

Timber tech

A "powerful" new tool has been developed to provide greater resource control for forest managers.

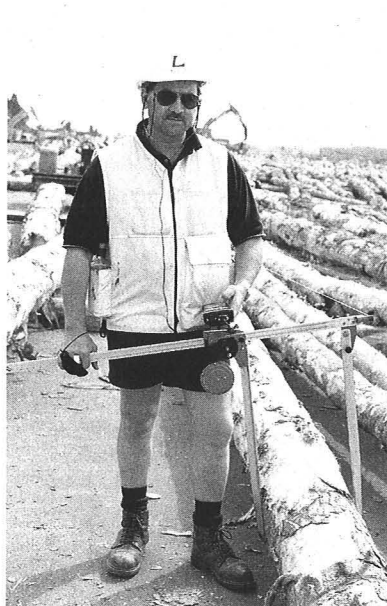
The Timber Tech Logger tool has been developed jointly by Interpine Forest Research Technologies Ltd, a joint venture between private company Interpine Forestry Ltd and New Zealand Forest Research Institute Ltd.

The tool is an electronic caliper which is used by logmaker technicians to more closely match orders from customers to logs in the yard, providing a concept of stem optimisation. Descriptions of the log grades which have been ordered by customers, their values and any volume limitations on those orders are entered in a central computer.

In the log yard, the logmaker walks along the stem and enters a description of the log into the computer. At the top of the log, the computer runs



The Fletcher Challenge Forests Ltd central processing yard at Murupara.



Timber Tech provides forest managers with a powerful new tool.

through all the possible combinations of logs that the stem could be cut into and gives an optimal solution ensuring the best return to the forest owner. The logmaker technician then walks down the stem marking out where logs should best be cut according to that solution.

Interpine director Mike King says one of the most valuable parts of the exercise, which wasn't initially appreciated, was the data the computer stores.

This data includes harvest production information characteristics of lines of logs, information on log inventory quantities and movement.

"You also have a stem-by-stem description of your forest. This allows managers to establish a profile of the site where the logs came from so that they can run a series of re-cuts of the data to find out, say, if they could sell this or that log, how much money could they get out of it and what to do with the rest."

King says this ability to "mix and match" logs to markets puts forest managers in an extraordinarily powerful position of resource management. "The system would be one of the biggest step changes since the chainsaw took over from the axe," King says. "The whole culture of stem management is changing as a result, and the way the harvesting and marketing of our forests is done is changing due to this type of system."

Fletcher Challenge Forests Ltd is implementing the Timber Tech system in its central processing yards and Carter Holt Harvey Forests Ltd and New Zealand Forest Managers Ltd have also purchased the system. CHHF aims to have all of its harvesting operations using it by the end of the year.

King says, the board sees the United States as the big fish to catch and the company has already been in the US talking with interested parties.

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