

Adoption of community engagement in Australian plantation forest companies

Quantifying community engagement

Sustainability Assessment
Symposium 2010: Towards Strategic
Assessment for Sustainability

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Acknowledgements

- CRC for Forestry
- School of Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Tasmania, Hobart
- Tasmanian Institute for Agricultural Research (TIAR) at the University of Tasmania, Hobart
- Supervisors
 - Dr Michael Lockwood (University of Tasmania)
 - Dr Jacki Schirmer (Australian National University)
 - Prof Frank Vanclay (University of Tasmania)



Australian forest plantation companies

- Rapid change over the last 10 years, with changes in policy and the introduction of forest certification. More than 10 million ha of Australia's forests are now certified (Crawford 2009)
- Sustainable forest management is a guiding protocol for Australian forest management (Gee & Stratford 2001)
- Community engagement is a vital part of sustainable forest management



Sustainable forest management

- There is a need to be able to measure sustainable forest management and community engagement for reporting
- Lack of literature on quantifying community engagement in the context of forest plantation management



Forest certification

- There are two forest certification bodies in Australia:
 - Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)
 - Australian Forest Stewardship (AFS) certification (recognised under Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Scheme - PEFC)



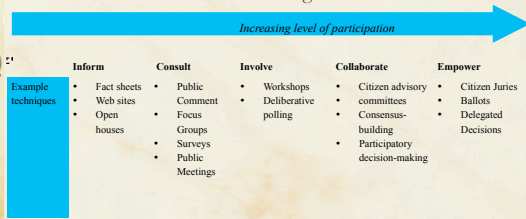
Forest certification guidelines

- Forest companies report on community engagement to meet certification requirements
 - Public participation (criteria 2 of AFS)
 - Indigenous people's rights (criteria 3 FSC)
 - Community relations (criteria 4 of FSC)



What is community engagement?

- Community engagement is a term used to describe a wide range of activities, which can include 'informing' or involvement in decision making



(c) 2007 International Association for Public Participation www.iap2.org.
Note: Diagram is adapted for the presentation.

Why community engagement?

- Vital component to obtain a 'social licence to operate' and vital for sustainable forest management.
- Diversity of views with regards to forest plantations (Williams 2009)
- Community engagement is also a requirement of policy and forest certification.

Adoption of community engagement

- Community engagement needs to be a part of the corporate culture of language, practice, relationships and behaviour in order for it to be sustained (Kenny 2006; Lovan, Shaffer & Murray 2004)
- Quantification and effective reporting can also provide evidence that community engagement is a part of corporate culture

Limitations

- Potentially, quantifying community engagement can help overcome:
 - A lack of recording and reporting of ad hoc community engagement (Dare et al. 2009)
 - A lack of adoption of community engagement in the corporate culture

Community engagement reporting

- Adopted differently by different forest companies
- Current reporting considerations:
 - Money spent on donations and resources provided to community groups
 - List of stakeholders engaged with
 - Number of complaints from community members
 - Qualitative reporting e.g. anecdotal reporting through articles, including media coverage.
 - Employee involvement in the community e.g. sporting groups (employees being a part of the community)
 - Requirements for forest certification

Opportunities

- Quantification of community engagement:
 - to assist internal company communications
 - to increase adoption of more effective community engagement
 - to improve external reporting
 - to improve communication with the wider community
 - to improve awareness of the value of community engagement
 - to promote continuous improvement
 - to improve industry wide collaboration

Further research

Further research is needed to develop an effective quantitative approach to reporting community engagement and to understand how it can be adopted and utilised by forest plantation industry



Questions

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