Developing a National Forest Policy in New Zealand - European Influences

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Abstract: New Zealand has long lacked a national forest policy. This is understandable in a political environment with a strong neo-liberal, market-based leaning, where “the market will decide” has been the overriding mantra to the forest sector. Forest sector professionals, including the New Zealand Institute of Forestry have recently drafted a national forest policy to be able to deliver greater overall net benefits to the country. Accounting for the unique New Zealand context, it was developed following Australian and European models, particularly Finnish and Irish forest policies, and the new EU Forest Strategy. Despite these policies being situated in a more government interventionist context, the ideas of improving production, environmental and social outcomes through a forest policy is common to all. In its development, the sector has taken a holistic approach, including sustainable forest management, wood processing, non-timber values and uses in order to demonstrate widespread appeal and support amongst the forest and adjacent sectors. In examining the European influences on this policy development under New Zealand conditions, we also question whether a market-driven philosophy is compatible with a forest policy, given the poorly recognised time scale and benefits of forestry.

Forest policy, European influence, market-based