

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2014

Agriculture

Question: 02

Division/Agency: Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division

Topic: Staff reductions in Climate Change policy area

Proof Hansard page: 48

Senator CAMERON asked:

Senator CAMERON: Have there been any reductions in staff in the climate area?

Dr Grimes: The relevant officers may be able to assist you. I do not have any figures with me on that at the moment, but we may be able to provide you with figures

Mr Glyde: I can give you the reductions in relation to that particular division, which, as the secretary has pointed out, was Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division. We will just have to take on notice whether there have been specific changes in relation to the climate change policy.

Answer:

Yes. In June 2014 the Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division (AAFD) had 25.96 full-time equivalent (FTEs) staff working on climate change policy and program delivery. On 1 July 2014, the climate change program delivery functions (Carbon Farming Futures) were transferred to the Sustainability and Biosecurity Policy Division, including 19.3 FTEs responsible for delivering the programs. The climate policy function was retained within AAFD. As at 2 December 2014, there are 4.6 FTEs allocated to the Climate Policy section in AAFD.

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Agriculture

Question: 03

Division/Agency: Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division

Topic: Cost of the Illegal logging prohibition Act regulation

Proof Hansard page: 105

Senator LEYONHJELM asked:

Senator LEYONHJELM: Do you have an estimate of the cost to the industry of implementing the regulations?

Mr Padovan: I do not have that at hand. I would have to take that on notice.

Answer:

On 1 December 2014, the Minister for Small Business, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister jointly announced an independent review of the impact of the *Illegal Logging Prohibition Amendment Regulation 2013* on small business.

The review will assess whether the existing due diligence requirements achieve an appropriate balance between the cost of compliance for small businesses and reducing the risk of illegally logged timber entering the Australian market. The Government will also develop an associated Regulation Impact Statement which will supplement the previous Regulation Impact Statement undertaken to inform the development of the existing legislative framework.

The review will be conducted by an independent consultant and report back to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck, by March 2015. The Terms of Reference for the independent review can be found at www.agriculture.gov.au/illegallogging.

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Question: 04

Division/Agency: Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division

Topic: Contribution going back directly to WWF

Proof Hansard page: 109

Senator LEYONHJELM asked:

Senator LEYONHJELM: In the countries that only use FSC, I suspect a small importer would have no option but to use those certification schemes, given they would have difficulty investigating the supply chain independently. So they would inevitably be contributing to WWF's coffers, would they?

Senator Colbeck: FSC international is a separate arm, and I do not know whether or not there is a contribution going back directly to WWF as such. I would have to take that on notice, but I do not think that is necessarily the case. Certainly, WWF and a number of other environmental groups promote FSC as a system, but it is the supply chain that has the certification for the legality, and it might not be an importer that has that certification burden. The importer might be purchasing FSC-certified product out of a country. So it might be a business in the country that has decided to have the certification process applied. It is not necessarily that the importer needs to have the certification. It is about buying a product that has that certification attached to it.

Answer:

FSC International is a global, non-for-profit membership association, which is governed by its members who include environmental organisations, forestry organisations, indigenous and community forestry groups, retailers, manufacturers, and forest certification organisations.

A number of international environmental organisations, including WWF, support and promote FSC certification. While WWF International is represented on FSC International's Board of Directors, we are not aware of any evidence that suggests the costs incurred in FSC certification financially benefit WWF International. Further information on FSC International can be found at www.ic.fsc.org.

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Question: 05

Division/Agency: Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division

Topic: Farm Household Allowance

Proof Hansard page: 110

Senator STERLE asked:

Senator STERLE: Thanks. Is it true that farmers can only apply for the Farm Household Allowance online?

Ms Kennedy: No, that is incorrect. There is also a PDF of the form available on the website that they can print out, fill in and then send in. I understand Centrelink offices can also post the form to them for them to fill in and send back. It is whichever is most convenient.

Senator STERLE: Is it true that farmers that were originally accessing the Interim Farm Household Allowance were required to reapply for the Farm Household Allowance and that, through this process, farmers were required to provide further information?

Ms Kennedy: Yes, you are correct. There was a requirement that people who had already applied for the Interim Farm Household Allowance also apply for the legislated Farm Household Allowance that is now in place. The major reason behind that is the fact that the Farm Household Allowance is a legislated scheme. It provides assistance on the basis of, for example, each member of a couple rather than to a farm family as a whole. The Interim Farm Household Allowance, on the other hand, was an executive scheme that was introduced early by the government in recognition of the difficult circumstances. Although many of the conditions are the same, there is a significant difference in the background.

Senator STERLE: How many of them had to go through that process?

Ms Kennedy: I would have to take on notice the exact number.

Senator STERLE: Yes, please. And can you do it by state?

Ms Kennedy: Yes, sure.

Question: 05 (continued)

Answer:

On 10 December the Department of Human Services advised that, as at 27 November 2014, the number of Farm Household Allowance (FHA) claimants who were previously in receipt of Interim Farm Household Allowance (IFHA) are listed below by state:

State	IFHA customers also claimed FHA*
NSW	928
NT	< 20^
QLD	798
SA	198
TAS	< 20^
VIC	381
WA	56
Total	2372

*A significant proportion of IFHA recipients were receiving a partnered rate (i.e. one member of the couple received payment on behalf of the family). Under FHA, this is not the case. Where partnered, each member of the couple applies individually and, where successful, receives payment in their own right. This means that the number of people who benefited from IFHA and are now in receipt of FHA is greater than the number of individual customers that had to apply for both payments.

^Confidentiality provision: All cells that have a value of less than 20, including zero, have been changed to display '< 20'. This rule has been employed for privacy reasons. Where the total fields are included these will only have a value when it does not make it possible to work out the value of any '< 20' fields.

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Question: 06

Division/Agency: Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division

Topic: Farm Household Allowance application form

Proof Hansard page: 110

Senator STERLE asked:

Senator STERLE: I was going to say, if there was a drama doing it online then there would be a drama downloading a PDF. We know a lot of people do not have access to that sort of stuff. But they can contact their local Centrelink and get a hard copy—

Ms Kennedy: Sent to them. That is correct.

Senator STERLE: Do we know how many did that?

Ms Kennedy: No, I do not have that.

Senator STERLE: Take it on notice.

Answer:

On 10 December 2014 the Department of Human Services (DHS) has advised that it does not collect data on the number of Farm Household Allowance or Interim Farm Household Allowance claim forms that were either manually sent to customers, or downloaded off the DHS website.

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Question: 07

Division/Agency: Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division

Topic: Processing Times

Proof Hansard page: 111

Senator STERLE asked:

Senator STERLE: Okay. So they are still waiting. They have not been forgotten or anything?

Mr Padovan: Most certainly not.

Senator STERLE: You will get to it eventually, but how long will it take to get to them? I know it is coming up to Christmas, and these poor buggers are obviously stressing out—am I allowed to say 'bugger'? I'm not, am I?

CHAIR: It is not good language.

Senator STERLE: Poor devils!

Mr Padovan: We do not have details at hand of average processing times.

Senator STERLE: Okay, but can you give me any light on the hill? Are you going to get to them before Christmas?

Mr Padovan: My recollection is that the average processing time is within 30 days. I cannot recall the percentage processed.

Ms Kennedy: Just to add to that, I think that might be something that is better directed to the Department of Human Services. They are the ones that have the responsibility for this.

Senator STERLE: Sure.

Ms Kennedy: We can ask them that and get back to you.

Question: 07 (continued)

Answer:

On 10 December 2014 the Department of Human Services has advised that as at 27 November 2014, it had 236 Farm Household Allowance claims on hand. A breakdown of these by days since submission is below.

Days since claim submitted	Number of claims on hand
0-14	123
15-28	64
29-42	16
42+	33

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Question: 08

Division/Agency: Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division

Topic: RBDC

Proof Hansard page: 113

Senator STERLE asked:

Senator STERLE: What is RBDC?

Ms Willock: I will have to look up what the acronym means. They are our delivery agent. Certainly the Western Australian government has been quite active in talking to their constituents. There have been a number of media releases. We also provide funding for communications activities which are generally in the form of ads in the regional and metropolitan newspapers.

Answer:

Rural Business Development Corporation.

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Question: 09

Division/Agency: Agriculture Adaptation and Forestry Division

Topic: Drought Package

Proof Hansard page: 113

Senator STERLE asked:

Senator STERLE: So we have had three parts to the funding?

Ms Kennedy: Yes.

Senator STERLE: How long have they been available for and starting from when?

Ms Kennedy: The funding was announced in February—I would have to take on notice the exact date that that came online.

Answer:

The Department of Human Services drought coordinators commenced on 1 April 2014. The Family and Children Activity and Community Mental Health services commenced during May 2014. All elements of the enhanced social and community support measures for drought-affected areas in New South Wales and Queensland, announced by the Prime Minister and the Minister for Agriculture on 26 February 2014 were originally due to cease in December 2014 and have been extended until 30 June 2015.

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Question: 10

Division/Agency: Agriculture Adaptation and Forestry Division

Topic: Drought package

Proof Hansard page: 114

Senator STERLE asked:

Senator STERLE: Right. So it has been going since February and some more extra money has been thrown in. So how much money is left? Do we know how much has spent so far?

Ms Kennedy: I would have to take that on notice, Senator, but I know that the departments involved with the additional funding that has been announced will be in a position to continue that enhanced support until the end of the financial year.

Answer:

The initial \$10.7 million announced as part of the February assistance package was provided to service providers delivering the enhanced services from May 2014 and also funded five Department of Human Services drought coordinators from 1 April 2014.

The Department of Social Services is now liaising with service providers on the extended funding of \$3.5 million, announced on 20 November 2014, to continue to deliver this enhanced access to one-to-one counselling and local community events until 30 June 2015.

Department of Human Services drought coordinators have also been extended to continue their services up to 30 June 2015.

Further detail on the funding of these programmes should be sought from the Department of Social Services and the Department of Human Services who administer these programmes.

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Agriculture

Question: 11

Division/Agency: Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division

Topic: Forest Industry Advisory Council (FIAC)

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

1. This effectively replaces the Forest and Wood Products Council (FWPC) as per its role as outlined in the [Regional Forest Agreements Act 2002 s11](#) (see subsection 11 of the Act)?
2. There is no representation from Queensland or South Australia on the FIAC?
3. Is the Department or Government aware of any concerns about this?
4. Has there been any other stakeholder concern or feedback received by the Government about the Council or that the Government is aware about?
5. The Council has met only once this year?
6. Was the Minister (Minister Joyce) in attendance at the first meeting of the Council, given the Act says that the Minister is the Chair of the FWPC?
7. The Council will meet twice this year so will meet again, given the Act says the FWPC will meet twice every year?
8. Will changes to the arrangement for example the Council not being Chaired by the Minister (but rather the Parl.Sec if this is indeed the case) and the Forest Industry Advisory Council replacing the FWPC be confirmed through a Government amendment to the Act?
 - a. If not why not?
 - b. If not, is the Government in compliance with the act?

Answer:

1. The Forest and Wood Products Council (FWPC) remains in place and is being used to deliver the government's commitment in its role as Forest Industry Advisory Council.
2. There are no members from South Australia and Queensland on the council.

Question: 11 (continued)

3. The department is aware of concerns about the council's membership raised by industry representatives in Queensland and by the South Australian Minister for Forests. Members were chosen from various industry sectors based on their individual expertise and knowledge, not on who, where or what they represent. The number of positions on the council is limited to 11 members and four observers.

4. No.

5. The FWPC met twice in 2014, on 9 October 2014 and 9 December 2014.

6. The Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP, Minister for Agriculture, did not attend the council meetings in 2014. Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, co-chaired the FWPC at the request of the Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP, Minister for Agriculture.

7. The FWPC met twice in 2014, in accordance with the requirements of the section 11 of the *Regional Forest Agreements Act 2002*.

8.

- a. The FWPC is being used to deliver the government's commitment to establish a Forest Industry Advisory Council. Therefore, an amendment to the *Regional Forest Agreements Act 2002* is not required.
- b. The FWPC continues to exist in compliance with the requirements set out in the *Regional Forest Agreements Act 2002*.

Agriculture

Question: 12

Division/Agency: Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division

Topic: ChAfta and Forestry Industry

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

1. Are you aware of the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) Media release of the 18/11/14 on the CHafta which stated the main exports to China were currently Roundwood (\$251 million), Waste Paper (\$151 million) and woodchips (\$150 million) whereas the main imports were over a billion dollars in value and included paper and paperboard, panels and transformed wood products? If not are these figures consistent with your understanding of the two way trade?
2. The current trade arrangement currently appears to be that Australia provides raw materials and China provides value added manufactured products- will the FTA exacerbate this, resulting in an even more significant trade deficit for Australia?
3. Is there any modelling on the impact on this?

Answer:

1. These figures are consistent with data included in ABARES 2014, *Australian forest and wood products statistics*, March and June quarters 2014. However, due to confidentiality issues ABARES did not report the value of woodchips exported to China in 2013–14.
2. ChAFTA supports Australia's existing economic engagement with China. China is Australia's largest trading partner, with Australian total merchandise exports to China worth around \$95 billion and imports from China worth around \$47 billion in 2013. ChAFTA enhances Australia's competitiveness in the world's second largest economy.
3. Economic modelling has not been conducted on the possible impact of ChAFTA on trade in wood and paper products between Australia and China. Expanded liberalisation of trade with China – the world's second largest economy and Australia's largest export market – is expected to benefit Australia. Earlier studies, such as the initial feasibility study undertaken in 2005 and the Australia-China Business Council-commissioned study, support an FTA with China. The Government decided it would not need to undertake economic modelling of ChAFTA to demonstrate that this is a good deal for Australia.

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Question: 13

Division/Agency: Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division

Topic: ChAfta and Forestry Industry

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

Just on the exports of roundwood (or whole logs), this increased dramatically from New Zealand after the New Zealand China FTA - and there were significant occupation health and safety ramifications with a sharp increase in fatalities, if there is a dramatic increase in economic activity in terms of raw material export from Australia due to trade agreements/and or pulp log plantations coming on stream resulting in increased harvesting, is the Government prepared to mitigate the risk of increases in fatalities by learning what happened in New Zealand through appropriate training and skills development?

Answer:

The China Free Trade Agreement does not change Australia's safety and quality standards.

There are a range of factors that impact forest harvesting safety that may be more prevalent in New Zealand, for example harvesting on steep terrain and whether mechanical or manual harvesting techniques are used.

Following an Independent Forestry Safety Review in 2014, the New Zealand Government and industry associations have initiated a range of activities targeted at reducing safety incidents in the New Zealand forestry sector.

The Australian forestry sector has a diligent attitude to occupational health and safety. All operators must comply with the relevant workplace health and safety legislation applying to their operations.

The Australian forestry sector is supported by ForestWorks, an Industry Skills Council. ForestWorks develops training and qualification packages aimed at addressing the skill and capability needs of the Australian forest sector. These packages include coverage of workplace health and safety awareness and requirements.

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Question: 14

Division/Agency: Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division

Topic: ChAfta and Forestry Industry

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

On the imports the AFPA release states that what is needed is continued support for an effective and internationally compliant antidumping and countervailing system to guard against unfair competition.... have paper and paper board, panels (or other engineered wood products) and transformed wood products (like furniture) been subject to Anti-Dumping investigations in the last decade in Australia?

Answer:

Ensuring Australian manufacturers have recourse to a robust and responsive set of trade remedies, including anti-dumping and countervailing measures, is a key priority for the Government. Through the China Free Trade Agreement, we have preserved Australia's existing rights and obligations under the World Trade Organization (WTO) to address injuriously dumped or subsidised imports.

In the last decade, Australia has conducted anti-dumping investigations on imports from China of white uncoated A4 and A3 cut sheet paper (copy paper), plywood and toilet paper.

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Question: 15

Division/Agency: Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division

Topic: ChAfta and Forestry Industry

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

Is the Department aware if Anti-Dumping and or countervailing duties for the above products exported from China are subject to any investigation or currently attract duties in other countries, for example the USA?

Answer:

The World Trade Organization (WTO) provides a snapshot of the initiation of anti-dumping and countervailing investigations and the application of measures for broad product categories. The WTO statistics are based on information from WTO Members submitted in semi-annual reports for the relevant periods.

On wood and paper-related products, the WTO reports that 46 anti-dumping investigations and eight countervailing duty investigations had been initiated on products of Chinese origin for the period 1995 to end 2013. Of the 46 anti-dumping investigations, measures were applied on 28 occasions and of the eight countervailing duty investigations, measures were applied on five occasions.

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Question: 16

Division/Agency: Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division

Topic: ChAfta and Forestry Industry

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

Is the Government aware that the Australian Industry Group in their submission to DFAT stated that:

- a. Australia's rights on anti-dumping and/or countervailing duties should not be diminished by an Australia-China FTA
- b. It is important to acknowledge that the rights under the particular "market situation" provisions in Australia's domestic legislation applies to any exporting country which is the subject of an anti-dumping investigation not just China, and reflects the provisions contained within the WTO Anti-Dumping Agreement Therefore, as a matter of international consistency, there should be no erosion of these provisions under a possible Australia-China FTA.

Answer:

Australia's rights on anti-dumping and/or countervailing measures are not changed under the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement.

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Question: 17

Division/Agency: Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division

Topic: ChAfta and Forestry Industry

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

Is the Government aware that the Australian Industry Group in their submission to DFAT stated that:

- a. Australia's rights on anti-dumping and/or countervailing duties should not be diminished by an Australia-China FTA;
- b. It is important to acknowledge that the rights under the particular "market situation" provisions in Australia's domestic legislation applies to any exporting country which is the subject of an anti-dumping investigation not just China, and reflects the provisions contained within the WTO Anti-Dumping Agreement Therefore, as a matter of international consistency, there should be no erosion of these provisions under a possible Australia-China FTA.

Answer:

Ensuring Australian manufacturers have recourse to a robust and responsive set of trade remedies, including anti-dumping and countervailing measures, is a key priority for the Government. Through the China Free Trade Agreement, we have preserved Australia's existing rights and obligations under the World Trade Organization (WTO) to address injuriously dumped or subsidised imports.

In the last decade, Australia has conducted anti-dumping investigations on imports from China of white uncoated A4 and A3 cut sheet paper (copy paper), plywood and toilet paper.

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Question: 18

Division/Agency: Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division

Topic: ChAfta and Forestry Industry

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

1. On the imports at the 2013 Federal election Liberal Party Director Loughnane in response to a survey from AFPA' which asked "Do you support strengthening measures to avoid import of sub-standard quality forest products?" responded "The Coalition support the enforcement measures to avoid the importation of sub-standard forest products. If necessary, we will also consider the strengthening of these measures. It is important that materials used in the Australian Construction industry meet Australian Standards"Is the Government aware of any industry advice on whether measures need to be strengthened for any wood products, such as formply and LVL Beams used in construction to support loads during construction pours?
2. Was the matter brought up either in the forum or privately with the parl. sec when he spoke at the 'Engineered Wood Products- From here to the future' conference on the Gold Coast held last week where Sen. Colbeck was a speaker?

Answer:

1. This question is best answered by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission who are responsible for protecting the interests and safety of consumers and supporting fair trading in markets.
2. The Department of Agriculture has no record of the matter of strengthening the voluntary standard being brought up at the "*Engineered Wood Products - From here to the future*" conference.

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Question: 19

Division/Agency: Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division

Topic: ChAfta and Forestry Industry

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

DAFF doesn't ever inspect and test the compliance of any wood products to Australian Standards or whether false and misleading claims are being made about meeting Australian Standards as part of the biosecurity or any other program does it?

Answer:

No. The Department of Agriculture does not test imported or Australian produced wood products for compliance with Australian Standards or for misleading claims about meeting Australian Standards.

According to Standards Australia, the inspection and testing of any mandatory requirements associated with building products is the responsibility of the building authority in each state.

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Question: 20

Division/Agency: Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division

Topic: ChAfta and Forestry Industry

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

1. Is the Department aware that the Australian Industry Group in their October submission to DFAT about the ChAFTA
http://www.aigroup.com.au/portal/binary/com.epicentric.contentmanagement.servlet.ContentDeliveryServlet/LIVE_CONTENT/Policy%2520and%2520Representation/Submissions/Trade%2520and%2520Export/Submission_Australia-China_FTA.pdf stated that:
 - a. Respondents also noted that many manufactured goods imported from China do not meet Australian safety and quality regulations and standards and the removal of tariffs under an Australia-China FTA may exacerbate this situation;
 - b. Related to this are uncertainties about how potential breach of contract and delivery of faulty Chinese products will be properly dealt with, including processes around insurance claims and other legal resolution channels &
 - c. Conformity with Australian safety and quality standards needs to be strengthened and a process developed for legal enforcement of insurance claims and contract breaches?

Answer:

The China-Australia Free Trade Agreement does not change Australia's safety and quality standards.

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Question: 21

Division/Agency: Agricultural Adaptation and Forestry Division

Topic: MIS and plantations

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

1. Just on the plantations, and I'm talking about short rotation predominately planted under the MiS as part of the plantations 2020 policy, - Is the department aware of industry estimates of what percentage of plantation established are likely to be replanted for a second rotation after harvesting
2. If so what is the percentage?
3. Will this have any implications on meeting the 5% reduction of carbon emissions which the Government is attempting to achieve under direct action?

Answer:

1. The National Plantation Inventory, managed by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES), collects statistics on the Australian plantation estate. While a question has been added to the national survey on planting intentions following harvesting, at the present time insufficient data has been collected to quantify replanting rates.
2. This information is not available.
3. The Department of the Environment is responsible for official projections of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, as well as Australia's National Greenhouse Accounts. Any questions regarding these matters are best addressed to the Department of the Environment.