



Australian Government
Department of Climate Change
and Energy Efficiency

Experiences and notes from developing a Reference Level

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Australia's circumstances

- Large area of highly variable forest (108M ha)
 - Only a small proportion under intensive management
- Numerous types of forest and forest management
 - Native forests, plantations
 - Single tree selection to clearfell, enrichment, other management
 - Long history of management
 - Forests in various states of regrowth-mature, differing silviculture
- Existing wall-to-wall remote sensing program within an integrated MRV system
- Legislation dealing with greenhouse gas emissions being implemented



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Reference level development did not start with technical discussion

- What were the Governments' requirements?
 - International reporting
 - National policy requirements
- What were the key factors in forest management?
 - Types of activities under forest management
 - Nature of the forest estate
 - Natural disturbances vs anthropogenic emissions
- What did the decision text state?
 - Requirements, report structure, accounting rules and modalities, key documents, review procedures



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Reference level had to meet national policy requirements

■ Clean Energy Futures (CEF) package

- Range of measures to reduce emissions, including an emission trading system
 - Includes use of land sector mitigation options through the Carbon Farming Initiative
- Legislation passed last Tuesday
 - Will start July 1 2011

■ Potential changes in forest policy

- Effects on harvesting rates
- Private land holder responses



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Key criteria for reference level

- Cover all key forest management activities
 - Ensure balanced accounting
- Consistent spatially, temporally and with MRV system
- Flexibility to allow use of project based, policy, market or other mechanisms
- Include all carbon pools (inc. wood products) and gases (CO₂ and non-CO₂)
- Focus on anthropogenic emissions
- Meet all reporting requirements



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Decisions made

- Projected reference level
 - Assuming BAU from 2009 as per decision text
 - Benefit only gained if additional action taken
- Narrow definition of forest management
 - Option 1 set out in 2003 GPG for LULUCF
 - Able to do this because of MRV system design
- Use best available data
 - But acknowledge need to improve through time
 - Note plans to make technical corrections as the system improves



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Why use the narrow definition?

- Only a small proportion of forest is subject to forest management activities (e.g. harvesting)
 - State forest
 - ‘Private’ forests (including leasehold and other lands)
- Potential issue of leakage with this definition
 - Decreased harvest in State land moving to private forests
- Solution
 - Include all areas of public forest under management, monitor all remaining forest, bringing forest into the account when a forest management activity occurs
 - Same type of tracking of lands as used for AR&D



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Implementation

- Developed a brief strategic plan
 - Checked with policy areas to ensure it would meet their requirements
 - Implementation based on the plan
- Identified models and data to be used
 - Which are interim and which are final?
 - Does any of the data differ to the MRV system?
 - Methods for projecting
- Complete report and modelling
- Internal QA/QC and review
- Preparation for technical assessment



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Key lessons and challenges

- Decide what is needed first
 - Understand international, government, policy and market requirements
- Use the requirements to set the objectives
 - Objectives will guide the methods
- Ensure consistency with MRV system
 - Both current and planned future improvements
- Clear and thorough understanding of decision text, guidance and guidelines
- Understand where uncertainties lie
 - Not just technical. Policy, internationally, others



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Conclusions

- Need collaboration between all parties
 - Domestic emissions policy, forest policy, international negotiators, technical
 - Also between government agencies/ministries
- Ensure needs, objectives and consequences are clearly understood
 - Results will be measured against those needs
- Acknowledge that accounting rules are not final
 - Be involved in negotiating on these rules



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Thank you

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