
[Australia: Plantations, plantations and still more plantations...](#)

Vast areas of the southern island of Tasmania in Australia are being planted with tree monocultures as "carbon sinks" and causing concern at different levels (see WRM Bulletin 35). At the same time, the timber industry is also very active in promoting plantations for the production of raw wood material.

As a result, local communities are now suffering the effects of the huge investments that national and multinational companies made in the forestry sector some time ago. Peolenna, a small town in rural North West Tasmania is a typical example of the once highly productive, well watered, rich soils that have been bought up for setting up plantations. The town and its surrounding area are now living the last phase of a desertification process: that of the voiding of the territory. In fact only one out of 25 dairy farms remain nowadays and as the community moves away schools close and the town dies. This flood tide of trees has destroyed community life, as good farmland is being knocked out of food production.

The Tasmanian Government allocated \$17.9 million in the current budget to Forestry Tasmania, a government corporation to continue with the destruction of 7,000 hectares of public native forests a year to give place to plantations. A similar area of private land is also to be converted to plantations. Additionally to their ecological and social effects, plantations do not benefit the local economy, even from the conventional economy point of view. Wood obtained from mature plantations is not even used locally, but logs are exported to different countries -for example to Korea and Indonesia- probably to return to Tasmania as paper or other wood products. Part of the roundwood is converted into chips, which are also exported to feed pulpmills in other countries.

As local residents have rallied against this flood tide of trees, the pro-plantation Timber Communities Australia (formerly the Forest Protection Society) has used the usual arguments, saying that the dissent is a move against the whole Tasmanian timber industry and against farmers being allowed to diversify, and that only the lesser quality land and steep country will be used for plantations. However, the response to those arguments has been to say that they "certainly are blind to reality, as they can't see the wood or anything else now for all the trees that have been planted."

Article based on information from: Tasmanian forest issues, June 2000 by Peter C. Sims