

producing and consuming countries, aimed at securing a well-conducted and environmentally sound timber trade through cooperation," he said.

ITTO had recently issued guidelines for establishing the tropical timber trade on a sustainable basis by the year 2000, with a mechanism for consuming countries to assist producers to meet this target.

"Membership of the organisation also provides a chance for New Zealand's experience and technology in both conservation and production forestry to contribute toward achievement of the global goal," said the Minister.

ITTO was established in 1983 to promote trade in tropical timber, through research and development and improved market intelligence.

"Since 1983 the rate of tropical deforestation has risen sharply and is now estimated at 19 million hectares a year.

"As a result, ITTO has swung behind development of national policies for sustainable utilisation and conservation of tropical forests and their genetic resources, and maintenance of the ecological balance," said Mr Falloon.

## Forestry honour for NZIF member

Dr Dennis Richardson is the first New Zealander to be awarded honorary membership of the Society of American Forestry.

The Society is the largest forestry society in the world. Usually one honorary membership is awarded a year to a forester outside the United States, Canada or Mexico.

A New Zealander has never been selected before and no memberships were awarded last year.

Dr Richardson said he found out his name had been put forward for consideration about two years ago.

"I had forgotten about it until I received the letter the other day."

### His Specialty

Dr Richardson said most of his work is done overseas as he specialises in tropical forestry. He has written two books on forestry in China and recently gave lectures in North America on China.

The official presentation will be held in Virginia at the end of October. Dr Richardson said he would most probably attend as it was such an honour and he was "chuffed".

(See Page 3, Waiting for Waitangi.)

# Forest products review

Dr Margriet Theron\*

Forest products is a key industry, supplying the country with virtually all its timber requirements and currently earning over \$1.5 billion yearly in overseas exchange. A review of the research that is being undertaken in the sector says that despite New Zealand's impressive advantages in forestry, forest industries still face a major challenge in actually realising the sector's full potential as a key New Zealand industry.

An independent review report just released by the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology says that the forestry sector stands at a crossroad between becoming a supplier of lower-value forest commodities such as logs and sawn lumber, or becoming a significant player in the international market for higher-valued softwood products.

Ministry of Research, Science and Technology Chief Executive Dr Basil Walker said that over the next decade the forestry sector had the potential to increase its annual foreign exchange earnings to over \$3 billion.

"The sector has a major challenge ahead to achieve its full potential. An essential component in the mix required to achieve this is a substantial and focused research effort by both the Government and industry," said Dr Walker.

The review facilitated by the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology, covers all New Zealand's government-funded forest products research. It includes new and improved processing and quality management methods and wood and paper products.

The report states that around \$31 million is spent each year on research in the forestry sector. Of this, approximately \$16 million is spent on plantation forestry research and \$15 million on forest products research. Of the \$15 million spent on forest products research, around \$7.5 million is spent by commercial firms and \$7.5 million is funded from the Government's public good science fund.

The report states that a recent strategy report by the Forest Industries Council has recognised the two most important issues facing New Zealand's forest industries:

- 1 The need for an industry strategy and associated action programme involving the cooperation of all par-

ticipants working for the common good of the whole sector and

- 2 The need for the whole forestry sector to recognise and support fully the pivotal role of the sawmilling industry. While various alternative development paths are recognised for the sector, the greatest impediment to collective industry growth is seen to be the lack of a strong, vibrant, innovative, internationally focused sawmilling industry.

The review team also noted that the New Zealand Forestry Research Institute (formerly the Forest Research Institute) is an internationally recognised centre of excellence for forestry and forest products research. It says that the various research organisations and the universities also have considerable forest products research capabilities and it is imperative that close links are maintained between scientists and engineers at the Institute and those in other organisations.

The report also notes that there is a persuasive argument for a major injection of funds into forest products research over the next decade and for this additional research to focus, to a large extent, on the solid wood industry. It says that this will require a commitment by both Government and industry to bolster the effort across the whole spectrum, from fundamental studies into wood properties to product development and marketing research.

The members of the review team were: Barry Ashwin, Technical Director, Fletcher Challenge Ltd; Dr Frank Beall, Professor and Director, Forest Products Laboratory, University of California at Berkeley; Dr David Bryant, General Manager, Scientific Services, Carter Holt Harvey; Dr Gordon Leary, Director, DSIR Chemistry; Mr John Turner, Director, Forestry Industry Services Ltd, Auckland.

### SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

- Sawmills provide the residues vital to the maintenance of competitive fibre-based forestry industries, and consequently, a vibrant and internationally focused sawmilling industry is pivotal to the future competitiveness of the whole forestry sector. Achieving this will require investment, and a research effort focusing on the needs of this industry and involving close collaboration between Government and industry.

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