Australian forest and wood products statistics

Production and trade to 2023-24

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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Foreword

ABARES Australian Forest and Wood Products Statistics (AFWPS) is a collection of data on key indicators of activity in the Australian forest and wood products sector. AFWPS is a joint initiative between ABARES and Forest and Wood Products Australia (FWPA) and ensures stakeholders have access to domestic production, trade and plantation estate data. The ultimate objective of AFWPS is to deliver unbiased, evidence-based forestry related analysis and statistics that can be used to inform industry and support forest policy development.

AFWPS includes information from a broad range of sources with many of the items being collected directly by ABARES as well as State and territory forest services, forest industry associations and private companies.

This Overview report presents 2023–24 data on key indicators of activity in the forestry sector and the report is supported by summary tables in Excel format and a Power BI data visualisation that provides users with an interactive dashboard to interrogate the data.

Value of logs harvested is the gross value of logs delivered to the mill door (or wharf gate) and excludes further processing or value adding. Values presented for exports and imports are ‘free on board’ (FOB) values at point where wood products are loaded on vessel for transport from/to Australian ports.

Time series charts are expressed in real terms (adjusted for inflation).

Summary

In 2023-24, the volume of logs harvested fell by 6.6% compared to 2022-23. This was primarily driven by smaller harvests of pulplogs from the hardwood plantation estate. The log price index for all logs also slightly decreased by 1.8% in nominal terms. Overall, this contributed to a reduction in the nominal GVP of total logs harvested by 6.4% to $2.26 billion in 2023-24 (10.2% decrease in real terms).

Table 1 Overview of Australia's forestry sector

	Unit	2023–24	% change from 2022–23 [a]
Volume of logs harvested			
Commercial plantation log harvest	million cubic metres	20.9	-6.5
Hardwood log harvest	million cubic metres	7.1	-15.9
Softwood log harvest	million cubic metres	13.7	-0.7
Native forest log harvest	million cubic metres	2.3	-7.5
Total logs harvested	million cubic metres	23.2	-6.6
Value of logs harvested			
Commercial plantation-logs harvested	$ million	2,010	-5.9 (-9.7)
Hardwood log harvest	$ million	656	-17.9 (-21.2)
Softwood log harvest	$ million	1,355	1.2 (-2.9)
Native forest-logs harvested [b]	$ million	246	-10.4 (-14.0)
Total value of logs harvested	$ billion	2.26	-6.4 (-10.2)
Plantation area			
Hardwood plantations	’000 hectares	674	-0.6
Softwood plantations	’000 hectares	1,010	0.2
Total plantation area [c]	’000 hectares	1,707	-0.1
Dwelling commencements			
House commencements	‘000	100	-9.6
Other residential commencements	‘000	59	-5.2
Total dwelling commencements	‘000	160	-8.2
Trade			
Total value of imported wood products	$ billion	6.5	-5.3 (-9.1)
Total value of exported wood products	$ billion	2.7	-2.0 (-5.9)

a Values in brackets are percentage changes in real terms (2023-24 dollars) to account for inflation.
b Includes native cypress pine logs.
c Total includes plantations where type in unknown.
Source: ABARES; ABS (2025a; 2025b; 2025c).

The volume of production from hardwood plantations decreased by 15.9% to 7.1 million m^3 in 2023-24. The gross value of production also decreased by 17.9% (21.2% in real terms) to $656 million. Most notably for hardwood plantation log harvest, the volume of hardwood woodchips for export decreased by 15.4% from 2022-23. These changes reflect developments in international woodchip markets with Australia facing increasing competition from Vietnam in our key export markets. Indeed, the value of exports of forest and wood products continued a declining trend with a reduction of 2.0% in nominal terms to $2.7 billion in 2023-24 (5.9% fall in real terms), with the majority of this decline attributed to reduced export values of Australian woodchips.

The volume of production from softwood plantations stayed relatively steady, only decreasing by 0.7% in 2023-24 compared to 2022-23. The gross value of production for the softwood plantation estate in 2023-24 was $1.36 billion, a 1.2% increase from 2022-23 (2.9% decrease in real terms). This steady value and volume of production was achieved despite an easing in housing market conditions in 2023-24. Declining import values and volumes were the main adjustment mechanism for reduced demand for structural and construction wood products, rather than a reduction in domestic production.

The volume of native harvests (including native cypress pine) decreased by 7.5% between 2022-23 and 2023-24 to 2.3 million m^3. Declines in harvest in Victoria and Western Australia due to the phase out of harvesting in public native harvests on 1 January 2024 had a limited effect on the 2023-24 production data, with VicForests ceasing a considerable portion of their harvest early due to legal challenges (VicForest 2023). Compared to 2021-22, when native harvest reached 3.5 million m^3, the volume has dropped by 33.0% over the past two financial years. The gross value of production for native harvest also decreased by 10.4% (14.0% in real terms) to $246 million between 2022-23 and 2023-24. Similarly, there was a significant fall from $372 million in 2021-22, a 33.8% drop (40.6% in real terms) when compared to 2023-24.

The rate of new plantation establishment eased in 2023-24 with 3,700 hectares of new plantations established (16.9% less when compared to 2022-23). The majority of these new plantations were softwood (3,500 hectares) with some hardwood plantation establishment (200 hectares). In 2023-24, the total area of commercial plantations was 1.71 million hectares, with 1.01 million hectares of softwood plantations and 0.67 million hectares of hardwood plantations, and the remainder of unknown species.

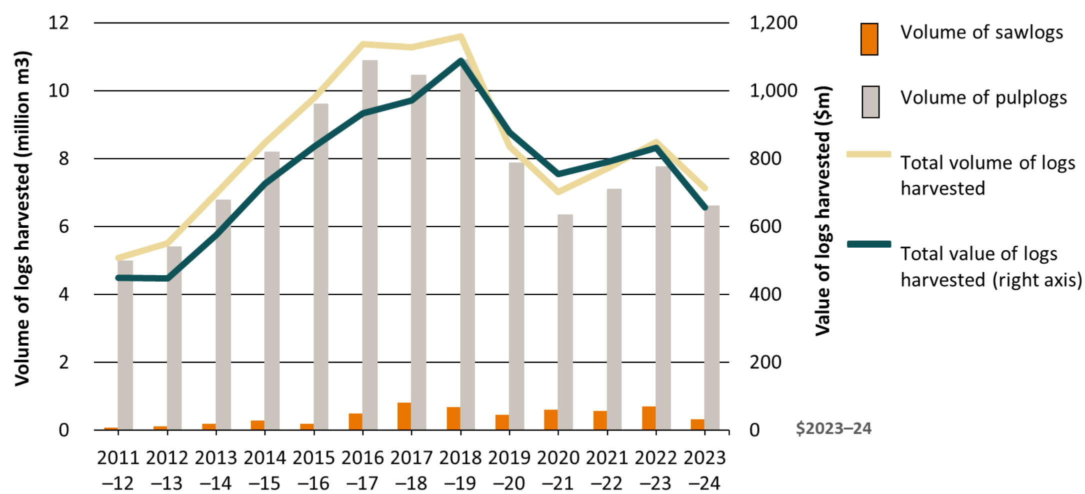
1 Plantation hardwood production affected by global woodchip market

In 2023-24, the volume of plantation hardwood log harvest decreased by 15.9% to 7.1 million m^3 compared to 2022-23, with the value of production declining slightly faster, by 17.9% (21.2% in real terms) to $656 million in 2023-24 (Figure 1).

Australia's hardwood planation estate is structured to supply woodchips to international markets. In 2023-24, 87% of hardwood plantation logs harvested were pulplogs intended for export as woodchips.

The value and volume of production from Australia's hardwood plantation estate have been declining sharply since 2018-19. While the economic disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic marked the start of this decline, exports of hardwood woodchips have not recovered to pre-pandemic levels and continue to decline.

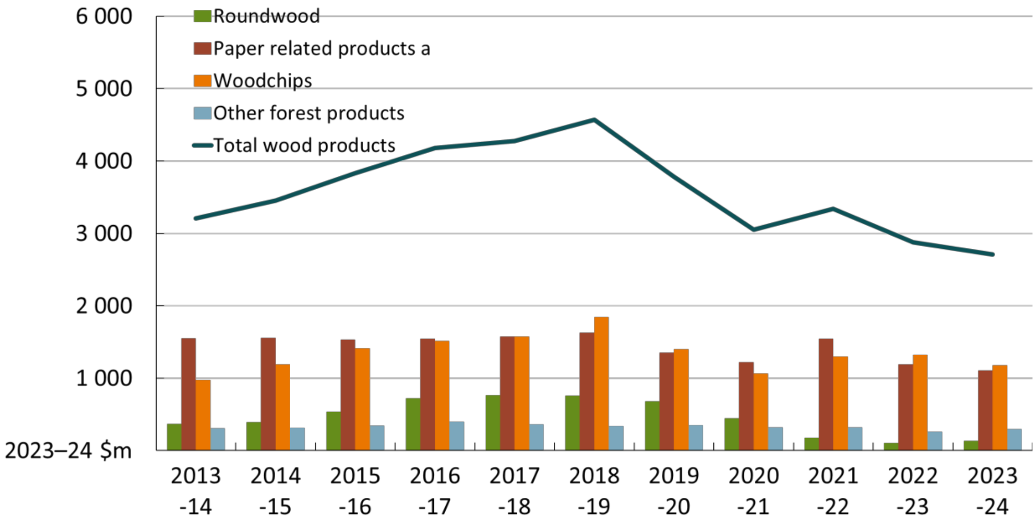
Figure 1 Volume and value of hardwood logs harvested



Note: 'Sawlog volumes' includes veneer logs and logs for plywood. 'Total volume of logs harvested' includes the category 'other', which comprises other plantation log products.
Source: ABARES; ABS (2025c).

Woodchips are an important export commodity and in 2023-24 were worth $1.2 billion, or 43% of Australia's forest and wood product exports (Figure 2). This was a 7.3% reduction (11.0% in real terms) in total export value compared to 2022-23.

Figure 2 Total value of wood product exports dominated by woodchips



Source: ABARES; ABS (2025b; 2025c).

China and Japan have historically been the major markets for exported Australian woodchips. Recently, demand from China has been in decline, partly attributed to slowing economic growth but also, a strategic shift within its domestic paper industry. Increasingly, Chinese manufacturers are seeking imported wood pulp from other markets rather than raw woodchips that Australia traditionally exports, because wood pulp offers greater processing efficiencies and cost-effectiveness (ResourceWise 2024). In contrast, the Japanese market remains focussed on imported woodchips as the pulp and paper industry is highly integrated and reliant on imported hardwood woodchips due to the limited domestic availability of suitable feedstock (Margules Groome 2020).

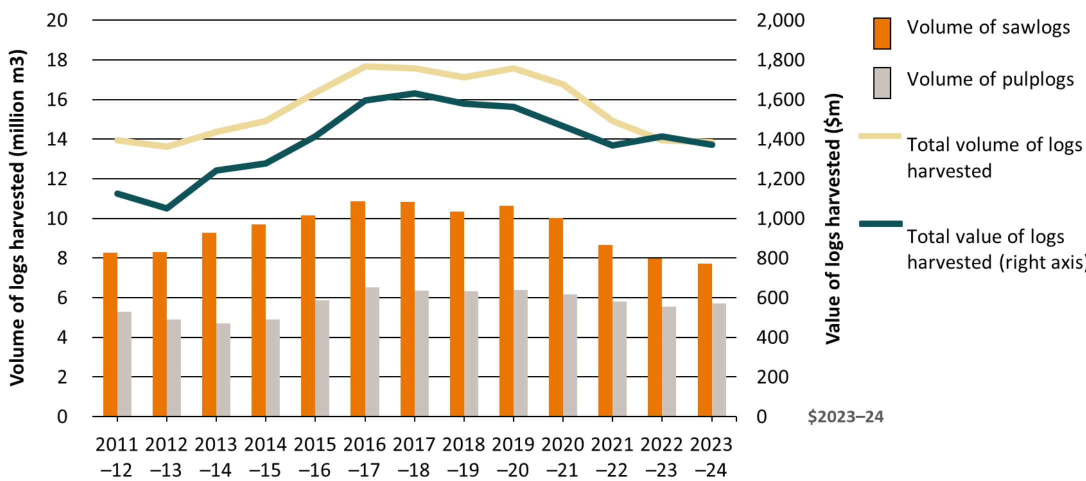
Australia's historical position as a major global exporter of woodchips is also increasingly being challenged by Vietnam. While Australian eucalyptus woodchips are generally regarded as superior to Vietnam's acacia chips due to higher pulp yields, Vietnam has steadily increased in importance in export markets and currently accounts for over 60% of the Asia-Pacific hardwood woodchip market (Margules Groome 2024).

Declining competitiveness and increasing volatility in global woodchip markets is affecting dynamics in the Australian plantation estate, with growers beginning to consider alternate options for their hardwood plantations (ABARES 2025).

2 Softwood plantation values steady and declining construction imports

In 2023-24, the volume of logs harvested from softwood plantations remained steady at 13.7 million m^3, a 0.7% decrease from 2022-23. The nominal log price index for softwood plantation logs increased by 2.1%, driven by a 5.4% nominal increase in log price index for softwood saw and veneer logs. The value of softwood plantation log production increased from 2022-23 by 1.2% to $1.36 billion (2.9% decrease in real terms) (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Volume and value of softwood logs harvested



Note: 'Sawlog volumes' includes veneer logs and logs for plywood. 'Total volume of logs harvested' includes the category 'other', which comprises other plantation log products. Includes a small component ($17 million) of cypress pine logs harvested from native forests.
Source: ABARES; ABS (2025c).

Sawlogs are the major product category from the softwood plantation sector and are used to produce structural sawnwood products for the construction sector, as well as other sawnwood products for uses such as packaging and logistics. Demand for structural sawnwood and, hence, softwood sawlogs is driven by residential construction sector activity, where they are predominately used in wall framing and trusses.

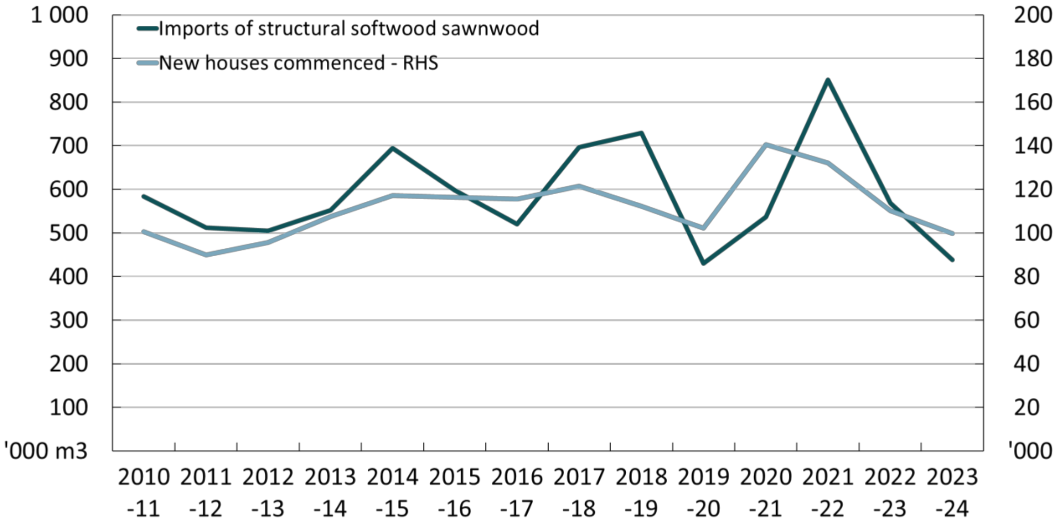
In addition to domestic production from softwood plantations, Australia draws on imports of structural softwood sawnwood and other building related forest and wood products from a diverse range of sources to meet domestic construction demand. The ability to draw on import markets offers important flexibility in accessing timber products at times of short-term volatility in construction markets (ABARES 2025). This can be seen in the 2023-24 data, where construction sector activity slowed, domestic production remained steady and total forest and wood product imports declined noticeably, driven by changes in construction sector related imports (Figure 4, Figure 5, Figure 6).

In 2023-24:

- House construction commencement reduced by almost 10% with structural softwood sawnwood imports also falling by 22.9% (Figure 4).
- Total value of forest and wood product imports reduced by 5.3% to $6.5 billion (a 9.1% decline in real terms) (Figure 5).

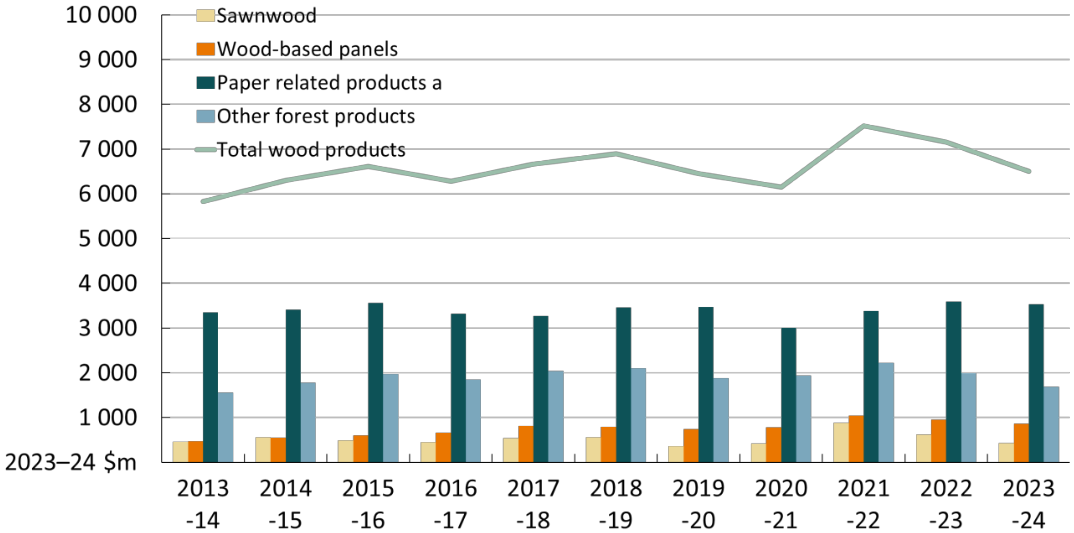
Construction related imports reduced by 10.2% to $2.3 billion (13.8% in real terms) (Figure 6).

Figure 4 Structural softwood sawnwood imports reflect new house commencements



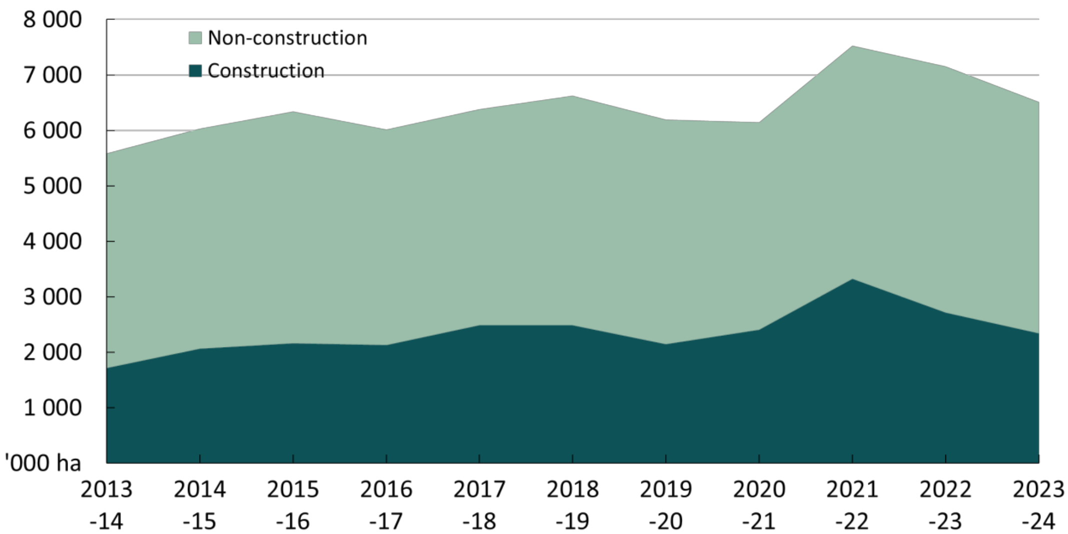
Note: Structural softwood sawnwood imports are defined by trade code descriptions that have a thickness exceeding 6mm and a cross-sectional area of less than 120cm^2. New houses commenced consist of building activity on approved work in total sectors in Australia.
Source: ABARES; ABS (2025a; 2025b).

Figure 5 Value of wood product imports



Source: ABARES; ABS (2025b; 2025c).

Figure 6 Value of construction and non-construction wood product imports

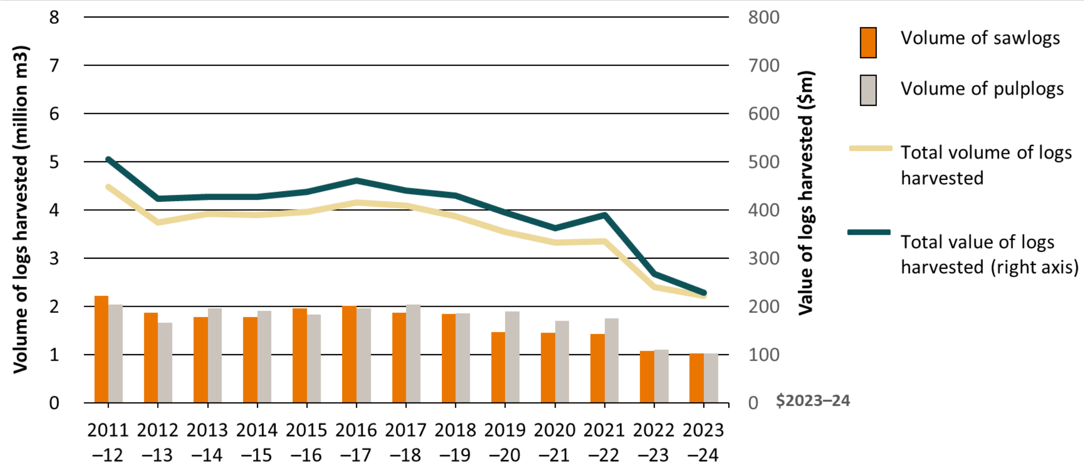


Note: Imports of construction consists of sawnwood, wood-based panels and miscellaneous wood products that are used as an input for construction. Description of miscellaneous wood products is used to determine whether the product is used in construction.
Source: ABARES; ABS (2025b; 2025c).

3 Native hardwood production decreases to historically low levels

The volume of hardwood native logs harvested in 2023-24 was 2.23 million m^3, a 7.5% decrease from 2022-23. The gross value of production for hardwood native logs in 2023-24 was $229 million. This value has decreased by 14.5% in real terms when compared to 2022-23 (Figure 7). Both value and volume of hardwood native production for 2022-23 have had small revisions following updated figures available from industry.

Figure 7 Volume and value of hardwood native forest logs harvested



Source: ABARES; ABS (2025c).

There was limited change in production between 2022-23 and 2023-24 despite the ban on harvests in public native forests in Victoria and Western Australia coming into effect half-way through the year on 1 January 2024. While harvests did fall in Western Australia and Victoria, majority of the decrease had already occurred between 2021-22 and 2022-23 with VicForests ceasing a considerable portion of their harvest early due to legal challenges (VicForests 2023).

In 2022-23, VicForests reported that financial performance, and harvesting activity, had been significantly impacted by litigation actions brought against them by environmental groups (VicForests 2023) which limited forestry operations in 2022-23. For comparison, in 2021-22 Victorian native harvest volumes were 957,000 m^3. Harvest levels subsequently dropped to 206,000 m^3 in 2022-23 and then further to only 26,000 m^3 in 2023-24.

Reductions in harvest levels have been smaller in Western Australia where native harvest dropped to 199,000 m^3, a 40.5% decline since 2022-23. This level of harvest includes commercial harvest in Western Australia's forests up to 31 December 2023. From 1 January 2024, commercial harvest has ceased with allowances remaining for ecological thinnings, a process where removing individual trees allows surrounding vegetation a better chance for survival (DBCA 2023).

Native forest harvesting in the South East Queensland Regional Plan Area has ceased from January 2025 (MIG & NFISC 2024). The effect of this will not be seen in the 2023-24 data with native harvest levels in Queensland at 276,000 m^3, a less than 1% change from previous financial year.

4 Plantation area stable

In 2023-24, the area of commercial plantations was 1.71 million hectares, comprised of 1.01 million hectares of softwood plantations (59%), 0.67 million hectares of hardwood plantations (39%). There were 23 thousand hectares of unknown or mixed species (1.4%).

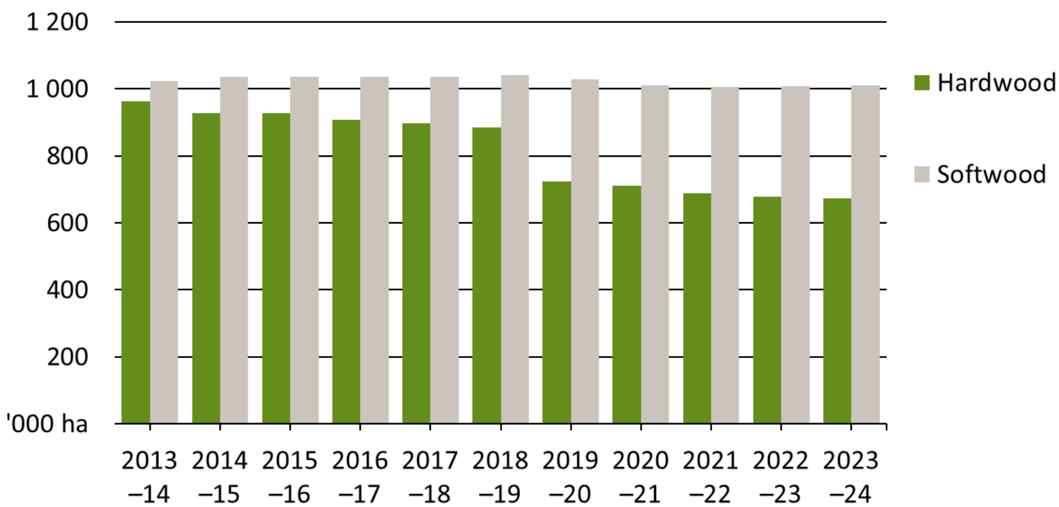
4.1 Stable hardwood and softwood plantation area

The area of commercial plantations reduced by just under 1,500 hectares (0.1%) between 2022-23 and 2023–24. This change reflects a combination of plantation land that was not commercially productive being converted to agricultural or other land uses, and revisions to land use area figures reported by plantation managers.

The softwood plantation estate has been stable for more than 20 years. There was a slight increase of 0.2% between 2022-23 and 2023–24, while the area of commercial hardwood plantations has moved out of a period of decline and is now more stable, with only a small, 0.6%, reduction in area in 2023-24 (Figure 8).

Most commercial softwood plantations are located in New South Wales (29% of softwood plantation estate), Victoria (22%) and Queensland (18%). Most commercial hardwood plantations are found in Tasmania (28%), Western Australia (26%) and Victoria (24%).

Figure 8 Plantation area available for harvest



Source: ABARES.

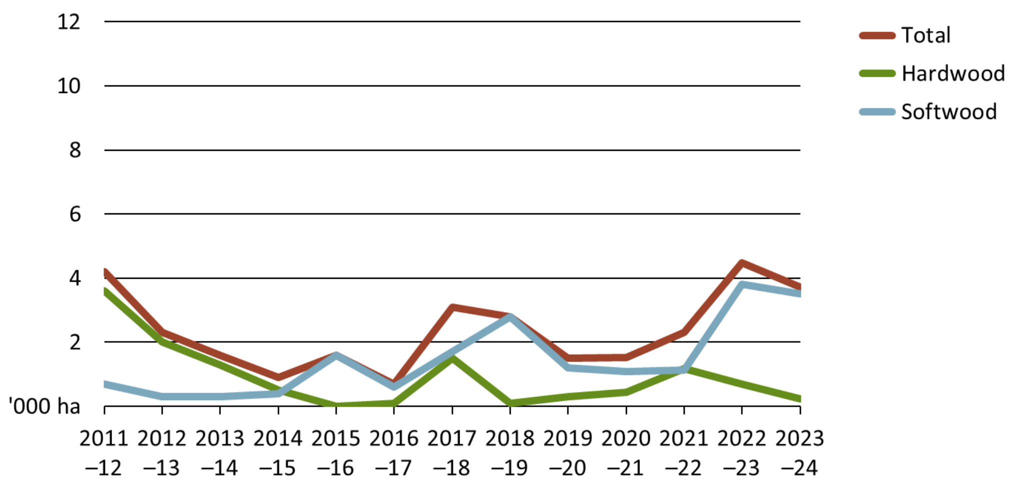
4.2 New plantation establishment reduced

In 2023-24, new plantation establishment eased slightly compared to 2022-23, with 3,700 hectares of new plantations established (16.9% less when compared to 2023-23). This new establishment makes up 0.2% of the total plantation estate. There were 200 hectares of hardwood plantations and 3,500 hectares of softwood plantations established (Figure 9).

The majority of new establishments were softwood plantations located in New South Wales (1,900 hectares) and Western Australia (1,600). Over the past five years, 10,700 hectares of softwood plantations have been established, the majority of which have been in New South Wales (48%) and Western Australia (43%). Over the same period, 2,800 hectares of hardwood plantations have been established with Victoria accounting for the largest share (34%).

The recent increase in plantation establishment represents a combination of factors. Private growers are investing in selective plantation expansion, drawing on the Australian carbon credit units (ACCU) Scheme, and the $73.8 million grant funding available under the Support Plantation Establishment program from 2023–24 to 2026–27 (DAFF 2023). In addition, state governments including Western Australia and Victoria have funding available to increase the plantation estate and transition industry from native forestry to plantation forestry.

Figure 9 New plantation area



Source: ABARES.

Glossary

Term	Definition
Carbon Credit, or Australian Carbon Credit Unit (ACCU)	A tradable certificate, permit or legal instrument, deriving from a verified reduction of one unit (one tonne) of carbon dioxide emissions (or equivalent), and tradable to offset one unit (one tonne) of carbon dioxide emissions (or equivalent).
Commercial plantation	A National Forest Inventory forest category that comprises hardwood or softwood plantations managed commercially to supply logs to wood-processing industries for the manufacture of wood products.
Fibreboard	A category of reconstituted wood panel products made from pulpwood and/or wood-processing residues such as woodchips, sawmill shavings and sawdust plus a resin or binder, pressed into panels. Types of fibreboard (in order of increasing density) include particleboard, medium-density fibreboard, high-density fibreboard and hardboard.
Free on board (FOB)	In international shipping, FOB means that the seller (consignor) is responsible for transportation of the goods to the port of shipment and the cost of loading. The buyer (consignee) pays the costs of freight, insurance, unloading, and transportation from the arrival port to the final destination.
Forest	An area, incorporating all living and non-living components, that is dominated by trees having usually a single stem and a mature or potentially mature stand height exceeding 2 metres and with existing or potential crown cover of overstorey strata about equal to or greater than 20%. This includes Australia's diverse native forests and plantations, regardless of age. It is also sufficiently broad to encompass areas of trees that are sometimes described as woodlands.
Forest land	Land carrying forest. Also called the forest estate.
Forestry	The establishment and/or management of forests to meet desired goals, needs, and values, for human and environmental benefits.
Gross value of production	Value placed on production at the wholesale prices realised in the marketplace (where the marketplace refers to local consumption, export, or a point before value-adding by a secondary industry). Gross value of production provides a value for products that do not have a final market price.
Hardwood	Wood or wood products from flowering trees (broad-leaved tree species), such as eucalypts, irrespective of the physical hardness of the wood; also used to refer to the trees that have such wood, and plantations of such trees.
Harvested wood products	Wood products originating from harvested trees and removed from harvest areas for use as-is or after further processing.
Log price index	Index of nominal prices paid per cubic metre at mill door. The AFWPS data is presented as an index with a base year of 1999-00=100. Includes pulplogs and saw and veneer logs. Excludes other log types such as posts, poles, fencing and firewood removals.
Managed investment scheme (MIS)	A pooled investment scheme that satisfies the definition of 'managed investment scheme' in Section 9 of the Commonwealth Corporations Act 2001 and fulfils associated regulatory requirements; describes a wide range of investments in financial products, real estate, agriculture and plantation forestry.
National Forest Inventory	Australia's system of integrated national forest data, compiled from state, territory and Australian government agencies, industry information, and independent, remotely sensed data, using national standards and protocols for collation and reporting. Used to meet national and international forest-related reporting requirements. Includes the forest categories 'Native forest', 'Commercial plantation' and 'Other forest'.
National Plantation Inventory	Australia's national inventory of commercial forest plantations, a program of the National Forest Inventory.

Term	Definition
Native forest	A National Forest Inventory forest category that comprises national forest types dominated by the suite of native tree species naturally associated with forest in that location and located within their natural range.
Nominal value	Value of an economic statistic that is measured in terms of actual prices that existed at the time.
Particleboard	A panel product made by compressing wood particles (usually from softwood) and resin under heat and pressure, commonly used in flooring and joinery.
Plantation	An intensively managed stand of trees of native or exotic (that is introduced) species established by the regular placement of seedlings or seeds, usually to produce timber.
Plywood	A panel product made by gluing together veneers of wood under heat and pressure, commonly used in construction and joinery.
Pulp	A product made from wood by chemical or mechanical separation of the fibres, and that is used to make paper.
Pulplog	A log harvested from a plantation or native forest stand that does not meet sawlog quality specifications and is designated to produce pulpwood. Such logs are used to manufacture fibreboard, particleboard, paper products, and small-diameter logs used for posts and poles.
Real value	Value of an economic statistic that has been adjusted for inflation.
Roundwood	Wood in round form, e.g. sawlogs, pulplogs, poles, piles, girders and posts.
Sawlog	Log used to manufacture veneer, plywood and sawn timber.
Sawnwood	Timber produced by sawing logs into particular sizes; also called sawn timber.
Softwood	Wood or wood products from cone-bearing trees, such as pines, irrespective of the physical softness of the timber; also used to refer to the trees that have such wood, and plantations of such trees.
Thinning	The removal of some trees from a forest stand. Trees remaining after a thinning operation generally grow more rapidly.
Timber	Products usually square or rectangular in cross-section milled from logs and that conform to industry grades, standards or specifications.
Veneer	Thin sheets of wood, usually thinner than 3 millimetres, which can be glued and pressed to make plywood, or glued and pressed onto core panels (typically wood, particleboard or medium-density fibreboard) to produce panels. Can be produced by slicing or peeling logs.
Wood	The hard, fibrous, underbark component of the stem and/or branches of a tree, often suitable for conversion into products.
Woodchips	Small chips of wood produced from logs for use in fibre products or for conversion to pulp for paper manufacture.

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ERRATUM to Australian forest and wood products statistics: Production and trade to 2023-24

The numbers for 2023-24 native hardwood harvest (volume and GVP) have been updated, including tables, graphs and text in the Overview report after it was published in June 2025.