

Plantation, paper and milling show how it's done

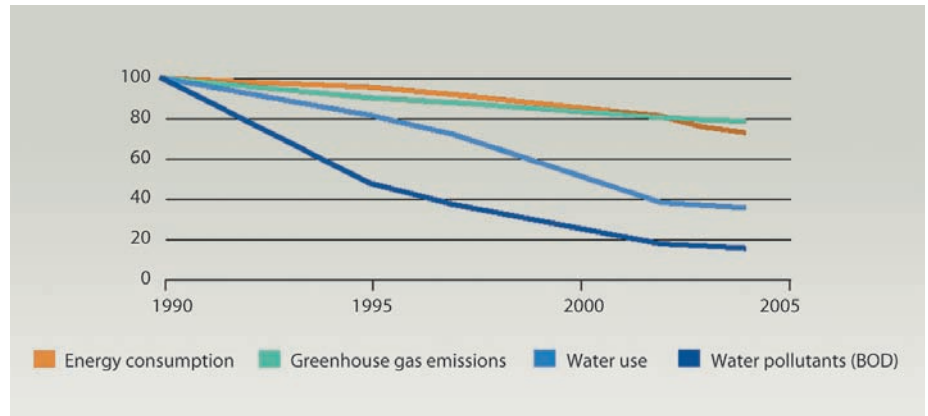
The Australian Plantation Products and Paper Industry Council's recently launched sustainability action plan has raised the bar for industry commitments to practice improvements. Now being comprehensively implemented across 22 of the country's largest plantation, saw-milling and paper manufacturing organisations, the plan outlines proactive and deep-impact reduction commitments that are winning international praise.

Launched in Brisbane earlier this year at the National Business Leaders Forum for Sustainable Development, the *Performance, people and prosperity: sustainability action plan* is a first for Australia's plantation products and paper industry in that it includes specific targets, measures of performance and a commitment to publicly reporting against 21 broad sustainability issues. These include:

- voluntary certification for sustainable practices through independent bodies;
- the reduction of greenhouse emissions and increased use of 'greenhouse friendly' plantation products;
- the prevention of imports of illegally logged forest products and helping to identify legally sourced products;
- optimisation of the economic value of production and increases in the level of sustainable employment;
- reduced chemical use and seeking of alternatives;
- increased water use efficiency, re-use of water and improvement in the quality of discharges;
- minimisation of damaging emissions and the impact of waste production;
- increased safety levels – no accidents will be tolerated; and
- developing and implementing techniques to exceed state/territory compliance levels in plantation management.

Speaking at the launch, Mr Rob Lord, Chair of the plantation products and paper industry's peak body (known as A3P), said, 'Our impact on Australia's present and future is significant so we need to manage it responsibly.'

A3P organisations produce 12 million cubic metres of logs, 3 million cubic metres of sawn timber and more than 2 million tonnes of paper annually, with a significant environmental footprint. The body's commitment to industry-wide prac-



Environmental trends of the Australian paper industry (trend per tonne of paper production over time, indexed against 1990 levels set at 100). Source: A3P

tice improvement sets a strong example.

'This Sustainability Action Plan (SAP) was prepared in consultation with A3P members and leading environmental NGOs and is based on the best available research,' Mr Lord said. 'The targets aim to have a decisive and positive effect on Australia's environmental challenges; the implications, having relevance worldwide.'

'We adopted a product stewardship approach in developing the plan because effective results require action from everyone along the product life cycle including growers, manufacturers, importers, governments and consumers – who all share responsibility for environmental impacts.'

'While our industry has already dramatically reduced water use, improved water discharge quality from timber and paper mills, and steadily reduced its greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption, the SAP is our commitment to do more,' said Mr Lord.

The A3P Plan is also significant because it features leading best-practice case studies highlighting the sustainability commitments already achieved by A3P organisations for each area of concern, such as:

- Hancock Victorian Plantations achieving Forest Stewardship Council certification, the first Australian company to do so;
- Forests NSW becoming (February 2005) the first body in Australia to trade carbon credits arising from forests in a greenhouse gas abatement scheme;
- Forests NSW's agreement to purchase the first salinity control credits generated by new forests planted in the soil prone

Macquarie River catchment in central-west NSW (2000); and

- Australia becoming a world leader in newspaper recycling, reaching a new peak of 75.4 per cent recovery of all newsprint consumed in 2005. This is partly due to A3P members, like Norske Skog, who have committed to still higher levels of newsprint recycling.

A3P has also taken its sustainability commitments to an international level by signing a statement on global sustainability, on behalf of members, at the International Council of Forest and Paper Associations (ICFPA) meeting in Rome in June this year. Created in the presence of 56 international forestry leaders, representing 25 countries, the statement commits some of the largest pulp, paper and wood products companies in the world to improving sustainable performance.

The ICFPA's membership is comprised of trade associations in 43 countries and represents industries accounting for more than 90 per cent of the world's paper and more than 50 per cent of the world's wood production.

A3P CEO, Mr Neil Fisher, who represented members at the conference, reported that 'Australia's plantation products and paper industry has an important responsibility to promote sustainable development objectives worldwide.'

'We were proud to be part of a global industry taking the challenge of sustainable development seriously, through actions promoting sustainable forest management, addressing illegal logging and improving environmental practices.'