

BUILDING NEW ZEALAND IN WOOD

THE NZ WOOD MARKETING STRATEGY FIRST CAME TO OUR ATTENTION WHEN ITS BREATHING FORESTS APPEARED ON OUR TV SCREENS.

Now *NZ Wood* is coming home, with the appointment in August of its first chief executive officer, Jane Arnott. She works from the new ForestWood Centre shared by the Forest Owners and Wood Processors Associations on The Terrace in Wellington.

“Network PR have done a fantastic job of managing *NZ Wood* to date. But with the programme established and the industry strongly committed to it, it is time to bring it under our roof,” says Lees Seymour, chairman of the *NZ Wood* board.

In the Woodco strategic study, *Building a Stronger Future for Wood*, a cross section of industry players strongly supported the domestic promotion of wood, as well as the *NZ Wood* programme.

Promotion is a clarion call that’s also being heard internationally, with the Forest Stewardship Council general assembly in Malaysia last month endorsing a New Zealand motion calling for FSC-certified

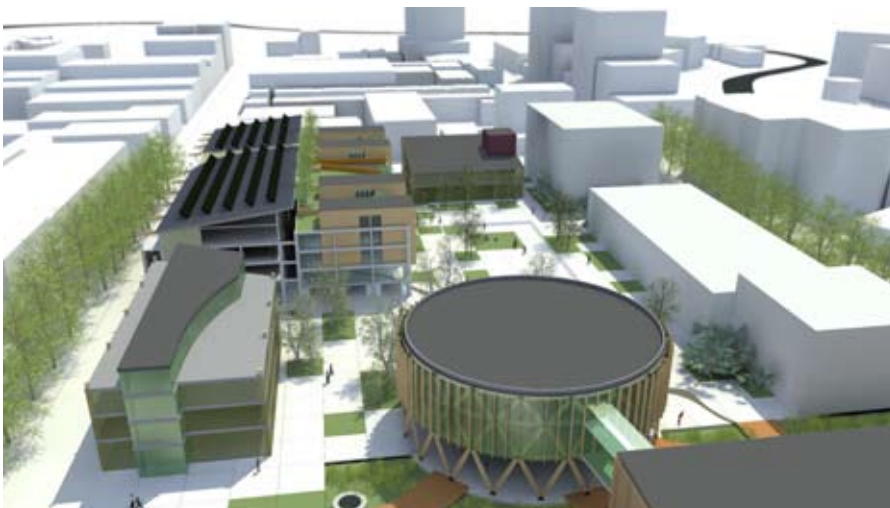
wood products to be promoted over competing construction materials. Plantation forestry is one of New Zealand’s most sustainable industries and around 60% of NZ plantation timber comes from FSC-certified forests.

In the lead up to Arnott’s appointment, *NZ Wood* hasn’t missed any opportunities.

It was gold sponsor of the NZ entry in the US-based solar decathlon (see *Forestry Bulletin*, Summer 2010). It also has the NZ Institute of Economic Research quantifying the importance of the industry to New Zealand – economically, socially and environmentally.

In June, a *NZ Wood* Design Advisory Centre team led by director Jason Guiver won the supreme award in a 48-hour design competition for the earthquake rebuild of the Christchurch CBD from 14 other teams. It also contributed to another entry which won the architectural award. Both awards involved engineered timbers and advanced designs.

“We have spent the last few years building a one-stop shop website for information on wood design and construction. This emphasis on providing good technical and design information will continue, but we will also put more emphasis back on our promotional activity,” says Seymour.



The NZ Wood vision for the Orion NZ site in Gloucester Street: The supreme winner of the 48-hour Christchurch rebuild design competition

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We need to know more about GE



“Some of this may be aimed at consumers, but there will be a strong focus on influencing the influencers.”

To this end, *NZ Wood* will be bringing Italian engineer Paolo Lavisici and English architect Andrew Waugh to New Zealand in September.

Lavisici’s firm won the contract to rebuild in wood much of the medieval Italian town of LAquila which was levelled in a devastating earthquake in 2009 that killed 308 people and left 65,000 of the town’s population of around 100,000 homeless.

Since then, the use of wood has taken off in Italy. “We have completed designs for six and eight storeys and are now designing for 12 storeys,” he says.

Waugh created the award-winning nine-story Stadthaus building in London using cross-laminated timber (CLT). Construction took 27 days for a crew of only four to complete once the foundations were in. At 30 metres high, it is the tallest modern timber residential building in the world.

Lavisici will be talking to wood processors and forest owners at the BNZ Forest Industries Conference in Rotorua on 7 September. But Lavisici and Waugh’s main role will be to influence engineers and architects at a series of seminars and talks in Wellington, Nelson, Christchurch and Dunedin.

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WORKING ON THE KNOWN KNOWNS

THE FORESTRY AND WOOD PROCESSING SECTOR IS EMBRACING A NUMBER OF INITIATIVES DESIGNED TO MAXIMISE ITS COORDINATION AND PERFORMANCE.

On 15 June the Wood Council of New Zealand (Woodco) released a study report, *Building a Stronger Future for Wood*, based on consultation with industry leaders during the previous six months. The report will be used as a guide for determining Woodco's strategic priorities, subject to the agreement of all players.

Strategising is an intriguing exercise for an industry that works on a cycle of at least 28 years between the initial investment by growers and the harvest of the crop. But having a strategic reference point is important for both the industry and its major stakeholders such as research providers and government. Indeed, several other primary industries have recently engaged in similar exercises with support and encouragement from our minister David Carter and MAF.

Like the pronouncements of soothsayers, strategies are limited by the life-changing variables that inevitably lie in waiting, among them Donald Rumsfeld's known unknowns and unknown unknowns.

How many strategic planners, even 10 years ago, would have been banking on New Zealand having an operational carbon market, a wood pellet industry profitably supplying a renewable energy market half a world away, the fall from grace of nuclear power, NZ being second only to Russia in terms of log exports to China, and seeing widespread looting and arson in England's major cities.

The Woodco report has therefore focused on those known knowns where there is the

incentive to try and chart a collective course. Some of these are already being worked on by the industry – indeed it would have been a concern if this wasn't so.

The report also highlights how important it is for the industry to carefully define its research and development priorities in order to achieve the best outcomes from its funding contribution. Prompted by the government's reordering of the science funding and delivery system, a Woodco RS&T committee developed strategies for both the growing and processing industries. First drafts of these strategies were developed at about the same time as the study report, with some work still to be completed.

Another theme that came through strongly was support for pan-industry promotion. It was widely considered that our good news stories need to be understood both outside and inside the sector. Some of the public is aware of what forestry offers in the way of CO₂-reduction, renewable energy,

marketing intelligence, greater bioenergy utilisation, infrastructure demands, interface with government and government policy coordination will be given greater consideration by the Woodco board over the coming year.

And of course, in considering where the effort is best-directed, questions arise as to how it is resourced, and where it is directed from.

Where practical the industry should speak with a common voice on key issues, with Woodco taking a greater leadership role. This is not to say that sector groups within the industry should apologise for having differing views from time to time when policy or other issues impact on them in starkly different ways. Nor does our industry stand alone in that respect.

There is an unequivocal message in the study that industry funding needs addressing. The model typically proposed is a commodity levy rather than the current series of voluntary levies. As well as a



Wood pellets and London riots: In 2001 these were unknown unknowns

renewable materials, and in the construction of earthquake resilient buildings. But most do not.

It is heartening that the flagship *NZ Wood* promotional programme, collectively financed by growers and processors, was strongly endorsed. Now it is successfully established, *NZ Wood* is being refocused by Woodco, with the appointment of a full-time chief executive (see front page).

Other value chain opportunities and challenges such as clear and consistent operating standards, cooperative

change in the mechanism, there is a widespread view that the issues being faced require a greater level of funding.

There are a variety of options available under a commodity levy. The point of collection of a levy or levies is critical, but equity and simplicity are not necessarily mutually compatible. Nonetheless, a more secure funding framework is needed for the future. So forest owners will be giving the options serious consideration during the coming months.

WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT MAY HAVE MERIT

FOREST OWNERS ARE ACTIVELY EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL FOR GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY TO JOINTLY MANAGE BIOSECURITY THREATS.

The government is encouraging the biological industries to sign GIAs (Government-Industry Agreements) to formalise the way biosecurity threats are handled. Those that take part will share decision-making as well as up to 50% of the costs of readiness (including surveillance and research) and the initial response.

“By working together, we can harness greater capability and capacity than either party can by working alone,” argues agriculture and forestry minister David Carter. He says the response to the kiwifruit disease PSA, while not subject to a formal government/industry agreement, was a very good example of this.

However, other observers have noted that the kiwifruit industry is paying a heavy price for not having a formal surveillance system and response plans in place for PSA, a disease that was well established in other countries. Hence Carter’s wish for more industry involvement in readiness and response activities.

For about 50 years the forest industry has had a pest and disease surveillance programme covering the forests of members and those non-members who choose to take part. For the last 20 of those years, the self-funded scheme has been run by the FOA. It’s a great example of industry taking ownership of its own biosecurity

FOA biosecurity committee chair David Balfour says that under a GIA, industries and MAF will jointly take a critical look at their surveillance programmes. Weaknesses will be identified and remedied.

While this is something the FOA and MAF have been doing for many years, he says there is a need for better surveillance of forests, woodlots and amenity plantings that don’t take part in the FOA scheme. He also expects the FOA’s current investment to be taken into account when the government calculates its share of the funding.

“A big advantage of the GIA is that we will be sharing the decision-making if there’s an exotic pest outbreak. Often those decisions will be highly political, especially if it involves spraying urban centres, which are often close to the main points of entry.”

The FOA has decided to continue negotiations with MAF on the shape a forestry GIA would take, while being mindful that there’s still a lot of water to go under the bridge before anything gets signed. The next step will be the development of a ‘value proposition’ for endorsement by the FOA and MAF.

A GIA consists of two parts: a deed signed by MAF and all participating industries, and individual operational agreements agreed between MAF and one or more industry parties. At 62 pages and growing, the draft deed is serious legal stuff.

Before an industry can sign such a deed, it must be able to show that it can fund its side of the bargain. This means forest owners would have to commit to a levy under either the Biosecurity or the Commodity Levy Acts. This would require the FOA to consult publicly with all forest owners.

Balfour points out that a Biosecurity Act levy would only kick in if there was an outbreak. MAF would initially fund the costs of eradication or containment, then seek recovery of the industry share through the levy.

“The government has undertaken to fund at least 50% of control costs, but in the case of forestry we expect government and other sectors will normally be picking up a bigger share than this,” he says.

“Most exotic insect pests are likely to attack a wide range of tree species, both native and exotic. And even if a pest or disease is specific to radiata, the social and environmental benefits of radiata plantings are significant. They are widely used for recreation, shelterbelts, sand dune stabilisation, water catchment protection, erosion control and so on.”

The government will amend the Biosecurity Act to provide for GIAs with a view to making them available for industries to sign from May 2012. The legislation is expected to go through parliament early next term.

In addition to the changes to readiness and response, changes will also be made to the way we manage pests and weeds that are established in New Zealand.

The amended Act will include a ‘good neighbour’ rule requiring the Crown to comply with regional pest management plans. This means the Crown, like private land owners, will have an obligation to control designated weeds and pests. This change will be welcomed by forest owners and farmers whose properties adjoin the conservation estate.



FOA biosecurity chair David Balfour: Better surveillance is needed in non-FOA forestry

The idea of a GIA comes from Australia where government and industry share response decision-making and costs. On this side of the Tasman, the concept has been extended – with FOA encouragement – to include readiness, on the basis that early detection and preparedness have a huge bearing on whether an exotic pest can be cost-effectively controlled.

NEW FOA OFFICE

The FOA, Farm Forestry Association, NZ Institute of Forestry, NZ Wood, Wood Processors Association and Woodco moved into smart new premises at the end of the first week in August. The offices, in the aptly named ForestWood Centre, are only a few doors south (and on the same side of the road) as the FOA’s long-standing former offices on The Terrace. Please note that while the FOA’s mail address has also changed, phone numbers and email addresses stay the same.

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GOOD SCIENCE AND THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

THERE'S AN AIR OF EXCITEMENT AT THE FOA AS IT BRINGS TOGETHER THE MULTIPLE STRANDS THAT WILL DRIVE THE SCIENCE AND INNOVATION NEEDED TO SECURE THE INDUSTRY'S FUTURE.

“There’s huge potential to make our forests much more productive and profitable. The thrilling thing is that we are now in a position to grasp that opportunity,” says research committee chair Peter Clark.

Radical government reforms to crown research institutes have helped set the scene for progress. As has a new willingness among most major forest industry players to dig deeper to support science that meets the industry’s needs and achieves results.

Indeed, it’s not just the growers who are on side.

In the Forest Industry Strategic Study released by Woodco in June a cross section of leading forest owners and wood processors say they support an increase in funding for research and development across the value chain. Naturally enough, they want that spend to be better aligned to the industry’s needs than what they’ve been getting.

One respondent to the study put it succinctly – research needs to “look at the whole value chain, starting with tree genetics and providing wood that processors want and hence products that consumers want.”

It’s a philosophy that is a major driver in the FOA’s Science & Innovation Plan approved in June. The plan says growers

want to produce, at the lowest possible delivered cost, a consistent and superior raw material that will enhance the solid wood processing sector’s processing efficiency and profitability.

But the underlying vision is to significantly improve forest profitability. Forestry has recently become more profitable, but compared with competing countries its costs remain high and productivity is lower than it should be. Even with current prices, some forests on steep remote country are uneconomic to harvest.

To make the industry more competitive, the vision is that per-hectare productivity will be doubled. Wood quality will be improved. Trees will have increased resistance to pests and diseases, including those not yet present in New Zealand.

In order to achieve this, the FOA wants research to be focussed in three key areas:

- Increasing stand productivity by producing better wood from faster growing trees. This includes biosecurity research focused on the foliar diseases which cost growers dearly (see panel page 5).
- Reducing the costs of production, especially harvesting costs.
- Evaluating new revenue streams and ensuring a licence to operate by addressing environmental issues such as herbicide use.

Forest owners are also loud and clear with their wish for greatly improved communication between researchers and stakeholders. Forest managers need to better understand existing research findings, especially the impacts of silviculture on wood quality. And the New Zealand public and overseas markets need to be made aware of the wealth of environmental research that demonstrates the sustainable nature of well-managed forests.

Clark says he expects researchers to spend more time with the industry getting the message across now the government has given the CRIs greater funding certainty.

Under the new CRI regime, what the industry wants it is more likely to get. Instead of being accountable to science bureaucrats, CRI scientists will be accountable to their managers and ultimately to their sector. This means forest owners are more likely to get research that delivers them value – the sort of research they’re willing to fund.

“The government stumps up 86% of the \$21 million that goes into forest growing science each year. The total sum and the industry contribution is small relative to other major industries,” says Clark.

“This is partly because forestry offers a lot of social and environmental benefits that don’t deliver a financial return to the forest owner. But nevertheless we will be in a weak position negotiating for more funding from the Ministry of Science and Innovation if we aren’t willing to fund a bigger share.”

In fact, he expects the ministry to respond positively when the industry next year puts forward a new business case and funding strategy for post-2013 forest growing research when current government funding contracts expire.

“Forestry will inevitably play an important part in the government’s plan to treble the value of the country’s exports over 15 years. Markets want our wood, demand is expected to keep growing and production from existing forests will increase markedly as first-rotation crops planted in the 1990s reach maturity.”

In addition, forest owners see a big potential to increase the productivity of these forests. This means growing better wood, harvesting more of it, and doing it more efficiently.

Industry leaders conservatively estimate that a productivity increase of 5 m³/ha/yr can be achieved over the next 10 to 15



FOA research chair Peter Clark:
Big opportunities if we dig a little deeper



The science spend will be better aligned to the industry’s needs

years, simply by applying existing knowledge more effectively. Applied across the 1.6 million ha radiata pine estate this would mean 8.1 million more cubic metres a year and a potential \$1 billion/yr increase in export earnings.

In the view of Clark and his fellow research committee members, if you put a well-focused and properly resourced science and innovation programme in place, the sky's the limit. The long-term FOA target is to increase productivity from an average of 20 m³/ha/yr for forests harvested today to 40 m³/ha/yr for forests planted from 2035.

Next steps

With its Science and Innovation Plan now approved, the FOA is considering how to best execute the plan. The Radiata Pine Breeding Company, Future Forest Research, Forest Biosecurity Council and the Solid Wood Initiative are among the conduits through which the research could be directed.

More:

NZ Forestry Science & innovation Plan: <http://tinyurl.com/3bm3y3e>
Science gets a shake-up: Forestry Bulletin, Winter 2010

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Inevitably, seeing Christchurch rebuilt in wood is a major objective. Guiver says Lavischi and Waugh will be there for two days, seeing the red zone for themselves and meeting key influencers.

“There is an awful lot of talk in Christchurch in the aftermath of the quakes that wood is good and concrete bad. When the public thinks like this, it obviously influences builders, architects and developers,” he says.

“They in turn need the resources and confidence to build commercial buildings in wood – which is where the NZ Wood Design Centre comes in.”

Guiver says there are a lot of wood-rich apartment and commercial buildings on the drawing boards for Christchurch, with some substantial developments already with the architects. When the developers go public with their plans, forest owners will be able to take some pride that through NZ Wood they have influenced the rebuild of one of New Zealand's most beautiful cities.

For more about the Woodco Christchurch Design: <http://tinyurl.com/3m4xrz3>

GE TREES – A KEY TO GREATER SUSTAINABILITY?



Eucalypt harvesting in Brazil: Eucalypts have been modified to produce less lignin and more cellulose, making them potentially much more efficient – both economically and environmentally

MORE RESEARCH IS NEEDED INTO THE POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH GENETICALLY ENGINEERED (GE) PLANTATION TREES.

“Forestry around the world faces some major challenges that will not be easily solved using conventional crop breeding and management techniques,” says FOA senior policy analyst Glen Mackie.

“In New Zealand we want an effective way to eliminate wildlings and we want the wood properties of our trees to better meet the needs of manufacturers. Also, we want to reduce our use of persistent agrichemicals at a time when there appears to be an accelerating global spread of major plant diseases, weeds and pests.”

GE may have the potential to solve these and other challenges. But then again it may not. No-one can answer definitely because funding of GE research in New Zealand forestry has been constrained by public opinion and opposition from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

“We need to investigate the risks and benefits that would arise from planting GE trees. Then, and only then, can we have an informed debate on whether their commercialisation would be a sensible idea,” he says.

FOA environmental committee chair Peter Weir says a motion from Brazil, supported by the NZFOA, calling for more research into the risks and benefits of GE in forestry failed to win majority support at the FSC general assembly in Malaysia in July.

“There was strong opposition to the motion from the social chamber and division in the economic chamber so we

expect the debate has a long way to run,” he says.

“Higher productivity from plantations is economically and environmentally essential. The area of land available for forestry is limited and the demand for the products and services provided by forests keeps growing – so we need to make every hectare of plantation forest as productive as we can, without sacrificing sustainability.”

The FSC currently prohibits the use of GE trees in certified forests and there is no world trade in genetically modified lumber. But research in many countries including the United States and Brazil has advanced significantly in the last decade, particularly with fast-growing poplars, willows and eucalypts modified to produce less lignin and more cellulose.

When the GE eucalypts are grown for liquid biofuels, as much as 99% of plant sugar can be extracted compared with around 50% for unmodified trees. When grown for paper, less energy and fewer chemicals are needed to extract higher yields of pulp.

The FOA's Science & Innovation Plan encourages the government to support the application of intragenic GE, which would get around some of the traditional concerns associated with GE. Intragenics involves the manipulation of genes from the same or a closely-related species, as distinct from transgenics which involves the manipulation and transfer of genes from unrelated species.

RESEARCH

FORESTS, PRODUCTS & INNOVATION

Scion's 2011 Statement of Corporate Intent (SCI) was approved by its shareholding ministers Wayne Mapp and Bill English on 30 June.

This requires Scion to partner with key stakeholders to drive innovation and growth in the forestry, wood and biomaterial sectors, to create economic value and contribute to beneficial environmental and social outcomes for New Zealand.

Chief executive Warren Parker says Scion consulted with more than 80 stakeholders before drafting the SCI. After taking into account the FOA's new Science and Innovation Plan and its wood processing counterpart, it was decided that the future focus of Scion's science and innovation would be to:

1. Maximise the value and productivity of commercial forestry.
2. Improve the competitiveness of the solid wood processing industry.
3. Expand opportunities in the wood fibre, biopolymer and biochemical industries.
4. Improve NZ's preparedness for biosecurity incursions, fire and climate change.
5. Ensure NZ forest industries' licence to operate



Scion chief executive Warren Parker

domestically and internationally and enhance environmental performance.

6. Increase NZ's energy security through the expanded utilisation of forest biomass for energy.

"We also reviewed our brand proposition and the SCI is the first document to carry the new tagline *forests products. innovation.* It conveys first and foremost that we are involved in the forest industry and the success of its businesses," says Parker.

Significantly, as a result of the government's 2010 CRI Taskforce Review, Scion will for the first time be allocated core funding of \$17.7m, or about one-third of its income, in the 2011-12 financial year. This will support longer-term and applied science programmes in the six key focus areas.

"The SCI ushers in an exciting new era for Scion – I look forward to working with our forest industry partners to bring our shared aspirations to fruition."

David Rhodes, chair of the Woodco RS&T committee, welcomes this collaboration: "It is critical for the industry and our key CRI to have a common vision and agreed priorities. I also welcome the close communications that Scion is continuing to maintain with us."

More about the SCI: <http://tinyurl.com/3b5v74s>

ENVIRONMENT

NES NEEDS BIG CHANGES

THE PROPOSED NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARD FOR PLANTATION FORESTRY NEEDS MAJOR CHANGES BEFORE IT WILL BE SUPPORTED BY FOREST OWNERS.



Sally Strang: The same issues are being relitigated in district after district.

"We strongly accept the objectives of the standard, but the current draft contains restrictions that our members cannot support," says FOA chief

executive David Rhodes.

When the draft NES was developed, the FOA understood it would be broadly consistent with the status quo. There would

have been some tightening of rules in regions where they are permissive and some relaxing in regions where they are unduly stringent.

"We were therefore very disappointed to find that the NES will make some regulations considerably tighter in all regions. This means more consents, more regulatory cost and less certainty for our members," says Rhodes.

"On this basis the NES fails the cost-benefit criteria that it must meet under the Resource Management Act (RMA). It also flies in the face of evidence that good environmental outcomes are being achieved in regions where rules are relatively relaxed," he says.

The FOA has recommended there should be 27 changes to the current draft. Key among these is the need for land owners to have certainty that in 30 or more years time that they will be able to harvest a forest they plant today. To achieve this, the default status for all routine forest activities must be 'controlled'. Controlled status allows all RMA issues to be addressed, ensuring good environmental outcomes while providing certainty to forest owners.

The only exception should be 'red zone' areas where afforestation should not be permitted because of the environmental risks. Replanting in this zone should, however, be permitted subject to conditions.

There is also a need for a straight-forward process for correcting inaccuracies on erosion risk maps.

Despite these and other concerns, the FOA remains supportive of the concept of an NES and believes the issues raised in its submission can be resolved.

Members are now engaged in the development of second generation district and regional plans in many parts of the country. This is imposing a significant drain on their resources as the same issues are often relitigated in district after district – a process which is both inefficient and costly says FOA environment committee member Sally Strang.

"In our view, settling on one set of pragmatic and consistent rules via an NES would offer enormous benefits for all involved."

Read the full submission: <http://tiny.cc/igrtq>

BIOSECURITY

IRONING OUT THE BUGS

EARLIER THIS YEAR THE FOA BREATHED NEW LIFE INTO ITS BIOSECURITY RESEARCH STRATEGY.



Some diseases are already costing millions: One of these, cyclaneusma needle cast, is shown here in Scots pine in the United States

Three committees dealing with biosecurity and forest health issues were merged into one. High priority was given to finding solutions for foliar diseases and disorders that cost radiata and Douglas-fir growers about \$150 million a year. These include dothistroma, cyclaneusma, physiological needle blight and red needlecast.

David Balfour, chairman of the Forest Biosecurity Committee, says he also wants to see New Zealand working with other radiata pine growing countries to find effective solutions to major diseases that we don't yet have, such as pine pitch canker, Dano foliar pini (DFP) and western gall rust.

By focusing a properly-funded research effort on key priorities, he says there's a better chance of finding solutions that result in improved forest productivity and profitability. Also, by having healthier forests there will be less likelihood that markets will put up trade barriers based on biosecurity concerns.

Biosecurity threats to New Zealand's primary industries could potentially cost the economy billions of dollars, even where the threats are more perceived than real. Already, for example, Australia has bans on green logs and lumber from areas known to

have *Phytophthora kernoviae* – thought to be a New Zealand native – even though the risk to their forests is likely to be near-zero.

“We need science to assess and reduce biosecurity risks to our forest products trade, including the risks associated with the perceptions and fears that can arise in the absence of scientific fact,” Balfour says.

Fumigation with methyl bromide is used to reduce these risks, but it is being phased out internationally. The strategy therefore emphasises the need for continued funding of STIMBR (Stakeholders in Methyl Bromide Reduction) and the search for alternative treatments.

Balfour says the FOA is working closely with MAF, research providers and other stakeholders to implement the strategy as quickly as possible.

“Robust solutions for the foliar diseases and conditions that are costing the industry dearly are likely to be difficult and time-consuming to develop,” he says.

“However there are some potentially less expensive solutions that could be explored short-term, including endophytes and other beneficial organisms. These are widely used in both pastoral agriculture and horticulture. Selective breeding for resistance, possibly based on the metabolic profiling of superior breeds and clones, also has potential.”

The biosecurity research strategy has strong links to both the government's GIA initiative (page 3) as well as the forest industry's wider research strategy (page 4).



A bug we need to be prepared for: Branch and stem galls caused by western gall rust, *E. harknessii*, on a young lodgepole pine in Canada

SAFETY

STONERS NOT WANTED

NEW TESTS FOR SYNTHETIC CANNABIS ABUSE ARE NOW BEING USED AS PART OF ROUTINE WORKPLACE DRUG AND ALCOHOL TESTING IN NEW ZEALAND FORESTS.

FOA senior policy analyst Glen Mackie says forest owners and contractors are legally bound as employers to ‘take all practicable steps’ to ensure that everyone working for them is safe.

“Since almost all work in forestry is safety-sensitive, workers must not be affected by drugs or alcohol when they are on the job. It is irrelevant whether the drug is legal or not.”

He says the forest industry has been reducing the number of serious harm injuries per million hours worked. Worker training and certification, machinery design and systems improvements have all played their part. But a Drug and Alcohol-Free Workplace Policy is key.

“Our workforce has been very positive to the adoption of random drug and alcohol testing. They have taken ownership of their clean workplaces,” Mackie says.

“Workers who have drug and alcohol habits are offered rehabilitation, followed by frequent random testing to ensure they are not impaired. It's their choice whether to clean up their act or to leave the industry. But it is pleasing to see many people break their habits.”

In the last 12 months synthetic cannabinoids like Kronic, K2, Spice and Aroma have become popular recreational drugs, yet tests for them have only recently become available. Although they are likely to be outlawed next parliamentary term, and their sale has been banned, for the meantime personal use is legal.

Kirk Hardy of the NZ Drug Detection Agency says synthetic cannabis mimics the effects of traditional cannabis, but is much more potent. He likens it to alcohol – another legal drug – that has no place in a safety-sensitive workplace.

Mackie agrees. The new tests for synthetic cannabis will soon be incorporated into the FOA's Drug and Alcohol Code of Practice.

IN THE NEWS

MATARIKI WARMS CANTERBURY



Matariki's Darren Mann (second from left) and other Christchurch firewood 'legends'

Rayonier Matariki Forests has been praised by the on-line community for giving free firewood to those hit hardest by the Christchurch earthquakes.

"When the last major quake knocked out power to much of the city, we realised we needed to step in and give whatever we could to make sure residents had a way of heating their homes," says Rayonier Matariki Canterbury regional manager Darren Mann.

A story in The Press about Rayonier Matariki's generosity triggered eight positive comments on Stuff, with 'Jo' saying, "You guys are legends - typical kiwi kindness plain and simple - good on you!"

'Ian' said, "This is fantastic, thank you so much. There are some individuals and companies out there doing a wonderful job of supporting Canterbury people at this time and good to see some recognition for them."

LUMBERJACKS FOR A DAY



Pretending he's in the bush

This year, for the first time, finalists in the Young Farmer of the Year Contest had to show they had mastered some forestry skills. At Masterton's Solway Showgrounds the seven finalists had 45 minutes to get into their safety gear, assemble a chainsaw, mark up logs into 3 metre lengths, cut them without splitting or slabbing, transfer the logs to a stack with a 14 tonne digger and then scale them, says Jamie Falloon of Forest Enterprises Ltd (FEL).

The module was organised by FEL in the spirit of the International Year of Forests, with help from Greater Wellington Regional Council, local logger Dave Bashford and Hiremax which supplied the digger.

NEW HI-VIZ SPECS

The forest industry has developed new technical guidelines for manufacturers of the hi-viz clothing used in the industry. Specifications are on the FOA website.

The guidelines have been modified to reflect the latest standards. Clothing already approved does not need to be retested. The new testing agency is the NZ Wool Testing Authority. Former provider AgResearch no longer provides a testing service.

NEW WORLD IN WOOD

The 2012 ForestWood Conference, *A New World in Wood*, will have three session themes.

The first, *The new world in which we live*, will traverse the unfolding political, scientific and financial factors that influence the businesses of forest owners and wood processors.

The second will emphasise why new forests and wood product technologies are so important for the sector to contribute fully to NZ's environmental, social and economic wellbeing. During this session the industry will unveil its strategy to grow the sector, both domestically and internationally, and consider approaches undertaken elsewhere.

The third session is *Seismic Shifts: Shifts in new energy, new technology and emerging market expectations*. This session will close with a focus on the government's potential to facilitate industry growth through policy leadership, streamlining regulation and creating supportive regulatory frameworks in areas such as bio-energy and construction.

ForestWood 2012 is being held at Te Papa, Wellington, on 21 March. For more information: www.forestwood.org.nz

FOA AGM

The 2011 Annual General Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 11 October. Official notification of the date will be distributed to members shortly.