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Farm Forestry Tips: August - Inventory

Taking tree measurements in your farm forestry plantation, also known as inventory is an important part of forest management.

Like in any business, you should undertake periodic inventories to find out how much your stock is worth. By inventorying your farm plantation, you will be able to find out how much wood you have at a particular time, and make an estimate of how much it might be worth.

You can use inventory to find out how fast the plantation is growing and make comparisons to other growers or benchmarks. Inventory is also very useful in assisting you to measure the response to various management activities including thinning, fertilising and pruning. It will allow you to gain a more intimate knowledge of your plantation, enabling you to: check the quality and effect your management activities are having on the plantation; plan your intentions for the plantation at a much more detailed level; and make cost and revenue estimates.

Inventory can give you valuable information such as stocking levels, and basal area (the area of all the stumps in a hectare), which is important when deciding when and how much to thin your farm plantation.

When your plantation is ready for harvest, inventory will assist you in marketing the products, as you will know more reliably what products will be produced, making it more attractive for potential buyers.

Inventory is most efficiently undertaken by randomly placing plots in the plantation and measuring the diameters, heights and quality of the trees. This will give average statistics for the whole plantation. These measurements can be multiplied by the total area of the plantation to provide total figures.

When undertaking a farm plantation inventory, you should:

- seek professional advice from your local forestry extension provider;
- obtain a manual for inventory and tree measurement;
- use an analysis package such as the free "Farm Forestry Toolbox"; and
- purchase, borrow or lease the appropriate equipment.

A well managed farm plantation will provide the best returns to the tree grower. Inventory provides very important information that assists the farm forester make certain management decisions about the future of their plantation.

If you would like further free advice about plantation inventory, would like to see an example at a farm forestry demonstration site, or have any question relating to commercial forestry, contact Emily May at Gippsland Private Forestry on (03) 5153 2947.

Gippsland Private Forestry provides free advice and assistance to private forest growers on all aspects of forestry, including plantation establishment, management, harvesting and marketing of forest products.

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Promoting sustainable, commercial private forestry development in Gippsland