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Forest Plantations and Timber Supply Projections in the U.S. South

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Pine plantations comprise 21% of the timberland area in the U.S. South and about one-fifth of the fast grown industrial forest plantations in the world. These plantations provide 33% of the softwood timber harvest volumes in the South, and have been projected to increase their share to about 50% by 2050. Almost all intensive management in the South is based on these plantations. However, the rapidly changing forest land ownership patterns in the South, competition with urban and farm land uses, dynamic changes in forest products manufacturing, and other factors will significantly affect future timber supply. We use the USDA Forest Service Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) data and the SubRegional Timber Supply (SRTS) model to project southern timber supply based on new assumptions about plantation area and management intensity, timber demand, forest land ownership, and competing land uses. Implications for plantation management, forestry investments, and public policies are discussed.