POLICY MANUAL

Title:	Tree Cropping Policy
Previous No:	
File No:	ADM 0277
Statutory Environment:	Shire of Brookton Town Planning Scheme no. 3
Minute No:	10.02.09.06
Last Updated:	
Review Date:	June 2013

Objective:
The objectives of this Local Planning Policy are to:
- Achieve a consistent, efficient and equitable system for assessing and approving tree crop applications, in particular ensuring consistency across the five Shires;
- Allow local governments to keep track of tree crop developments, which will assist in promoting the region to potential processors;
- Demonstrate that SEAVROC local governments support and promote tree crops as a land use in the General Agriculture Zone;
- Encourage tree crop developers to adhere to industry guidelines and standards as specified in relevant codes of practice and other documents; and
- ☐Identify specific issues that local governments wish to see addressed in the planning and development of tree crops.

Any tree crop development shall not be justification for an application for subdivision nor any proposed tree cropping or an approved application for tree cropping on any land be deemed a precursor to subdivision

A body of legislation, policy and guidelines relevant to tree crops already exists and a range of government agencies and other stakeholders are involved in regulating and managing tree crop issues.

This policy aims to be consistent and complementary with existing regulations and not to place additional undue burden on landowners and investors wishing to pursue tree crop development.

Policy:

1. Background

Tree crops have the potential to become an important land use in medium to low rainfall agricultural areas in Western Australia (WA). Landholders and private investors are looking to capitalise on emerging opportunities for farm forestry in these regions, diversify income streams and to gain the on-farm environmental benefits that integrated tree cops can provide. Given the increasing opportunities and interest in tree crop development, it is timely for local governments to ensure that these developments are adequately supported and addressed in local planning.

The South East Avon Voluntary Regional Organisation of Councils (SEAVROC) member local governments, which are the Shires of Brookton, Beverley, York, Quairading and Cunderdin, wish to maximise the benefits and opportunities associated with tree crops, such as new industry development and regional investment, while minimising any potential negative impacts. They also recognise that having consistent policy across the region can facilitate planning approvals and provide landowner and investor confidence.

Background information relating to tree crops is provided in the report, Opportunities and Issues Associated with Farm Forestry in the South East Avon Low Rainfall Region.

2. Definitions

Applicant

An Applicant is defined as the person or entity (e.g. company or organisation) responsible for management of the tree crop. The Applicant does not have to be the owner of the trees or the land on which trees are planted (e.g. the Applicant could be a third party management agency). The Applicant is responsible for ensuring adherence to this policy and other relevant legislation and regulations.

Tree crop

For the purpose of application of this policy a tree crop is defined as:

- Trees planted with the intent of producing commercial products. Commercial products include all wood and non-wood products that can be sold to a third party. Wood products are produced when trees are harvested, such as woodchips or sawlogs, while non-wood products include products such as environmental services; and

- Trees under the management of one Applicant with an aggregate area greater than 40 hectares in any one Shire in the Shires of Beverley and York and an aggregate area greater than 10 hectares in the Shires of Brookton, Cunderdin and Quairading.

Landowner

A Landowner is defined as the person or entity that holds the title to the land.

Management Plan

Provides details of the way in which a tree crop will be developed and managed, and aims to demonstrate the means by which the principles of environmental care, cultural and fire management objectives are achieved.

A Management Plan includes the following components:
- Establishment plan;
- Plantation Management plan; and
- ☐Fire Management plan.

Code of Practice

Code of Practice for Timber Plantations in Western Australia 2006, produced by Forest Industries Federation WA, Forest Products Commission Australian Forest Growers, or as revised.

Guidelines for Plantation Fire Protection

Guidelines for Plantation Fire Protection 2001, produced by the Fire and Emergency Services Authority WA, or as revised.

3. Areas of application

This policy applies to land zoned 'General Agricultural' or "Farming" in the Local Planning Schemes of the Shires of Brookton, Beverley, York, Quairading and Cunderdin.

4. Application and approval requirements

4.1. When is an application required?

A Tree Crop Development Application must be submitted and approved prior to the commencement of a tree crop development.

In the Shires of Beverley and York an application is required for all tree crop developments greater than 40 hectares in size. If an Applicant has tree crops with an aggregate area of less than 40 hectares within any one Shire an application is not required. However, the Applicant is required to submit a Tree Crop Development Application when new tree crop developments will result in the total aggregate area exceeding 40 hectares.

In the Shires of Brookton, Cunderdin and Quairading a Development Application is required when an applicant has an aggregate area of tree crops which is 10 hectares or greater.

A Tree Crop Development Application can cover multiple tree crop developments, which may be on different titles, provided they are under the management of one Applicant.

4.2. Tree Crop Development Application requirements

In addition to Shire requirements for Development Applications, a Tree Crop Development Application is to contain the following three parts:

1) Registration, which must contain the following information:
- Title details of the subject land;
- ☐Name of the Landowner(s);
- ☐Name of the Applicant (tree crop manager);
- ☐Address and contact details of the Applicant;
- Area (hectares) to be planted and species to be planted; and
- ☐Signatures of the Applicant and the Landowner(s).

2) Management Plan:
- A checklist of information that should be included in a Management Plan is provided in Attachment 2. The checklist is based on the guidelines in the Code of Practice.
- ☐The Management Plan must address the policy measures described in Section 6 of this Policy.

3) Map, which should show the following:
- ☐Location of tree crops;
- Access roads;
- ☐Structures and buildings;
- ☐Natural features including native vegetation and water courses; and
- ☐Other relevant information such as hazards or significant features.

4.2.1. Modification to Tree Crop Development Application

An Applicant with an existing Tree Crop Development Application approval may modify the existing application, including the addition of new tree crops or expansion of existing tree crops. Additional areas of tree crops may therefore be managed under existing Management Plans, without the need for the Applicant to prepare a new Management Plan for every new tree crop development. However the Applicant must ensure that the management measures in an existing Management Plan are relevant to new tree crops and the sites on which they will be developed, and meet the requirements of this policy.

If this is not the case the Applicant is required to submit a modified or new Management Plan.

If an Applicant transfers management responsibilities to another organisation they are required to notify the Shire and provide details of the new managing entity.

4.3. Assessment of applications

Tree Crop Development Applications should be submitted to the Shire in which the development will occur.

Assessment of Tree Crop Development Applications is to have regard to the application requirements and policy measures described in Sections 5.2 and 6 of this Policy.

5. Additional policy measures
The following policy measures must be addressed in the Management Plan.

5.1. General tree crop management
The Shires encourage all tree crop developments to be undertaken with appropriate consideration to the specifications and guidelines in the Code of Practice and Guidelines for Plantation Fire Protection.

The Code of Practice provides management goals and operational guidelines to tree managers to "ensure tree crop operations in WA are conducted in a manner that is in accordance with accepted principles for good plantation management, while recognising that a primary aim of tree crops is to be economically competitive and sustainable".

5.2. Access and roading
When planning tree crop developments, Applicant's should consider how tree crops will be accessed for management, harvesting and removal of products (if applicable). Potential access roads should be identified on the Map.
The harvest and haulage of tree crop products results in 'wear and tear' of roads and other transport infrastructure and the Shires are seeking to minimise adverse affects on local roads within their control.

The future locations of processing facilities in or near the SEAVROC region are currently unknown, and it is therefore difficult to prepare a transport strategy prior to commencement of tree crop development.

5.3. Fire management
A fire management plan must be included as part of the overall Management Plan (see Attachment 2).
Any Fire Management Plan must be consistent with Guidelines for Plantation Fire Protection 2001, produced by the Fire and Emergency Services Authority of WA, or as revised. Should the Fire Management Plan not be consistent with the guidelines then the application will normally be refused.