the property should be suitable with respect to rainfall, scale, soil and location so that the future plantation can contribute to Western Australia's softwood resource. More information on the program can be found on the FPC website at [www.fpc.wa.gov.au](http://www.fpc.wa.gov.au)

The FPC provides technical advice to support the establishment of viable and productive plantations on farms. In addition, the FPC website includes practical reference guides for tree planting and fire management and protection.

### High quality seedlings

The FPC's Manjimup Nursery and Seed Centre provides access to high quality radiata and pinaster pine seedlings ensuring the industry has the best genetic stock, improving productivity and drought resilience.

## Privately owned native forests and woodlands

Well-managed privately owned native forest and woodlands can contribute a range of services to the landowner. The FPC has supported preparation of a booklet which aims to assist landowners interested in sustainable native timber production. *Managing private native forests and woodlands in the south-west of Western Australia* (Jack Bradshaw, 2020) can be downloaded from the FPC website.

### South West Timber Hub

Regional forest industry hubs have been established around Australia as a strategic measure to grow forest industries in key geographic areas. Recognising Western Australia's competitive advantages and important contribution to a strong forest industry, the South West Timber Hub was established in 2019.

The South West Timber Hub will work with industry to ensure adequate supply to meet current and future timber demand. This includes expanding the softwood plantation estate, with private land forestry being part of the solution.

### South West Agroforestry Network (SWAN)

SWAN is a branch of the Australian Forest Growers, a national organisation representing private tree and forest growers across the country. The group's objective is to connect landowners and others by being a contact point for what is going on in the world of tree growing and revegetation. For more information about SWAN, visit [www.swagroforestrynetwork.com.au](http://www.swagroforestrynetwork.com.au)

## Landcare and natural resource management

Governments are committed to protecting Australia's natural resources and facilitating sustainable and productive management of agricultural land and its soil, vegetation and other biodiversity assets.

The National Landcare Program underpins Australia's efforts in assisting best practice natural resource management. A key focus of Western Australia's natural resource management funding is supporting rural communities to undertake projects which help to restore healthy ecosystems. For more information visit [www.wa.gov.au/service/community-services/grants-and-subsidies/find-grant](http://www.wa.gov.au/service/community-services/grants-and-subsidies/find-grant)

## **National Forest Industries Plan - Growing a Better Australia – A billion trees for jobs and growth**

The Australian Government's National Forest Industries Plan establishes a vision and framework for Australia's forest industry. On release of the plan, the 2018-2019 Federal Budget committed \$20 million over four years towards its implementation, including funding to "transform farm forestry as a commercial enterprise supplying timber to Australia's forestry sector".

### **Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF)**

New farm forestry plantations could be an eligible carbon offsets project under the Australian Government's ERF. The ERF is a voluntary scheme that aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by providing incentives to new projects and technologies.

Eligible ERF projects can earn Australian carbon credit units (ACCU) which may be sold to generate additional income, either to the Australian Government through a carbon abatement contract or to a secondary market.

More information on the ERF and eligibility requirements, including measurement-based methods for farm forestry plantations, can be found on the Clean Energy Regulator website at [www.cleanenergyregulator.gov.au](http://www.cleanenergyregulator.gov.au)

## **Climate Proofing Australia (CPA)**

The CPA is an initiative established to work in partnership with leading groups in the farming, forestry, and conservation sectors to advance their role in meeting Australia's emissions targets.

CPA actively supports the Carbon Farming Initiative, around which the ERF was built, and advocates for better integration of farming and forestry with land conservation to deliver improved environmental and productivity outcomes.

For more information about CPA, visit [www.climateproofingaustralia.com.au](http://www.climateproofingaustralia.com.au)

### **Farm Forestry Toolbox**

The Farm Forestry Toolbox is a collection of computer programs designed to assist owners and managers of small to medium-sized forests map, measure, and manage their estates. It is owned and managed by Private Forests Tasmania and can be found at [www.farmforestrytoolbox.com](http://www.farmforestrytoolbox.com)

#### **Cover:**

The FPC's Farm Forestry Assist program aims to increase Western Australia's softwood resource by providing free pine seedlings to eligible landowners.

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