



## 5.6 Tree farming

Tree farming is an umbrella term used to describe the planting of trees to generate economic return and/or environmental benefits. It has been a rapidly emerging industry in a number of rural locations across the State. Usually this has involved the planting of trees for harvest. However, more recently the planting of trees for carbon sequestration has emerged as a new rural land use. Tree farming which involves harvesting is a primary production activity that also sequesters carbon. The different types of tree farms, i.e. integrated, chip logs or saw logs, require varied planning approaches.

WAPC policy in regard to tree farming is:

- (a) tree farming is supported and encouraged on rural land as a means of diversifying rural economies and providing economic and environmental benefit;
- (b) tree farming should generally not occur on priority agricultural land;
- (c) tree farming should generally be a permitted use on rural land, except where development of a tree farm would create an extreme or unacceptable bushfire risk or when responding to specific local circumstances as identified in a strategy or scheme;
- (d) local governments should manage the location, extent and application requirements for tree farming in their communities through local planning strategies, schemes and/or local planning policies;
- (e) in planning for tree farming, local government considerations should include but are not limited to, potential bushfire risk, environmental and economic factors, water availability and recharge,

visual landscape impacts, transport impacts of tree farming (where harvesting is proposed), planting thresholds, appropriate buffers, and location relative to conservation estates and sensitive land uses;

- (f) where tree farm proposals are integrated with farm management for the purpose of natural resource management and occupy no more than 10 per cent of the farm, the proposal should not require local government development approval; and
- (g) the establishment of tree farms does not warrant the creation of new or smaller rural lots.

## 5.7 Animal premises

Animal premises are important contributors to the food needs of Western Australia's residents and to the State's economy. In order to operate effectively they require ready access to consumers, access to services and freight, appropriate environmental or climatic conditions, and the ability to respond to changes in the market. As a result, animal premises are generally located in the vicinity of road, rail and port infrastructure and population centres. Relocation of existing animal premises away from approaching urban fronts will not be possible for all businesses, nor is it a reasonable expectation.

Many animal premises are subject to environmental regulation, but others, most notably poultry farms, are not. Where animal premises are not subject to environmental regulation, planning decision-makers may need to consider a broader range of environmental factors and resolve potential land use conflict.

WAPC policy in regard to animal premises is:

- (a) animal premises are a rural land use, and are generally supported and encouraged on rural land provided rural amenity and environmental impacts can be effectively managed;
- (b) animal premises that require large sites or buffers, and could limit existing or potential industrial land uses, should generally not be located in State strategic industrial areas or within their buffers;
- (c) expansion of existing animal premises may be supported where off-site impacts (such as odour, dust or noise) are mitigated or managed to achieve maintenance or reduction of impacts, in accordance with an accepted code of practice;
- (d) in addition to environmental issues, planning decision-makers must consider the following matters in assessing proposals –
  - (i) the staging of the proposal and ultimate design capacity;
  - (ii) the transport of animals to and from the site;
  - (iii) the handling and disposal of deceased or 'retired' animals on or off-site;
  - (iv) the transport, handling and/or disposal of animal feed and/or waste on or off-site;
  - (v) outdoor pens or roaming areas for animals;
  - (vi) the potential impacts of operating hours;
  - (vii) shed configuration, including rotation and/or automation;
  - (viii) servicing, including location and size of effluent disposal ponds; and



## Planning for tree farms

The desirability of tree farms varies considerably between local government areas. Community views regarding tree farms can be obtained and be incorporated into a strategy to provide future direction for this land use. Where there is community support, strategy considerations could include:

- the areas / districts in which tree farming is most suitable;
- whether tree farms can be used to address environmental management issues or provide screening/ improved landscapes;
- the use of tree farms as supplementary income for broadacre farmers; and
- tree farms as an economic development tool which may be combined with downstream processing.

*The Code of Practice for Timber Plantations in Western Australia (2006) sets out standards for plantation establishment and management. It contains information on environmental care, silviculture, harvesting and relevant legislation.*

In areas where climate change is making traditional farming operations unviable, tree farms for the purpose of carbon sequestration may provide a viable alternative.

SPP 2.5 supports tree farms in rural areas and promotes local government approval regimes that respond to community views and local circumstances. The approvals regime can be used to encourage or discourage some or all forms of tree farming.

Matters to consider in relation to approval requirements include:

- the type of tree farm – a tree farm that will be regularly harvested will have different impacts to a tree farm established for carbon sequestration;
- whether the land is general agriculture or priority agriculture – tree farms are generally not recommended on priority agricultural land;
- the type of trees being planted – this will affect integration with the local environment or bushfire risk;
- whether there is an adequate transport strategy if the crop is to be harvested; and
- whether there is a maximum size of tree crop allowed prior to development approval being required. As a guide, under the *Code of Practice for Timber Plantations in Western Australia* (2006) published by the Forest Industries Federation WA Inc., a plantation is designated as a stand of trees 10 hectares or larger.

### 8.1 Fire management

Fire control and bushfire risk is a planning consideration governed by *State Planning Policy 3.7 - Planning in Bushfire Prone Areas* (SPP 3.7). Some densely planted tree farms may have a substantially higher fire risk than broadacre crops, so the implications of locating tree farms close to fire sensitive land uses such as hay plants, State forests and residential development needs to be considered. Applications for a proposed tree farm should identify and address bushfire hazard as if it already existed, in accordance with SPP 3.7.

A Notification on Title to the effect that the land is within a bushfire prone area and may be subject to a Bushfire Management Plan should be a condition of approval. The Bushfire Management Plan should set out the short, medium and long term management strategies for the bushfire hazard and represent an ongoing commitment by the landowner/proponent or responsible authority to undertake bushfire risk management measures for the life of the development.

### 8.2 Environmental benefit

A benefit from tree farms is their potential to address environmental issues, such as salinity, soil erosion, land degradation, waterlogging and other natural resource management (NRM) matters by replacing the tree cover that was removed through past agricultural practices. Integrated tree farms, as discussed in Part 8.4 in particular, address NRM objectives.

Consultation with the local NRM organisation about identifying areas suitable for rehabilitation is recommended. In many cases these groups have undertaken extensive studies and research into local catchments.



### 8.3 Visual impact

Some tree farm proposals may improve landscape values by addressing land degradation or screening unsightly facilities such as quarries, abattoirs or strategic industrial areas. Other proposals, which may obscure particular landscape features, may be seen to detract from the natural or rural landscapes. If landscape protection is a matter of importance to the local community, it may be appropriate to consider limits on tree farms or excluding areas of high landscape values.

*When considering landscape provisions the WAPC's Visual Landscape Planning in Western Australia Manual (2007) is a recommended point of reference. For more information contact the Department of Planning.*

### 8.4 Integrated tree farming

Since integrated tree farms, as defined in SPP 2.5, are primarily established for NRM purposes and the tree crop is a secondary purpose, the policy position established in SPP 2.5 is that development approval should not be required for this land use. If required, it may be beneficial to establish a local planning policy or scheme amendment to clarify this.

Some of the matters to consider are:

- the species to be planted;
- the proposed width of the tree rows;
- whether the trees cover 10 percent or more of the farm's productive land area;
- whether the trees are on land previously under crop or pasture;
- whether the tree farm proposals are integrated into existing farm management; and
- whether it is intended to harvest the trees.