



New Zealand Farm Forestry Conference: ‘Trees in a Political Landscape’, 24 – 28 March 2021

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The New Zealand Farm Forestry Conference with the topic “Trees in a Political Landscape” was held from 24 – 28 March 2021 at Te Papa, Wellington. Although a five day conference, I only attended the regulatory session on Thursday, 25 March 2021. I came across the conference from its Facebook page and I have worked in forestry in Indonesia so decided to go to the conference to gain more understanding about the provision of plantation forestry in New Zealand.

There were five presentations in the regulatory session: Regulation of Log Traders and Forestry Advisers Amendment Act 2020 and Wood Legality Assurance Bill presented by Kay Shapland (Manager Forestry & Plant Sector, Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI)); the National Environmental Standards for Plantation Forestry (NES-PF) presented by Susan Secker (Manager, Forestry Operational Policy, Resource and Land Management Directorate, MPI); Climate Change – Farms, Forest, and Fossil Fuel presented by Simon Upton (Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment); Essential Freshwater Reforms presented by Bryan Smith (Chief Advisor for Freshwater, Ministry for the Environment); and Phytosanitary Options for Export Logs presented by Don Hammond (Chair, Stakeholders in Methyl Bromide Reduction).

From all the presentations, the NES-PF presentation was the major reason why I attended the conference. The NES-PF is the focus of my dissertation, and I thought the presentation will benefit me, especially to gain early information about the one-year review of NES-PF which had not yet been published (it has since been released on the MPI website). The NES-PF was issued to manage the adverse effects of plantation forestry, especially for eight-core activities (afforestation, prune and thin, earthworks, river crossing, forestry quarrying, harvesting, mechanical land preparation, and replanting). The national direction was made to make a consistent plantation forestry provision across the country.

Susan Secker briefly talked about the results of the NES-PF implementation review, her team found that the capacity and capability at the regional level still needs support from the MPI. High staff turnover and multiple job desks at the same time are one of the findings. The presentation also mentioned the progress of the Resource Management Act (RMA) reforms and the potential future of the NES-PF under the new or replacement RMA.

Overall, the presentation was really insightful. It reminds me of when I was working as a forester in plantation forestry back in Indonesia. In general, the main problems in plantation forestry in Indonesia and New Zealand are quite different (but not entirely different). However, the lack of capacity and capability, as well as the frequent staff rotation at the local level has been one of the obstacles in implementing the forestry provision in Indonesia. The conference has given me a good learning experience to see the plantation forestry provision from a New Zealand perspective. Moreover, it was nice to see all the stakeholders from government ministries and the forestry farmers interact with each other to discuss the future of plantation forestry.