

***Developing the potential of New Zealand's small-scale
sawmilling and alternative timber sector: proposal for
regional NZ Specialty Wood Trade Shows and industry
workshops***

Stage 1 Report

Authors: Paul Millen, Harriet Palmer and Vaughan Kearns



Research Providers: Marlborough Research Centre

Publication No: SWP-T137
Date: Sept 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Objectives	1
Introduction	1
Method and outcomes.....	1
Response from stakeholders.....	2
Conclusions and discussion	2
Appendix 1: Information circulated to stakeholders (NZFFA version)	4



Objectives

The overall objective of this project is for FGR, through the SWP, to develop and facilitate a series of regional 'NZ Specialty Wood Trade Shows' as well as industry workshops, the primary purpose of which would be to develop and strengthen connections between the current businesses that are part of existing regional specialty timbers supply chains.

The Work Plan identifies five stages with two early Stop/Go points:

1. Develop industry event proposal to be circulated to the SWP PSG and TST; NZFFA branches and other stakeholders.
First Stop/Go point: positive support in principal needed from all major stakeholders including a minimum of two regional NZFFA committees identified that want to host an event.
Completion date: 30th September 2021
2. Prepare project budget, approach likely funders and sponsors; secure provisional funding. **Second Stop/Go point:** sufficient external sources of funding to pay for projected budget costs identified have been provisionally secured before work begins on Stage 3.
Completion date: 31st December 2021
3. Secure funding; identify event regions; prepare an event template and other resources for use by regional coordinators
Completion date: 31st December 2021
4. Event planning, promotion and delivery.
Completion date: 30th June 2022.
5. Report on event success, database and workshop outcomes.
Completion date: 30th June 2022.

Introduction

The small-scale sawmilling sector is a key part of the alternative timbers supply chain. At present this sector comprises many independent operators and has no industry organisation. Alternative species growers in many parts of NZ find it difficult to locate small-scale sawmillers when they need one; meanwhile the small-scale sawmilling sector has no information on likely future harvest and wood availability. Links throughout the supply chain are weak.

Following consultation with the Specialty Wood Working Group, it was agreed that one or more regional trade shows would be a good way to get people from throughout the alternative species value chain together; also that these events would present an opportunity to gauge the likely support for an industry development strategy and a possible stand-alone association for members of the small-scale sawmilling sector and other closely related sectors. The ideal endpoint of this project would be to have identified a group of industry representatives who are ready to work together to develop a strategy for the sector.

Method and outcomes

Stage 1 of the project involved preparing a proposal outlining the idea of holding 2-3 trade shows and associate workshops (see Appendix 1). This was circulated to stakeholders, with a request for feedback and support for the idea.

The proposal was circulated to the following people/groups:

- All respondents to the earlier survey of small-scale sawmillers
- NZFFA Branch secretaries – requesting that they circulate to their Branch committee and also liaise with neighbouring branches

- NZ small-scale sawmill manufacturers.

Recipients had around three weeks to respond to Vaughan Kearns (Ruapehu Sawmill and NZFFA Events Coordinator).

Response from stakeholders

The response to our proposal was muted at best.

A number of individual farm foresters responded positively to the suggestion, as did one sawmill manufacturer. However, no farm forestry branch took up the opportunity to lead the organisation of an event, even though it would have been supported by the SWP team and the possibility of a paid event organiser.

The timing of the email circulation coincided with the whole country being in Covid-19 Level 4 lockdown. This brought a lot of uncertainty and at least two respondents commented on it being 'a bad time' to try and plan for anything.

Even now, with most of the country at Alert Level 2, it is very difficult to know when and if any large-scale events will be able to go ahead, even if they are outdoor events.

Alternative event option

In response to a suggestion from one of the small-scale sawmilling working group, we also approached Innovatek, who organise the annual WoodTech event in Rotorua. The 2022 event is planned for mid-May 2022. WoodTech is an event for larger scale sawmillers, but we wanted to scope out the possibility of the small-scale sector being involved in some way.

We received encouragement from Brent Apthorp of Innovatek, who suggested that a small-scale sawmillers' demonstration/workshop could be tacked onto the main WoodTech event, be promoted as part of the programme, and could take place after the main WoodTech conference. Brent suggested that the Scion campus would be a good place to hold a small-scale sawmilling workshop.

After some consideration, it has been decided to reject this idea. The main target audience for a small-scale sawmilling event would be farm foresters that have mature stands of alternative species that are readily harvestable, and the small-scale sawmilling sector. These people are not likely to be attracted to the WoodTech conference. Also, we think it unlikely that professional large-scale pine sawmillers and wood processors attending WoodTech would want to attend a small-scale sawmilling event of alternative species located some way away from the main WoodTech event. Also being locked into the WoodTech timeframe could be a difficult constraint, and the decision to go ahead/cancel the event because of Covid changes would be out of our control.

Conclusions and discussion

Our Workplan Stage 1 intended that:

First Stop/Go point: *Positive support in principle needed from all major stakeholders including a minimum of two regional committees identified that want to host an event.*

We have not received the support required from stakeholders and at this stage cannot proceed with the current work plan. We consider that the Covid-19 lockdown has created exceptional circumstances that have impacted on the willingness of volunteers to become engaged.

The total SWP contracted budget for the project is \$16,000, of which there will be \$10,000 unspent if nothing further is planned instead. The SWP partnership ends on June 30th 2022. The nine months remaining is a relatively short timeframe and while a renewal has been proposed to the Forest Research Committee, there is no certainty of any industry structure or funding to enable work to continue on developing an industry strategy with the farm forestry and sawmilling sectors including the possibility of a new industry organisation.

Therefore, our proposal is for the SWP sawmilling Working Group and the SWP TST to consider options for an alternative event and how we might deliver this by 30th June 2022. One possibility already suggested could be an outdoor demonstration/event located on the Scion campus that could showcase small-scale sawmilling with trees harvested from within the Scion campus. The wider achievements of the SWP R&D programme could also be promoted at this event. This event could either mark the start of a new Specialty Wood Products research partnership, and/or be a fitting way to end the current SWP.

Appendix 1: Information circulated to stakeholders (NZFFA version)



Regional Trade Shows for the NZ Specialty Wood Sector

Invitation to NZFFA regional branches/special interest groups and Farm Forestry Timbers to collaborate with Forest Growers Research in organising a regional specialty wood trade show, January-June 2022.

Contents

An invitation to help organise a specialty wood trade show	5
Background: regional trade shows for the specialty woods sector	5
Why trade shows?	5
Who will organise the events?	5
Combining forces with existing trade shows	6
Who will participate in the trade shows?	6
How will this initiative be funded?	6
Summary – timeline from September 2021	7
Next steps	7

An invitation to help organise a specialty wood trade show

Forest Growers Research (through the Specialty Woods Products Research Partnership, SWP) want to partner with the NZFFA to stage a series of two or three trade shows featuring growers, processors and all others involved in the specialty wood supply chain. It is anticipated the trade shows will be held in the summer/autumn 2022.

Therefore, we invite you - NZFFA regional branches, action/special interest groups and Farm Forestry Timbers - to help with the organisation and delivery of these trade shows. Please read our following proposal.

Background: regional trade shows for the specialty woods sector

Our proposal is to develop and facilitate a series of two or three regional 'NZ Specialty Wood Trade Shows' as well as industry workshops, the primary purpose of which would be to develop and strengthen connections between the current businesses that are part of existing regional specialty timbers supply chains (see Fig 1.).

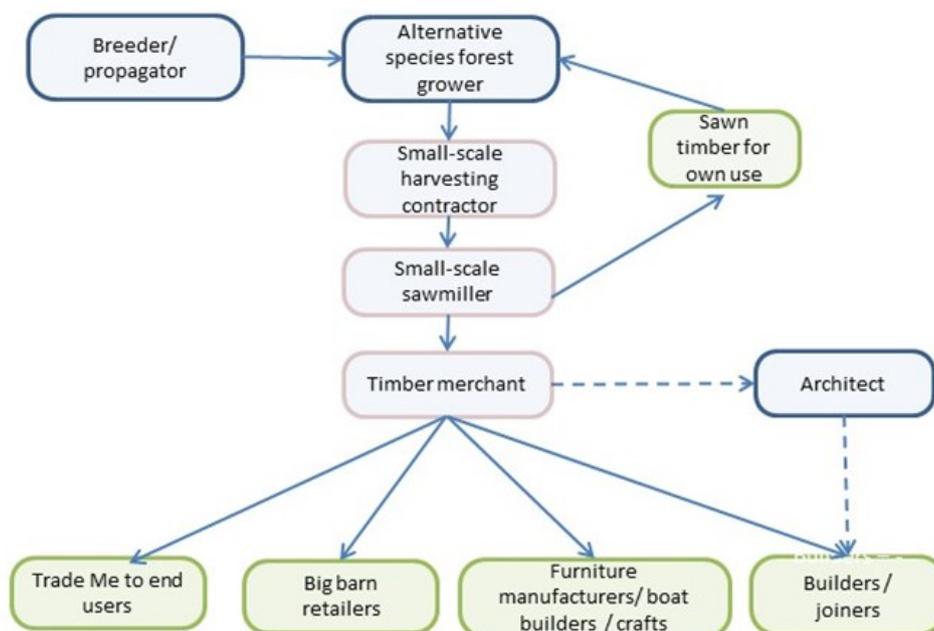


Fig 1. The NZ specialty timbers supply chain.

Why trade shows?

Trade shows are well established events within many NZ business communities. This includes the forestry sector: for example 'WoodTech' that focuses on the large scale radiata pine harvesting and processing sector. There is very little opportunity for the disparate but mutually dependent regional sectors of the alternative timbers value chain to get together and interact, so these proposed events will provide that opportunity. Field events run by the NZFFA featuring displays of sawmilling and specialty timbers are always very popular, so we are confident that we can build on the experiences from, and success of, these events.

Who will organise the events?

Forest Growers Research (through the SWP) will facilitate the events through supporting local groups to organise and run each event.

The SWP support team include Paul Millen, Vaughan Kearns, and Harriet Palmer, who collectively will work with regional groups that are prepared to take on the job of organising each trade show.

We want to encourage neighbouring NZFFA branches to work together to develop regional events – for example, there could be an event in the lower North Island involving Wellington, Wairarapa, Hawke's Bay, Taranaki and Middle Districts branches; similarly, the Bay of Plenty, Waikato and Taupo branches might combine forces, and in the South Island the Canterbury/Marlborough branches and/or the

Otago/Southland branches could team up. We also anticipate NZFFA Action/Special Interest Groups will want to collaborate with organising regional events.

A local committee would need to be formed to initiate and deliver each regional event with sufficient funding provided by event sponsorship to engage a regional event coordinator (in a paid, self-employed role if necessary). This person would work with the regional committee to deliver the event in collaboration with FGR. The role could suit someone from a NZFFA branch/Farm Forestry Timbers group or Wood Council or a suitably qualified professional event coordinator. All regions will be different in regard to their existing forest resources, the size and capability of sawmilling companies and the local market opportunities.

Generic event templates e.g. for event planning and budgeting, Health and Safety planning etc, will be provided by the SWP team to each regional coordinator to assist with event planning and management.

Combining forces with existing trade shows

In some cases there may be an existing trade show or suitable event which a regional specialty woods event could be part of. In this case a regional group would plan what to include in a 'speciality wood' exhibit/stand and be able to staff this with key people that are skilled in promoting NZ grown speciality wood.

In the North Island, we have already explored the possibility of linking up with the **May 2022 WoodTech event in Rotorua**, and this appears to have very good potential. Therefore we would welcome expressions of interest from any North Island branch/es or action group/s keen to progress this opportunity.

Who will participate in the trade shows?

The Trade Shows would aim to have regional businesses participate from throughout the supply chain, with exhibits and demonstrations of alternative timber forestry blocks, harvesting, sawmilling machinery, processes and products. The regional committee and coordinator would be responsible for developing a local event programme and budget based on an event template (supplied by SWP) and local preferences. The events would be open to the public and show-case speciality wood products produced from alternative species timbers, products, and their potential for NZ applications. They would be targeted at professional/semi-professional operators. The focus is at a professional/high-value timber for joinery, boat-building etc level rather than 'folksy craft'.

- A specific objective of the trade shows is to facilitate links between growers who have maturing woodlots of alternative species that are close to harvest and potential buyers that can successfully process and/or market specialty wood products.
- A second objective will be to determine if there is sufficient interest in greater collaboration through developing an industry strategy, and to identify industry leaders who are prepared to commit to making this happen.

In summary, it is envisaged the proposed trade shows and workshops will:

- i. encourage and promote commercial relationships between businesses in the specialty timbers supply chain
- ii. encourage all those in the value chain to appreciate the benefits of greater collaboration and working collectively to increase their regional profile and customer base.

How will this initiative be funded?

The SWP has agreed to underwrite this proposal, by providing funding for event facilitation work. This invitation is our next step as we need positive commitment from NZFFA branches/action groups so that the SWP team can seek event sponsorship from those who are engaged in the speciality wood supply chain. This includes:

- Farm Forestry Timbers (NZ Farm Forestry Association)
- Branches of the NZFFA/NZFFA Action Groups
- NZFFA National Office/Executive

- Portable/small-scale sawmillers of alternative and native timber species
- Portable/small-scale sawmill manufacturers
- Other equipment manufacturers and retailers – e.g. Levin Sawmakers, Husqvarna, Stihl
- NZ Arboriculture Association
- Ministry of Primary Industries – Te Uru Rākau
- AgMardt
- Tane’s Tree Trust, some regional Wood Councils.

Regional groups would also be expected to seek local industry sponsorship/prizes and exhibitors, and to assist with promoting the event to their regional communities of interest.

The full list of anticipated activities and in Appendix 1 provides more details of what we envisaged will be involved with running a regional event.

Summary – timeline from September 2021

The trade shows must be held by the end of June 2022. The following timeline summarises the key activities and deadlines for completion:

Activity	Deadline
Responses from NZFFA branches/action groups interested in organising a trade show/workshop received by Vaughan Kearns. Support from all major stakeholders confirmed (SWP team)	September 30 th 2021
Regions for each trade show selected.	October 31 st 2021
National level funding secured by SWP team Regional committees identified Possible trade show venues and dates identified in each region SWP resources prepared and delivered to regional committees Media/marketing plan developed	December 31 st 2021
Regional coordinators appointed	January 31 st 2022
Venues and dates confirmed	February 28 th 2022
Event planning and promotion well underway Regional sponsorship confirmed (regional committees)	March 31 st 2022
Event delivery; reporting on event outcomes	June 30 th 2022

Next steps

1. NZFFA branch committees should consider amongst themselves whether they are keen to be part of an organising committee for a regional specialty timbers event
2. Branch committees should liaise with neighbouring branches to gauge levels of interest, with the view to combining forces and putting together a joint organising committee
3. Committees should make an expression of interest to Vaughan Kearns (027 445 7138; ruapehusawmills@xtra.co.nz)

Any queries should be directed to Vaughan Kearns in the first instance.