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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Farm Forestry Tips – Thinning - June**

Farm plantations are usually established at a stocking rate of approximately 1000 stems per hectare for eucalypts, and around 1300 for pines. In order to produce high quality timber from a plantation, this stocking level needs to be reduced by thinning during the life of the plantation.

At these initially high stocking rates, the trees compete for light and grow tall and straight sprouting small lateral branches, reducing the chances for timber defects.

For a eucalypt sawlog plantation, this stocking rate needs to be reduced at about age 5 to between 200 and 500 stems per hectare depending on the site quality. This removes competition for water, nutrients and light and encourages the retained trees to grow faster and reach sawlog size much earlier. Thinning can be undertaken progressively, initially removing the poorest quality stems before final selection of the crop trees. Thinned trees may be used for firewood, pulpwood or posts.

In a pine plantation, commercial thinnings are usually undertaken a number of times throughout the plantations life, where the smallest and poorest quality trees are removed and sold for pulpwood and posts, leaving the best sawlog trees for final harvest.

For the best result, implement the following guidelines:

- undertake an inventory to assess if it is an optimal time for thinning;
- select and mark the trees for removal or the best trees for retaining;
- try to keep an even stocking throughout the plantation;
- ensure no retained trees are damaged by falling trees;
- cut stumps to less than 10cm from the ground;
- control coppice on eucalypt stumps using an appropriate herbicide or by physical means; and
- fall thinned trees into alternate rows to maintain access to the plantation.

Thinning is an essential part of farm plantation management as it is better to have 300 big trees per hectare that will produce sawn timber than 1000 small and medium sized trees per hectare that will only produce lower value pulpwood.

An appropriately thinned and managed plantation will promote the most growth on the best trees, which will produce the highest value product.

If you would like further free advice about plantation thinning, would like to see an example at a farm forestry demonstration site, or have any questions relating to commercial forestry, contact Emily May at Gippsland Private Forestry (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.

For further information contact:

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*Promoting sustainable, commercial private forestry development in Gippsland*

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