

MEMBERS' BULLETIN

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Welcome

This *Members' Bulletin* is intended to keep you up-to-date with ATIF activities. This edition summarises ATIF's submission on the FWPA strategic direction, sets out some preliminary information on the 2020-2021 BMSB treatment season, and details correspondence with the Indonesian Ambassador related to SVLK legality verification certification.

Forest and Wood Products Australia (FWPA) strategic direction

As the second largest levy contributor to FWPA funding, and on behalf of the wholesaling and importing sector, in its submission to FWPA 2015-2020 strategic plan and future direction, ATIF has made suggestions about programs, priorities, future research, development and advocacy activities.

ATIF has indicated that the future strategic direction of FWPA must acknowledge the reality post the 2019-20 bush fires, and the challenges, already substantial, related to attracting investment in long rotation plantation establishment. Also, that it is essential for FWPA to continue to advocate the position that building and construction industries prefer timber products, both as fit-for-purpose, and as environmentally preferable product options.

ATIF's submission sets out details of future research, development and advocacy actions that would benefit the wholesaling and importing sector of the timber industry. These include:

1. Understanding market conditions, changing product preferences, demand levels and both domestic and international supply chains.
2. Identifying potential additional international supplies of both softwood and hardwood timber products that are fit-for-purpose and comply with Australia's statutory requirements and building codes and standards.
3. Appreciating the reality that the devaluation of the Australian dollar has had an adverse impact on supply and wholesale margins. Plus the related longer-term implications that when Australia needs additional timber volumes, suppliers may have already found other more profitable markets, and may therefore be reluctant to revert to again supplying the Australia market.

4. The need to put effort into international linkages with researchers and timber industry bodies involved in standards and building codes. ATIF considers that significant benefits would accrue to the timber industry supply chain if greater effort was directed at 'harmonizing' Australian standards with comparable other country specific standards.
5. In recognizing the benefits of permitting Australian builders to be able to use alternate sizes, initiate research directed at allowing other than presently mandated dimension structural softwood timber to be utilized for building and construction.
6. Examining the possibility of permitting timber grades to overseas standards, but still meeting the requirements of Australian standards and building code to be accepted in Australia.

Brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB) 2020-2021 season advanced notice

With Coronavirus restrictions this year the Department of Agriculture, Water Resources and Environment (DAWRE) will not be conducting industry workshops. DAWRE advises that the overall approach and policy will not change from the 2019-20 to 2020-21 season. DAWRE is anticipating only an increase in the list of target risk countries. DAWRE is hoping that by not changing the policy and only increasing the countries that this year is a lot smoother than last year.

In relation to additional countries DAWRE is looking at Europe and currently getting advice and intelligence relating to BMSB populations in the United Kingdom, Ukraine, Portugal, Poland and Moldova. No decision has yet been made as to which of these countries will be added to the high risk list, but they are all possible additions, if not for the 2020-21 season, sometime over the next five years.

DAWRE is currently working through an internal review and what the next season may look like country-wise, with the intention of publishing the new seasonal country list and measures by 1 June. This will be done via DAWRE Industry Notices, BMSB Newsletters and via industry contacts, including ATIF.

DAWRE is currently looking at the Safeguarding Arrangement policy. It is noted by DAWRE that two ATIF timber importing companies were included in the earliest approvals for Safeguarding Arrangements last year. Work is ongoing in relation to the BMSB treatment of Canadian timber and further advice will follow.

Queries about BMSB policy matters should be directed to: SPP@awe.gov.au

Indonesian SVLK legality verification certification

The ATIF Chairman Nils Koren has written to the Indonesian Ambassador Kristiarto Legowo, to bring to his attention concerns about reports that the Indonesian Government is considering amending or abolishing the national timber legality assurance system, Sistem Verifikasi Legalitas Kayu (SVLK).

ATIF is opposed to the removal, or any relaxation of the SVLK legality assurance scheme. ATIF has informed the Indonesian Ambassador that if removed it will be more challenging for Australian timber importers to continue to have confidence in Indonesian timber exporters.

ATIF is of the view that the SVLK scheme has worked well to date, and is recognised under Australia's *Illegal Logging Prohibition Act 2012* and the *Illegal Logging Prohibition Amendment Regulation 2012* as greatly assisting timber importers to complete their mandatory due diligence requirements under illegal logging legislation. Any moves to reduce the confidence Australian timber importers have in the legally-sourced credentials of Indonesian timber would be a serious backward step.

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