



## Sustainable management of privately owned native forests

New Zealand's native forests provide economic, environmental, cultural and recreational value. In New Zealand there are 6.4 million hectares of native forest, 5.2 million hectares of which are protected as conservation land; this accounts for 24 percent of total land area.

The remaining 1.2 million hectares are in private ownership and approximately a third of this is suitable for harvest.

Landowners have the opportunity to sustainably harvest a portion of their resource under the Forests Act 1949. The purpose of the Forests Act is to promote the sustainable forest management of New Zealand's privately owned native forests. This is achieved through managing the harvesting, processing and export of indigenous timber on a sustainable long-term basis. The Act also controls the manner in which harvesting occurs particularly with regard to the specific character of the forest concerned, for

example, the topography, riparian areas and areas of special biological significance.

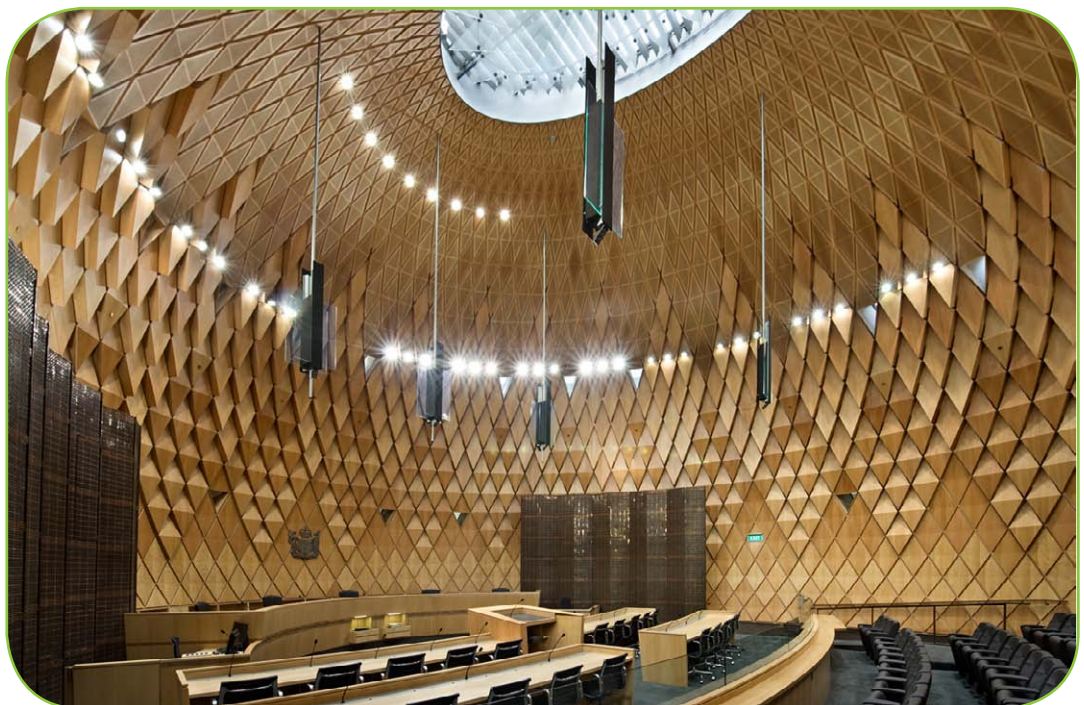
The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) is responsible for administering the Forests Act including setting harvest levels and implementing a comprehensive monitoring and auditing regime to ensure harvest levels are sustainable.

Commonly harvested species include red beech, silver beech, rimu, matai and totara.

### **MPI ensures harvest levels are sustainable**

Under the Forests Act, harvesting must occur either under an approved sustainable forest management plan or a limited use permit.

Plans can only be approved if they consist of a comprehensive forest inventory and describe the management processes and ecological safeguards that must be followed to maintain the health of the forest into the future.





Harvest limits are set at a level that ensures the volume of timber removed is always less than annual growth rates across the forest. If natural regeneration, following harvesting, is insufficient MPI can require seedlings to be planted at the harvest site.

Before harvesting can take place, operators must also provide MPI with an annual logging plan. This provides information on the area the trees shall come from, approved harvest volumes (by species), proposed harvest methods, location of tracks, and any requirements for specific actions, for example, directional felling to protect any adjacent forest. Operators are also encouraged to actively harvest trees with different ages and sizes and to source trees that are at risk of dying naturally.

**Auditing and monitoring harvest levels**

MPI audits the harvesting, milling and export of native timber. Sawmills processing native timber must be registered with MPI, and operators are required to provide regular production records.

This ensures that New Zealand has a robust, workable regulatory system which

supplies assurances to consumers around legality of source and underlying principles of sustainability.

In addition, over 60 percent of the native timber produced in New Zealand has secured international recognition and certification by the Forest Stewardship Council.

**MPI ensures harvesting has minimal environmental impact**

Forestry, like all human activity, has some degree of impact on the natural environment. However, plans and permits are only approved by MPI if the forest's natural values are maintained. Natural values include maintenance of forest flora and fauna, soil and water quality, and the control of pests and weeds.

MPI monitors these activities closely to encourage best management practices and to ensure impacts are kept to an acceptable level.

All harvest activity is also regulated under the Resource Management Act through regional and district plans.

**Did you know:**

- Forests act as a carbon sink continuing to store carbon long after a tree is harvested. Every cubic metre of native timber harvested removes almost a tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the atmosphere.
- The total volume of native timber harvested annually over all species in New Zealand will take around 50 days to replace through natural regeneration.
- Habitat trees containing hollows for use by forest fauna are set aside during harvesting to provide important habitats for birds and insects.
- Stumps, roots and heads of trees are left to decay in the forest after harvesting. This breakdown of organic matter helps to return important nutrients to the system.
- Selected harvesting of native trees can create canopy gaps which provide young trees and seedlings with space and sunlight to help them grow.

