

TFGA Farmwood Pty Ltd

URL: <http://www.farmwood.com.au>

This business uses electronic commerce technologies to:

- link cooperatives throughout Australia
- market produce for members
- provide market information to members.

A timber marketing cooperative

TFGA Farmwood Pty Ltd is a Tasmanian based organisation marketing timber for cooperative members throughout Australia and the world.

It is a collective management company representing every farmer and landowner in Tasmania with an interest in farm forestry. There are currently 400 members controlling over 480,000 hectares or one million acres of private forest.

The member organisations of TFGA Farmwood include:

- North West Tree Growers Cooperative Society Limited
- North East Tasmania Timber Growers Cooperative Society Limited
- Southern Tasmania Timber Growers Cooperative Society Limited
- Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Forestry Committee.

The TFGA Farmwood project commenced in October 1998 as a TECC first funding round project.

Electronic network

The aim of the project was to develop an effective electronic marketing network for the farm forestry cooperatives throughout Australia.

TECC and Farmwood have completed the first phase of the project. This was an investigation and analysis of the potential for Internet and associated electronic technologies for this particular type of industry application.

CAT Computer Training, Ulverstone, was selected to work on the project. The consultant analysed a range of Internet options in order to identify the best strategies available for Farmwood. The strategies recommended will enable the cooperative to strengthen member networks and establish links with similar organisations around the world.

Results of the project

After a successful trial a Web site was created, an Internet address was registered and the trial site was transferred to the Internet site. The site incorporates simple design features which can be readily edited and managed by trained TFGA Farmwood staff.

A database of Tasmanian councils with email addresses has been compiled.

Among the consultant's key recommendations was the purchase of hardware and software products including a PC, a scanner, a network system and basic software for developing and transferring Web pages.

Other recommendations for electronic networking and communication include:

- establishing client-based email lists to facilitate networking among cooperative members
- encouraging the use of 'real time' communication tools, such as ICQ, for facilitating conferences and instant exchange of information
- subscribing to relevant email list servers to get a feel for how they may benefit the organisation
- developing electronic newsletters.

The network expands

Since the start of the project, TFGA Farmwood has expanded and is now the link organisation for forestry cooperatives throughout Australia. As well as the Tasmanian groups, this includes two farm forestry cooperatives in Western Australia, one in South Australia, two in Victoria and three in Queensland.

The organisation's aim is to combine the resources of many into a critical mass, sufficient to influence the market place for all forest-related products, from seed to logs to finished products.