

The organisation of science

The Government has announced changes in the organisation of science:

- a Ministry of Research, Science and Technology will be established by October 1, 1989 to advise on national science policy, arrange science audits and "opportunity reviews";
- a Foundation for Research, Science and Technology will advise on broad science priorities;
- an Industry Innovation Fund will support innovative research based on proposals received from the wider community, including research co-operatives.
- a Co-operative Research Fund will sponsor research that is a joint effort between two or more university, Government or company groups.

The announcement does not make clear the relationship between the new Ministry and the Foundation, but it is assumed they will each report separately to the Minister of Research, Science and Technology. Functions of the Foundation, other than providing advice, have not been spelled out but presumably it will administer the two funds.

For the first time, there will be a Minister (not yet named) for national science policy who is not also the Minister in charge of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. The new Minister will chair a Cabinet Committee on Research, Science and Technology which will presumably assess funding priorities and recommend the level of funding for each science department.

These decisions leave aside the questions of university, health and social science research: apparently these are the subject of further deliberations.

The announcement, perhaps pointedly, says nothing specific on the crucial question of future funding levels. Government funding of forestry research seems to have taken a hammering compared to other sectors (we must wonder why, if the playing field is so level), and financial survival is of more immediate concern than the top-level organisation. The forestry sector has an irreplaceable research capability in the Forest Research Institute and it is important for the sector's future that FRI stays afloat.

While the future effects of the decisions remain to be seen, it is good that decisions have finally been made. They seem to mean that there will not be any radical restructuring of existing research organisations, that Government recognises that science is important to the eco-

nomy and to the life of the nation, and that Ministers accord it sufficient importance to take an active part in setting science policy. If this interpretation is correct, New Zealand science can per-

haps hope for a bit more certainty about its role and its future than it has had over recent years.

Colin Bassett

Forestry exports exceed \$1 billion

Forestry products exports broke the billion dollar mark during the year ended December 31, 1988, according to figures released by the Ministry of Forestry.

The total value of forestry products exported was \$NZ1096 million - an increase of 23.1 per cent over the figures for the December 1987 year. Forestry products exports now account for 8.4 per cent of New Zealand's total merchandise exports - up from 7.6 per cent in 1987.

Australia and Japan remain New Zealand's two largest forestry export markets. Australia bought \$449 million and Japan \$252 million of forestry exports. Exports to Australia rose by 39.2 per cent over 1987's figure of \$322 million, while those to Japan recorded a smaller rise of 8.0 per cent. The next most important market, Korea, nearly doubled in value, taking almost \$69 million worth of exports.

Better Prices

The jump in export figures was due to better world prices being received for wood pulp and newsprint, together with an improvement in the price being received for sawn timber in the Australian market during the year. Also contributing to the value increase were significantly higher volumes of log exports.

A 21.3 per cent increase in the value of New Zealand wood pulp exports helped contribute to the jump in total export value. This increase - a reflection of high global prices - also saw wood pulp exports increase by 6.4 per cent to 572,000 tonnes from 538,000 tonnes in 1987. Japan was New Zealand's single largest customer, taking nearly half (267,206 tonnes) of all wood pulp exports.

The improving demand for timber in

Australia towards the end of 1988 was primarily responsible for the rise of 20.7 per cent (to 461,000 cubic metres) in the volume of sawn timber exports. Sawn timber exports to Australia exhibited a marked rise in value of 64.2 per cent to \$NZ112 million, from the \$NZ68 million recorded in 1987. Australia was the largest buyer of New Zealand sawn timber, taking two-thirds (307,583 cubic metres) of the total export volume. The only other significant market for sawn timber was Japan.

Log Volumes

A big increase in the volumes of logs being exported also contributed to the value increase in the year. New Zealand exported 1,117,000 cubic metres of logs and poles (worth \$NZ102 million) last year, compared with 1987's figures of only 576,000 cubic metres (worth \$NZ56 million). Japan was New Zealand's largest buyer of logs, taking 589,855 cubic metres. South Korea followed, taking 338,969 cubic metres - up from 96,661 cubic metres in the previous year. China has also developed considerably as a market for New Zealand logs, taking 163,491 cubic metres in 1988, compared with only 8689 cubic metres in the December 1987 year.

Fibreboard

Fibreboard exports continued to increase, with a rise of 26.1 per cent to 190,000 cubic metres, earning \$NZ84 million. A marked fall was recorded in exports of plywood, down by 45.2 per cent to 10,085 cubic metres. Australia, Taiwan and Japan were again the biggest buyers of New Zealand panel products, together accounting for 72.1 per cent of the total volume of panel product exports.