

## Government wants info on biofuture of wood

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**GOVERNMENT plans for a report into the potential to use wood to make bioproducts is being hailed by those pushing for a biofutures industry**



Wood pellets made from sawdust

Forestry minister Shane Jones has just announced plans to commission a report on bio-based products and biorefineries, saying it could help the country to meet its emissions reduction targets.

“We know about the ability of trees to absorb carbon and we’ve invested heavily in rapidly strengthening our forestry estate through initiatives such as the One Billion Trees programme and recent changes to the Emissions Trading Scheme,” he said at the opening of a new forestry hub in Rotorua this morning.

“These forests will act as a carbon sink in the short-to-medium term.

“However, they are also vital to increasing wood and fibre supply over the next 20 to 30 years as we position our forestry system, or parts of this system, to manufacture a wide range of products that will help us to adapt to climate change and meet our emissions target.”

### Big question

Jones is looking for alternatives to concrete, steel and plastic.

“In theory, everything that can be made from oil or non-renewable resources can be made from trees,” he said.

**“The big question is one of commercial viability and how the big ideas can be made into reality.**

“I’d like to see a report that will identify investible opportunities for the production and manufacturing of high-value, wood-fibre-based bioproducts that will bring innovation and employment to our regions and increase onshore processing of logs.”

A request for proposals, issued yesterday, calls for a commercially oriented report identifying internationally competitive investment opportunities to use forestry biomass in ways that move New Zealand towards its 2050 emissions reduction targets.

## **Ball rolling**

It will be used to decide whether the Government then commissions an in-depth report identifying potential investors and developing a plan for implementation.

The budget for the two reports is more than \$1 million.

**Bioenergy Association chief executive Brian Cox says it is great to see the ball finally start rolling.**

“It has been obvious for a long time that we can get greater value from the trees we grow, and that internationally, New Zealand has been falling behind other countries where biofuels, biochemicals and new engineered wood products are produced from wood,” he said.

“Scion, the Crown research agency, undertook a large analysis several years ago and showed the wide range of products which we could be making, and broadening the economic wealth we can gain from our forestry

## **Welcome move**

Having the Government invest in such valuable and necessary applied research will be good for all regions as a focus on extracting additional value from forestry will encourage regional investments and create new employment opportunities.”

**National Energy Research Institute chief executive Simon Arnold is also welcoming the announcement, saying it is a chance to develop the country’s bioenergy and biorefinery sectors.**

Proposals for the first stage of the Wood Fibres Future Project close on December 12.

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