

# **Farmers' perceptions of private eucalypt plantations in Northwest Tasmania**

by

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## **Abstract**

Eucalypt plantations for timber production have been rapidly expanding in Northwest Tasmania. It is important to understand farmers' perceptions of eucalypt plantations as they are the key decision makers regarding land use options in the area. This research aims to evaluate whether eucalypt plantations are a positive land use option from a farmer perspective in Northwest Tasmania.

A questionnaire survey was conducted to collect data on farmers' behaviour and attitudes towards plantations. The questionnaire was developed based on other studies and current policy settings related to eucalypt plantations, and delivered using a snowball method. The questions asked in the survey were about plantations' impacts, plantation policy settings and frameworks and background information about participants. Most results were statistically analysed.

It was found that based on average responses farmers in the region generally consider the impacts of eucalypt plantations on the economy, society, and the environment as negative. Significant differences were observed between plantation owners and non-owners with farmers who own plantations valuing the benefits more strongly and considering the costs to be less significant. This indicates that their decisions on establishing plantations are influenced by their attitudes towards plantations. Policy settings also had an influence on their decisions, but to a lesser extent. Regulations for eucalypt plantations influence most negatively farmers who currently do not own plantations, while Whole Farm Planning, economic incentives and Private Timber Reserves encouraged others to establish plantations.

The research generally supported the findings of many other studies about eucalypt plantations, although some potential benefits of plantations described for other regions were not identified for Northwest Tasmania. The findings of the research were also consistent with the theories of reasoned action and planned behaviour, which provided the theoretical basis for the research.

Further studies would be desirable to test the accuracy of their perceptions. This research could provide useful information for developing policies and strategies to solve problems and investigate better management options. It could also strengthen analytical frameworks and provide a useful instrument for studies on similar problems.

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