



Trees on Farms Utilisation Program

Expression of Interest Guidelines

October 2025

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it.

We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

DEECA is committed to genuinely partnering with Victorian Traditional Owners and Victoria's Aboriginal community to progress their aspirations.

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1. What is the Trees on Farms Utilisation Program?

The Victorian Government recognises the potential contribution of farm-based timber resources to the state's timber supply. However, unlike large-scale commercial forestry, farm forestry growers are often constrained by limited economies of scale which makes it difficult to coordinate and collaborate in ways that could reduce costs and improve market access.

In addition, many landowners may have a limited understanding of the potential value of their timber resource – some may have purchased the land after the trees were established, while others may be unaware of existing market opportunities. These factors further constrain the ability of farm forestry to operate as a cohesive and competitive part of the timber supply chain.

The Trees on Farms Utilisation Program aims to play a facilitatory role for the farm forestry sector by improving market access and supporting landowners to undertake management activities that add value to their timber resource.

Fundamental to achieving this is a level of visibility to the extent, type, quality, growth stage, and location of the farm forestry resource – and critically, an understanding of landowners' motivations to manage their resource and make it available for sale.

The program will be delivered in 2 phases:

1. **Farm Plantation Assessment** – A free, on-site plantation assessment will be offered to landowners who meet minimum eligibility criteria. This will provide insights into the commercial potential of their timber resource and facilitate an internal process of wood supply modelling across the farm forestry estate
2. **Incentives for Plantation Improvement** – Where assessments identify a viable commercial opportunity, landowners may be eligible for financial incentives to undertake plantation improvement works, such as thinning, to enhance timber quality and market readiness.

This Expression of Interest (EOI) relates to Phase 1 – Farm Plantation Assessment.

While participation in Phase 2 depends on receiving an assessment during Phase 1, any decisions regarding thinning, harvesting, or other tree management activities remain entirely at the discretion of the farm plantation owner.

2. Program objectives

Phase 1 of the Trees on Farms Utilisation Program has three key objectives:

1. To provide farm forestry growers with a farm plantation assessment report that supports informed decision-making about potential management options
2. To identify, quantify, and spatially map the available farm-based timber resource across Victoria
3. To design a strategic plan for supporting thinning operations on eligible plantations, with a focus on achieving efficiencies through the coordination of operations.

Once the objectives of Phase 1 are achieved, Phase 2 will focus on facilitating the supply of thinning material to available markets, including firewood, woodchips, and small sawlogs. It will also support landowners with plantations nearing harvest age by identifying and connecting them with suitable market opportunities.

The overarching goal of the program is to enable landowners to grow high-value sawlog crops that will be commercially attractive to local processors as they mature over the next 5 to 15 years, strengthening the long-term viability of farm forestry in Victoria.

3. Who can apply to receive a farm plantation assessment?

To be eligible to receive a farm plantation assessment, applicants must:

- be the owner of the land on which an eligible plantation is located, or a plantation manager with written approval of the landowner, with rights to harvest and sell the plantation's wood resources
- hold current public liability insurance with a minimum of \$10 million coverage per occurrence if they are the landowner, or confirm the landowner holds the required insurance.



4. What plantations are eligible?

To be eligible for the program, the plantation must:

- have a net harvest area greater than 3 hectares and less than 30 hectares*
- include trees that were established specifically for wood production prior to 2020
- contain trees at an average spacing of no more than 6 meters apart, in an area reasonably accessible by heavy vehicles
- not be already allocated or committed for sale
- be located in Victoria (see Appendix A: Target Regions which presents how the program will be rolled across the state).

Plantations established for multiple outcomes e.g. wind breaks, must have been established for the purpose of timber production which should be evident by way of their species, spatial arrangement or management history.

**Plantations with an estimated net harvest area exceeding 30 hectares can still submit an EOI. Such applicants will be required to provide evidence that they have explored alternative avenues for commercialising the wood resource prior to submitting an EOI in accordance with these guidelines, noting that plantations at this scale may be commercial without the need for additional support.*

Plantations established under previous Victorian or Commonwealth plantation incentive schemes are welcome to apply.

To apply for a farm plantation assessment, landowners are requested to submit an Expression of Interest.

Not sure if your trees meet these conditions?

You can outline your current understanding of your plantation in the Expression of Interest application

Submit an Expression of Interest at: <https://deeca.my.site.com/grants/s/form?id=a0iRF00000542jVYAQ>

5. Farm plantation assessment

Farm plantation assessments will be conducted by professional forestry service providers external to, but vetted by, the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA).

Assessments may include the use of remote sensing analysis - such as aerial photography or drone imagery, and on-ground site inspections and measurements.

Landowners will receive a report detailing the findings of the farm plantation assessment free of charge.

The farm plantation assessment will cover the following key areas:

Plantation history

This will require direct engagement with the plantation owner or manager and seek to inform relevant information related to the establishment of the plantation, including initial motivations, management history, disturbance etc.

Harvesting regulations

An assessment of Planning Scheme requirements including compliance with the Code of Practice for Timber Production 2014 (as amended 2022).

Biophysical assessment

Data collected as part of the biophysical assessment will include at minimum:

- tree species
- tree height
- diameter of tree at breast height
- number of trees per area (stocking count).

Estimation of wood resource quantity and quality

An estimate of how much usable wood the plantation might produce considering factors such as:

- log straightness visible defect e.g. damage to the trunk
- current and forecast yield (mean annual increment).

Harvest and roading feasibility

Where a commercial resource is identified, the farm plantation assessment will evaluate the practicalities of harvesting and moving logs or firewood from the property. This includes identifying any major challenges, such as suitability of internal access tracks for heavy, loaded trucks.

6. How may the farm plantation assessment data be used?

Data collected from individual farm plantations will be integrated into the program's broader dataset and analysed to inform a regional wood resource profile aimed at enabling the commercialisation and market access of farm-grown timber in Victoria.

By assessing the location, quality, and growth stage of farm plantation resources, the department can develop strategies to support efficient management that maximises value.

Support may include:

- facilitating direct engagement with processors where a viable, market-ready product exists
- subsidising thinning activities to promote sawlog development, or
- where management intervention is not viable, providing alternative recommendations such as managing the trees for natural capital benefits, harvesting the plantation (partially or entirely) for firewood or pulpwood, and reestablishing plantation with support from the Trees on Farms program.

These supports options will be defined within the farm plantation assessment report.

Any financial subsidy to support thinning operations may be offered to landowners under Phase 2 of the program. The offer will be assessed based on the plantation's capacity to meet a minimum value threshold, which will be influenced by factors such as timber quality, site location, operational feasibility, and opportunities to achieve efficiencies through coordination with nearby plantations.

Participants in Phase 1 of the program are under no obligation to participate in or accept any supports offered in Phase 2 of the program, and will retain ultimate discretion on management options for their trees.

All information gathered during the assessment will not be made publicly available without the landowner's prior consent.

7. Other conditions and requirements

Publicity

Successful applicants are expected to acknowledge the Victorian Government's support on any promotional material related to the program and liaise with the department's program area to coordinate any public events or announcements related to their participation.

Case Studies

To promote the Trees on Farms Utilisation Program, landowners may be invited to participate in case studies that share insights from their experience. This will be a department-led initiative, and suitable landowners will be contacted to gauge their interest in participating.

Payments

No financial payments will be made to landowners as part of the farm plantation assessment phase of the Trees on Farm Utilisation Program.

Monitoring

Following receipt of the farm plantation assessment report, landowners should inform DEECA of any significant changes or disturbances to the plantation.

DEECA will use any updated information provided by landowners following the farm plantation assessment report as part of its consideration for Phase 2 activities including a location based aggregate analysis.

Privacy

DEECA is committed to protecting your personal information in accordance with the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)*.

The information you provide in this EOI will be used to assess your eligibility for the Trees on Farm Utilisation Program - farm plantation assessment.

If your EOI is successful, the results of the farm plantation assessment may be shared with research partners, technical experts, relevant DEECA teams, and other government agencies, to inform the approach to Phase 2 of the program.

DEECA will combine the data from the individual landowner farm plantation assessments to define a regional wood profile. The regional profile will focus solely on describing the wood resource and will not include any private or identifying landowner information. Your information will be stored securely on DEECA-managed systems or other authorised platforms used for program delivery and will be retained in accordance with the department's Records Disposal Policy.

DEECA may contact you about your EOI or to request additional information.

You have the right to request access to, and correction of, the personal information you provide. For more information, please refer to DEECA's Privacy Policy at <https://www.deeca.vic.gov.au/privacy>

8. What is the application process?

The EOI process is outlined below.

Step 1: Submit Your Expression of Interest

Complete the EOI form available at <https://deeca.my.site.com/grants/s/form?id=a0iRF00000542jVYAQ>

Invitations to submit an EOI will be staged across Victoria over 2025 and 2026.

If you are unable to access the online form, contact plantationforestry@deeca.vic.gov.au to request an alternative format. If you have any questions, reach out to the program team via the same email.

You will receive an email confirmation from the department that your EOI has been received.

Step 2: Department review of Expression of Interest

DEECA will assess your EOI against the program's eligibility criteria. You may be contacted for further information if clarification is required.

Step 3: Outcome notification

A response, either a Letter of Acceptance or non-acceptance, will be provided to applicants within 2 months of receiving your EOI.

Step 4: Endorsement by landowner

Successful applicants will be required to endorse the Letter of Acceptance, confirming their final intention to proceed with the farm plantation assessment.

The signed endorsement must be returned to the department via email at: plantationforestry@deeca.vic.gov.au

Step 5: Commencement

Once the department receives the endorsement from the landowner, the department will be in contact with an update on the status of the farm plantation assessment. Timing will be dependent on the appointment of a forest plantation assessor who will ultimately make contact to arrange the visit.

Additional considerations

All costs associated with preparing and submitting an EOI are the responsibility of the applicant.

Participation in the farm plantation assessment does not obligate the landowner or the department to take any action beyond this stage of the program.

The department reserves the right to:

- decline any Expression of Interest,
- reject any application submitted after the applications closing date
- withdraw offers if a Letter of Acceptance is not endorsed by the landowner within two weeks.



9. Additional information

Additional information is available at the program webpage <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/crops-and-horticulture/farm-forestry/trees-on-farms/trees-on-farms-utilisation-program>

If you require assistance submitting your application online, email plantationforestry@deeca.vic.gov.au

10. Key dates

Access to the Farm plantation assessment will be introduced in stages across Victoria.

The program will initially be available in northeast Victoria as per the dates in the table below. This includes the shires of Alpine, Benalla, Greater Shepparton, Indigo, Mansfield, Mitchell, Moira, Murrindindi, Strathbogie, Towong, Wangaratta and Wodonga.

The Farm plantation assessment offer will then be progressively extended to Central Victoria, Western Victoria, and Gippsland commencing from February 2026.

Applications open – North East	17 October 2025
Applications close – North East	19 December 2025
Applicants notified	Within 2 months of EOI submission

For updates and further information on when to apply for the farm plantation assessment, please visit the department's website: <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/crops-and-horticulture/farm-forestry/trees-on-farms/trees-on-farms-utilisation-program>

11. Checklist

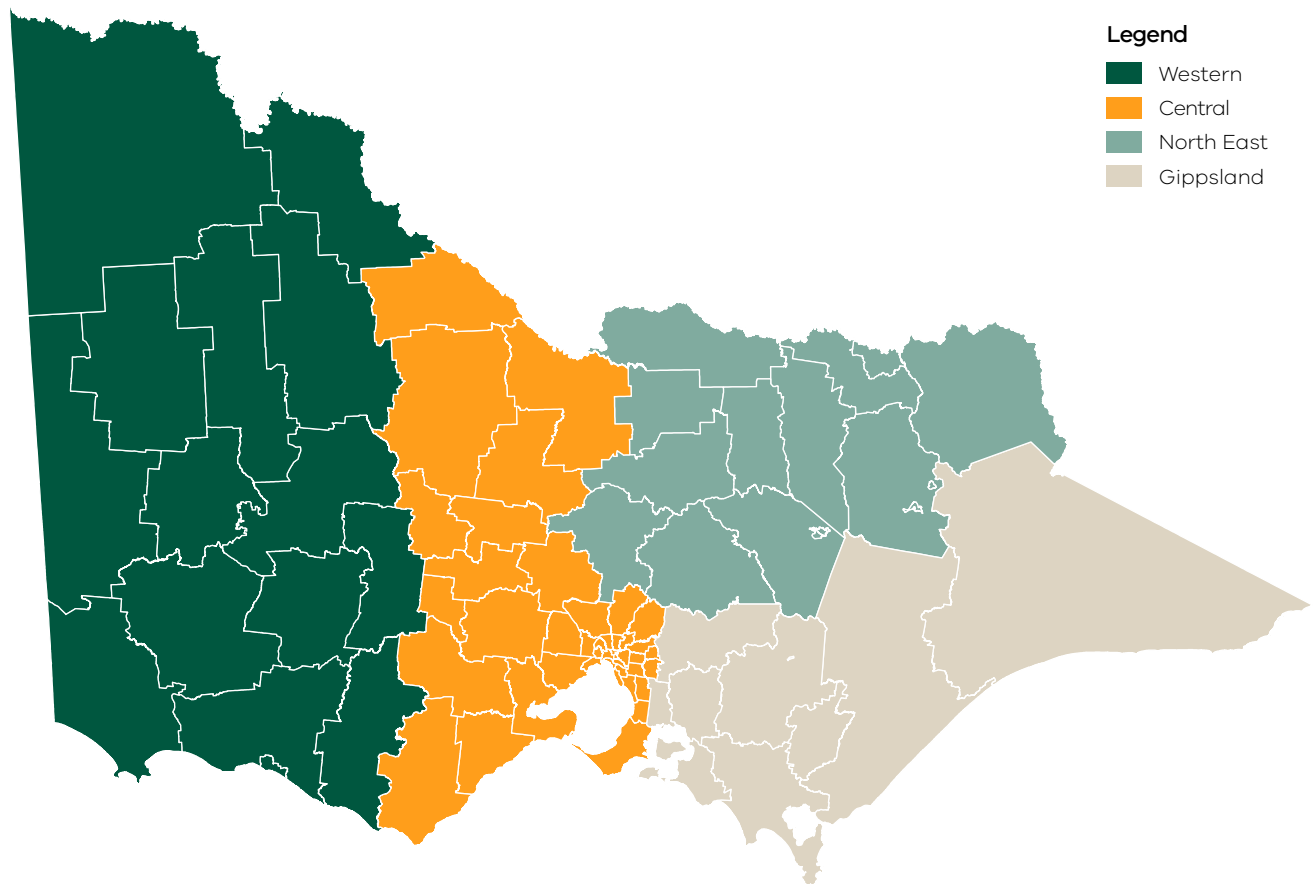
Read these guidelines and the information about this program at <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/crops-and-horticulture/farm-forestry/trees-on-farms/trees-on-farms-utilisation-program> before applying and complete the following checklist.

Have you:

- ☐ read these guidelines carefully?
- ☐ checked if you and your plantation are eligible for the program?
- ☐ prepared the appropriate supporting documents?

Appendix A: Target Regions

The rollout of the program to the program's target regions is outlined below



Legend

- Western
- Central
- North East
- Gippsland

North East

The shires are:

- Alpine
- Benalla
- Greater Shepparton
- Indigo
- Mansfield
- Mitchell
- Moira
- Murrindindi
- Strathbogie
- Towong
- Wangaratta
- Wodonga

Central Victoria

The shires are:

- Ballarat
- Banyule
- Bayside
- Boroondara
- Brimbank
- Campaspe
- Central Goldfields
- Colac Otway
- Darebin
- Frankston
- Gannawarra
- Glen Eira
- Golden Plains
- Greater Bendigo
- Greater Dandenong
- Greater Geelong
- Hepburn
- Hobsons Bay
- Hume
- Kingston
- Knox
- Loddon
- Macedon Ranges
- Manningham
- Maribyrnong
- Maroondah
- Melbourne
- Melton
- Merri-Bek
- Monash
- Moonee Valley
- Moorabool
- Mornington Peninsula
- Mount Alexander
- Nillumbik
- Port Phillip
- Queenscliffe
- Stonnington
- Surf Coast
- Whitehorse
- Whittlese
- Wyndham
- Yarra

Western

The shires are:

- Ararat
- Buloke
- Corangamite
- Glenelg
- Hindmarsh
- Horsham
- Mildura
- Moyne
- Northern Grampians
- Pyrenees
- Southern Grampians
- Swan Hill
- Warrnambool
- West Wimmera
- Yarriambiack

Gippsland

The shires are:

- Bass Coast
- Baw Baw
- Cardinia
- Casey
- East Gippsland
- Latrobe
- South Gippsland
- Wellington
- Yarra Ranges

