

Native Nursery SIG 3 April 2023 summary

At the Native Nursery Special Interest Group meeting via Zoom on April 3, Te Uru Rākau representatives presented an update on the afforestation research programme and the native nursery survey.

The meeting is available on the NZPP YouTube Channel at <https://youtu.be/vPygeayjSVQ>.

Policy Development

TUR gave an overview of its activities in the native afforestation area. Results from the native nursery survey undertaken late last year are helping test the assumptions made after the 2019 survey. TUR said it had heard loud and clear from the sector it did not want any central government native tree production as, given the right support and investment, it had the capacity. There had been assumptions that the carbon crisis would have led to greater development of commercial native forestry by now but instead it had led to more exotic forestry. As a result, there had been some recent reworking within the TUR policy and trade team to look at:

- New carbon markets
- Implications of [He Waka Eke Noa](#)
- Activity happening outside of Government
- What else might be required to address native tree demand and supply, including commercial, iwi, NGO and local government nurseries/propagation
- Impacts of the recent flooding and cyclone on priorities because funds were needed to address the damage.

Native Nursery Survey

TUR presented overall findings from the 2022 native nursery survey. 140 participated in the survey representing 47% of those approached. TUR will be releasing a summary of the survey shortly.

Headline findings:

- Most nurseries were private and half were based in the upper North Island
- Half were small businesses ie with five people or less while the remainder were medium (6 to 16 staff members) or large (more than 20).
- Most reported not using all of their productive land for production
- Most are looking to grow and have made operation changes to do so
- Barriers to not able to make operation changes included lack of access to capital or time or skilled workers
- Need for higher skilled workforce – very few workers with formal qualifications.

Native Afforestation Research Programme

TUR reported that a draft of the native afforestation research programme proposals would soon go to out to three external experts for independent feedback before a summary was released. She said the native nursery survey questions on research identified that propagation, germination and seed-sourcing were top research aims for the sector. These priorities were in line with the research aims identified in the 1 Billion Trees programme. Most nurseries were already investing in technology and innovation so the focus for TUR was on physiological challenges and protocols required to be successful. Aspects being looked at include:

- Seed sourcing– cutting/ tissue culture approach might be the only viable option for some species to have a consistent supply of material
- Germination – building on other work by people exploring paper pots and different container sizes

- Establishment - non-traditional forms of forest establishment such as on-farm and hill erosion control
- Exploration of industry standards e.g for an eco-sourced forest grade tree so everyone understands what that is. Such standards exist in Europe but not in NZ
- Practical guide to when and where and what eco sourced material is and what it means to on-sell it to consumers. Is eco-sourcing always the best option?
- Gap analysis work.

In response to questions from meeting attendees about the research programme, TUR said:

- It wasn't able to identify the external experts yet as they hadn't been approached
- At this stage, any industry standards wouldn't be part of an accreditation system such as Plant Pass because the standards would be free and open public good science involving guidelines
- TUR was evaluating proposals for a trial to remotely sense forest carbon i.e. eventually it would move away from look up tables to real time all-of-forest sensing but this would take time
- The current look-up tables under-estimate carbon sequestration but in some cases but over-estimate other trees
- MfE recognised [7 woody eco types plus 40 variations](#) for reporting
- TUR is putting out a survey soon on what the public thinks it should prioritise. It is interested in forest types that deliver the most bang for the buck and is looking to develop look up tables to provide a much wider value for landowners.

Next steps

NZPPI is now working on an NZPPI native sector positions paper covering the above issues as well as workforce and education. NZPPI is committed to ensuring that native nurseries stay front and centre of the research proposals and outputs.