

Trees mean more than just pines, says researcher

Jill Galloway

Getting commercial foresters to think outside the square about species other than *pinus radiata* is hard work, says a forestry researcher.

Stefania Pizzirani talked to farm foresters last week about life cycle analysis of forests and native trees.

She is completing her PhD at Massey University, though based at Scion in Rotorua.

Scion is a Crown Research Institute that specialises in research, science and technology development for the forestry and wood products.

Pizzirani did her masters in Wales and said there were more financial incentives for tree planting in Europe than there were in New Zealand.

"All intensive plantings here are *radiata* pine. I am looking at the social, environmental and economic impacts, as well as cultural values and assessing that."

At the moment, Pizzirani said, because of the economic meltdown, profit had come to the fore, but she was also looking at such things as biodiversity, employment potential, and greenhouse gas emissions.

Many of those things have not been evaluated and Pizzirani said she wanted to put figures on them.

She said production forestry was all about *radiata* pine and there was interest, especially among Maori (Scion worked closely with Ngati Porou), to look at alternative species and alternative management such as continuous forestry, or perhaps short rotations and the products that came from that.

"Instead of just forcing people to think about the profits, look at how

to maximise other things forests can bring."

She said that depended on who owned the forest and what they were driven by. "For instance, farm foresters have totally different values than a mainstream forestry company."

Farm forestry supporters often plant trees for shelter, bee fodder, land stabilisation, as well as profit. Companies generally look for the best financial use of the resource.

Pizzirani said she saw a major shift in Britain towards trying to optimise environmental assets – water and soil quality, for instance.

"Then the economic crisis hit, and suddenly it was about profit again. But if the Government subsidises

forestry, how many jobs would come from it?"

She said many of those things were not quantified, so they became a guessing game, and as a result it was important to assess as many economic indicators as she could.

"The more we can do to paint the bigger picture, the better – it gives the owners and managers more options."

She said British forestry had more financial incentives than those in New Zealand, where there could be support for those planting erosion-prone land in

trees. "But it is not as wide-scale as the UK. In Britain it is tied in closely with European Union incentives for renewable energy. And it has targets that are due to be met."

Pizzirani said she wanted to know whether subsidies worked on the ground.

"Does forestry create jobs? Those are things we need to know."

She expected her PhD research on forestry assessment would take about three years to complete.



Studying: Stefania Pizzirani, from California, is doing her PhD at Massey University, on life in the forest. She is based in Rotorua.

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