

Question on Notice

No. 890

Asked on 30 August 2022

MS J HOWARD ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES AND MINISTER FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

With reference to timber being in high demand— Will the Minister highlight some of the research the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries is carrying out and how this work is enhancing Queensland's reputation on the world stage?

ANSWER:

The forest and timber industry contributes over \$4 billion annually to Queensland's economy, which includes forest growing, processing, timber product manufacturing, and pulp and paper.

There are great opportunities for the industry in Queensland, as well as some important challenges. Queensland, like the rest of Australia, is currently facing extremely high demand for timber. This demand is outstripping domestic supply. The Palaszczuk Government's Native Timber Action Plan maps out a path to support native timber industry jobs and provide investment certainty for the sector.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) through Agri-Science Queensland is assisting the forest, timber and construction industries through targeted research, development and extension (RD&E).

DAF RD&E work is boosting productivity across forestry systems including nutrition research in plantation softwoods, silvicultural management of private native hardwood forests, and development of silvopastoral systems.

The silvopastoral Steak n' Wood project is facilitating the development of additional future forest resources and private native forests. Silvopasture systems provide additional benefits to both: the beef industry through shade and animal welfare, windbreaks, carbon offsets and alternative income from timber sales particularly during periods of drought; and the timber industry through greater access to new timber resources.

The DAF Forest Health Team is working to ensure the long-term viability of our forests by mitigating risks from exotic and endemic pests and diseases. This team is internationally recognised for their expertise, particularly with Myrtle Rust and *Phytophthora* that are threatening our native forests. This work ensures Queensland forests are managed to world's best practice, supporting a profitable and sustainable timber industry.

The DAF Forest Products Innovation Team at the Salisbury Research Facility is recognised as Australia's leading forest product research group. The team is pioneering the use of innovative technologies allowing underutilised sub-tropical logs to be processed with significant gains in product recovery and waste minimisation. This is allowing timber products to be manufactured from timber resources that were previously considered to have minimal value.

DAF is also a leader in engineered wood product RD&E and is working closely with industry and the university sector in Queensland, Australia and overseas to design products that will revolutionise the construction industry. These products target use of Queensland resources, are manufactured efficiently, and enable a greater range of feedstock qualities to be utilised. This not only facilitates new, innovative timber products, but also allows more products to be produced with the same log inputs.

Examples of adhesion projects that have advanced the Queensland industries are the high-performance bonding of softwood glulam beams which was instrumental in Hyne Timber investing in a new processing plant for commercial production. Current research is addressing the barriers to gluing high density hardwoods that are preventing processors across Queensland from producing high value hardwood glulam and laminated veneer lumber beams, and access to these lucrative markets.

DAF adaptation of new continuous drying technologies has enabled investment by major timber processors, Hyne Timber and AKD, to improve energy efficiency of drying processes and increase timber quality and straightness. Consequently, Hyne Timber invested \$15 million on a new continuous drying process that is achieving a 30 per cent saving in energy use and is leading to better wood quality with less timber distortion. The project has also supported 50 new jobs in the Maryborough district.

In addition, DAF invests \$378,000 per year to support collaboration with the University of the Sunshine Coast in pre-harvest forestry research. A further \$200,000 per year is invested in the Centre for Future Timber Structures (CFTS), a formal collaboration between DAF, the University of Queensland, prominent industry partners and other universities to support the adoption of medium- to high-rise timber construction. DAF is a lead research provider to the CFTS for mass timber panel RD&E, including cross laminated timber product development, manufacturing and performance testing through new mechanical properties methods, timber durability studies, and circular economy assessments.