

The first steps to marketing timber



A forest with different products

The first steps to marketing timber include carrying out an assessment of your native forest; planning the ongoing management of that forest. You need to notify the Department of Natural Resources and Water (NRW) of the location of the forest practice (no fee, this is not a permit but a notification form).

Aerial photography is the most useful tool to assist in defining how you can carry out an assessment with the use of tracks, fences and large watercourses as unit boundaries. Aerial photography can also be used in the planning of tracks for timber hauling without interfering with other activities on the property.

To understand that you are assessing the right forest product, select some trees of different quality and sizes that can be felled and measured to obtain an idea of what product can be produced from each tree size. When a unit is identified as having commercial timber, an assessment needs to be carried out by doing plots or by strip assessment. Plots are easier to do but can give the wrong impression if they are not done randomly. Strip assessment is best carried out by traversing features of the property such as waterways and ridges, this way you will cross over different vegetation types. Trees 5 metres either side of the strip line (0.1 ha per 100 m) are to be measured and recorded on an assessment sheet as you cross the unit, with one person doing the measuring while the other records the timber measured.

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The more strip lines that can be assessed will provide a better data average of the unit, thus giving a better idea of what product is available. As the trees are recorded it should also be noted what product they can be used for or if they would be suitable as habitat trees. If any areas of dying timber are sighted during a strip assessment, they should be recorded on sheets so the extent of the affected area can be plotted on the harvest map.

Add the volume of the timber assessed on each assessment sheet to calculate the volume per strip line, which trees can be harvested and what product is available. Combine data from all of the assessment sheets to work out an average of volume of timber per hectare. The area of timber can be calculated by drawing the strip lines on aerial photos, which makes it easier to estimate the area of timber. Once the area of timber has been calculated, you can multiply the volume of timber per hectare by the area to give an indication of the volume of timber in the unit area.

Take care not to calculate areas of non-commercial species in your assessment. If any areas are of doubt they should be left out, or they can be checked by visually inspecting areas along with the use of a GPS and aerial photos. A management plan for each unit should be established and incorporated into the Property Management Plan.

Once the amount of forest products are established, it is advisable to work out an action plan of what to harvest and also specify the time frame. Knowing the estimated amount of timber product, as well as understanding what products can be harvested from different trees is an advantage when talking to sawmill representatives. Trees to be harvested should have reached their full potential, or are showing signs of defect; such as poor crown position, dead branches, or have mistletoe or epicormic growth in the crown.

As it is in the landholder's best interest to look after the future of their timber they should control the harvesting of timber on the property. They can seek advice from other landholders who have had timber harvested on their property, or employ a person with experience in timber harvesting who can give advice and can control the harvesting under the direction of the landholder. Landholders should complete a Timber Harvest Plan which gives direction on how the timber is harvested and what areas are to be logged.

*Dead branches
and epicormic
growth*



Buffer zones around erosion areas or where weeds are identified are noted on the plan as well as on a harvest map. Contractors should be employed with incentives given if utilization of products has been maximised, and rehabilitation work is carried out to comply with the Code of Practice on Freehold Land. It should also be determined what product is to be harvested and the minimum classification of these products.

Tracks that will be used for harvesting should be marked on a map and on trees where the harvest is going to take place. Try to avoid crossing waterways, as this can cause erosion, tracks should be situated on the top of ridges and be positioned so as to make it easier to drain after harvesting. Log dumps be constructed on the top of ridges so snig tracks will follow spurs and not cross waterways when snigging timber.

Once the habitat and recruitment trees have been marked, mark trees for retention, 100 trees per hectare over 20 cm dbh with various tree species, will give the best results so that trees have space to grow, the table below gives a general range of dbh and spacing. Retained trees are to be protected during the harvesting process.

Recommended spacing for hardwood
(source Cant 2000)

Hardwood dbh (cm)	Spacing (m)	No. of trees/ha
10-20cm	7.5 x 7.5	178
20-40cm	10 x 10	100
40-60cm	12 x 12	70
60-80cm	15 x 15	44

As trees are harvested they will be allocated a number which is written on the stump and all the products from that tree. This is entered into a cutters log book immediately, so the forest products can be tallied up for each days cutting, with a copy of products harvested on each day given to the landholder. Cutting should be kept to one area, so as to avoid missing trees; once an area is finished the cutter can move onto the next area. After snigging all the harvested products the snigger operator can drain all tracks and fix any problems that have arisen during cutting, this will ensure rehabilitation work will be carried out as an area is completed.

Log and stump with number, dimensions and classification

