

SC024
1 April 2020

orders – 1

Tōtara study proves local demand

JSC Timbers of Riverhead has placed the first commercial order for farm tōtara timber harvested and milled as part of a two-year study to test the practicality and commercial viability of a new industry based on regenerating farm-tōtara from private land in Northland.

The company placed an order with the Tōtara Industry Pilot (TIP) project for 10m³ of KD 25 mm boards, to be used for interior applications such as exposed beams, fins and rafters, and sarking. JSC Timbers' Johnny Dobbyn said he expected to make further orders within the next six months.

The order comes on the back of market testing conducted with JSC Timbers in February this year. It received from TIP eight cubic metres of 25mm and 50mm boards.

"Our customers responded really well; they love the idea of being able to source sustainably produced NZ native timber in long lengths, and they adore the look of the product," Mr Dobbyn said.

One firm of architects had specified farm tōtara for all interior wood finishes for a beach house.

"It looks absolutely stunning, and is testament to the care and detailed attention that has gone into the TIP project to ensure that it lives up to its kaupapa and helps restore the mana of this highly prolific native species," Mr Dobbyn said.

JSC Timbers has explored the potential for farm tōtara in commercial applications too. The company has tested the timber's reaction to fire-retardant coatings so it can be used in malls, offices and other large commercial buildings.

A second, smaller order of TIP project timber is being used in the Te Hononga, Kawakawa Hundertwasser Memorial Park project in Kawakawa. Two-and-a-half cubic metres was used to produce laminated beams that will be used in the revolutionary rammed-earth building, destined to become a community and tourism focal point.

"There is something special about Te Tai Tokerau tōtara becoming part of this kaupapa," said TIP Steering Group member Pita Tipene, who also sits on the Kawakawa Hundertwasser Board, who are co-ordinating the Te Hononga project.

"This reflects the spirit of the TIP project; realising the potential of this Northland resource for the benefit of the people of our communities and holding true to the value of kaitiakitanga, to ensure sustainability."

TIP project manager Dr Elizabeth Dunningham said further orders were in the pipeline for the milled timber resulting from the 300 m³ of farm-tōtara logs to be harvested to date by the project. She said the initiative's Steering Group had received "a steady stream" of enquiries since the first project harvest in May 2018. Requests had covered a range of applications, from traditional to *avant-garde*.

more

Some of these were for significant volumes of timber (5-65 m³), showing that even before an on-going supply had been established and the timber promoted, there was some interest and demand.

“Market testing is a primary objective of the TIP project so it’s gratifying to see these enquiries come in on the back of very little actual marketing to date,” Dr Dunningham said.

The project has commissioned a detailed analysis of the potential market for a Northland-based industry based on the sustainable management of regenerating farm- tōtara. This has identified potential market sectors, development strategies for these, and possible commercial partners.

-ends-

About TIP

The Northland Tōtara Industry Pilot (TIP) is a two-year project which started in April 2018. It will assess the forest resource; harvest and process up to 500 m³ of farm-tōtara logs; collect data and research results from drying studies and trials; conduct milling trials, product and market testing; and develop and analyse the business case for a regional tōtara timber industry. The project promotes the sustainable management of tōtara on private and Maori-land, for all the benefits that native forests can bring. For more information visit www.totaraindustry.co.nz.