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Australia boosts Timber plantations with AU$73 million in grants

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Australia is strengthening country's sustainable timber supply, with $73.76 million in federal grants to establish new forestry plantations.

The Support Plantation Establishment program will provide grant funding over four years to help establish new long-rotation softwood and hardwood plantation forests. The program will seek to establish up to 36,000 hectares of new plantation across Australia.

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Murray Watt said the program further emphasises the Albanese Governmentâ??s commitment to supporting the forestry industry and regional communities, while reducing our carbon footprint.

â??The Albanese Government has delivered the most significant forest industry support package in Australiaâ??s history, investing over $300 million to help improve the capacity and capability of the sector,â? Minister Watt said.

"By stimulating new growth in Australia's plantation forest estate, we are helping meet future demand for timber, increasing our carbon stocks, creating regional employment opportunities, and building a sustainable and prosperous future while meeting our climate emissions reduction commitments.

â??Under the previous Coalition Government, the size of Australiaâ??s plantation forest estate declined, and estimates predict a shortfall of 3.4 million m^3 in 2050 between domestic production and demand for softwood sawlogsâ??we have acted

to prevent that from happening.â?•

Australian Forest Products Association Acting CEO Natasa Sikman acknowledged the importance of the grants to the future of Australian forestry.

â??AFPA welcomes this stimulus to drive the planting of more and much needed timber production trees to help secure Australiaâ??s sovereign capability in timber and wood fibre supply, while helping Australia fight climate change and underpin regional jobs in key areas,â?• Ms Sikman said.

The grants are open to private industry, First Nations businesses, farm foresters, and state and territory government forestry bodies.

Applicants are required to provide a co-contribution at least equal to the grant amount awarded. This can be demonstrated by the value of the land the new plantation forests will be established on, financial means, or state, territory, or local grant funding.

The Albanese Government will provide funding of $2,000 (GST exclusive) per 1 hectare of new long-rotation plantation forest established, with a minimum plantation area of 20 hectares to be eligible for a grant.