

Sustainable management of New Zealand's forests

The 2008 New Zealand Country Report on the Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators. MAF 2009.

Sustainable forestry in twelve countries - including New Zealand - is monitored by the Montreal Process. These twelve countries account for almost half the world's total forest area. "Criteria and Indicators" are assessed for each forest type and region.

The Montreal Process was founded on the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, which included the Principles for Forest Management and was signed by more than 178 countries. It includes the statements that:

...forest resources and forest land should be sustainably managed to meet the social, economic, ecological, cultural and spiritual needs of present and future generations.

and

The provision of timely, reliable and accurate information on forests and forest ecosystems is essential for public understanding and informed decision-making and should be ensured.

There are 7 Criteria and 64 Indicators, all of which have been painstakingly dealt with by the 2008 New Zealand Country Report. Why bother? What is the value for New Zealand of participating in this Process?

First, NZ must meet its international obligations and expectations. Second, we must demonstrate to our trading partners our very real commitment to sustainability - especially in our plantation forests. This gives us the moral authority to adopt an international stance on issues such as illegal logging in tropical countries. Third, we must not be so arrogant as to assume that everything is fine,

and will continue to be fine, in our small forestry universe (think of the recent catastrophic decline in planting rates). We need continual monitoring. Lastly, there is a need for ongoing public education about sustainable forest management.

For these reasons, MAF have put together an impressive 233-page book, superbly illustrated. It was released on 21 October 2009 and is available from MAF or in electronic form (<http://www.maf.govt.nz/mafnet/publications/2008-nz-report-montreal-process/index.htm>). It systematically analyses each indicator and records the trend. A green upwards-pointing triangle is good, whereas a red downward point is negative. Amber sideways arrows are neutral, and there are a number of question marks where we just do not know enough to make a definitive statement.

The report reads well. It makes one proud to be a New Zealander and also a forester in this beautiful country. As well as the explicit content, there is a subliminal message: one of which the authors may be innocently unaware. The message is that New Zealand has a dedicated and honest group of officials. If there is a negative trend, we show it. If we just don't know, we say so. Truth, when written clearly and honestly, is a hugely powerful force. (You would think that the Taleban, for example, when reporting on battlefield casualties would have learned this simple fact!).

Every forester who is interested in environmental issues is urged to acquire a copy of this publication, or at least to become aware of its existence. Well done, MAF!

Reviewed by the Editor

Indigena

The Indigena magazine is produced by the Indigenous Forest Section of the Farm Forestry Association.

This excellent, 28-page, quarterly magazine has a selection of articles regarding all aspects of indigenous forestry and ecology.

This is available for \$10.00 inc GST per copy plus postage or free if you become a member of the Farm Forestry Association and Indigenous section.



More details from www.nzffa.org.nz or contact Philip Smith, P.O Box 437 Taupo.