Regional Fact Sheet

Tairāwhiti/Gisborne

June 2025

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Te Uru Rākau New Zealand Forest Service

Current state of the forestry and wood processing industries in Tairāwhiti/Gisborne. The Tairāwhiti/Gisborne region is in the north-eastern corner of the North Island of New Zealand. It extends from Hicks Bay in the north to the Wairoa district in the south, between the Raukūmara Range in the west and the Pacific Ocean to the east.

$2.9 billion
Regional GDP for year ended March 2024 (1% nationally)

$197 million
GDP in forestry, fisheries and mining, March 2023 (7% of regional GDP)

$47,919
GDP per capita for year ended March 2024 (national GDP per capita $78,233)

51,135
Estimated regional population 2023 Census (1% nationally)

177
Number of new dwelling consents for all construction in 2024 (–3.3% change from 2023)

54.8%
Population identifying as Māori, 2023 Census (19.6% nationally)

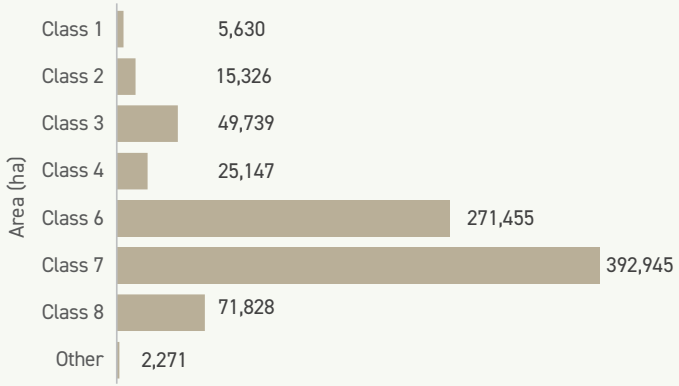
Source: Gross domestic product (GDP) – Stats NZ

Land use capability

The Land Use Capability (LUC) system classifies land into 8 categories based on its ability to support various productive uses over time. The classification considers physical attributes of land such as climate, soil, slope, vegetation and erodibility. Classes 1 to 4 are generally suitable for all ranges of cultivation. Classes 5 to 7 tend to be suitable for pastoral farming and forestry. Class 8 has severe limitations for primary production or forestry use.

Figure 1 shows the LUC classes of land in Tairāwhiti. 88.2% of land area in the region is classified under LUC 6, 7, and 8. Tairāwhiti doesn't have any LUC 5 land.

Figure 1. Area in hectares by LUC class 2021.



Source: Our Environment - Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research

Existing land cover

The total land area of Tairāwhiti is 838,506 hectares (ha), making up 3% of the total area of New Zealand.

41.37% of the region's land is covered in grassland, followed by 19.12% covered in exotic forest and 15.24% in indigenous forest.

New Zealand's regions are primarily determined by areas of water collection into rivers, known as catchments. There are 3 main catchments in the region: Waipaoa (220,716 ha), Waipu (153,855 ha) and Uawā (53,865 ha). 65% of the exotic forestry in the region is in these 3 catchments.

Exotic forest covers 19.12% (160,308 ha) of the region's total land area.

Deciduous hardwood such as willows, poplars, oaks, elms and ashes, which are exotic woodland, cover 0.77% (6,474 ha).

Indigenous forest covers 15.24% (127,744 ha) of the region's total land area.

Mānuka and kānuka scrub, typically as a nursery crop in a reversion towards forest, covers 8.95% (75,040 ha).

Broadleaved indigenous hardwoods such as wineberry, mahoe, *Pittosporum spp,* fuchsia, tutu, titoki and tree ferns, cover 7.19% (60,278 ha) of the region's land.

Forest – harvested is made up of bare ground where exotic forest was harvested or, less commonly, indigenous forest. It covers 2.25% (18,828 ha) of Tairāwhiti.

Source: Land Cover Database (LCDB5)

Geographic boundary viewer - Stats NZ

Figure 2. Map of land cover in Tairāwhiti. Source: Land Cover Database (LCDB5) – LRIS.

View a high-resolution map of the land cover in Tairāwhiti.

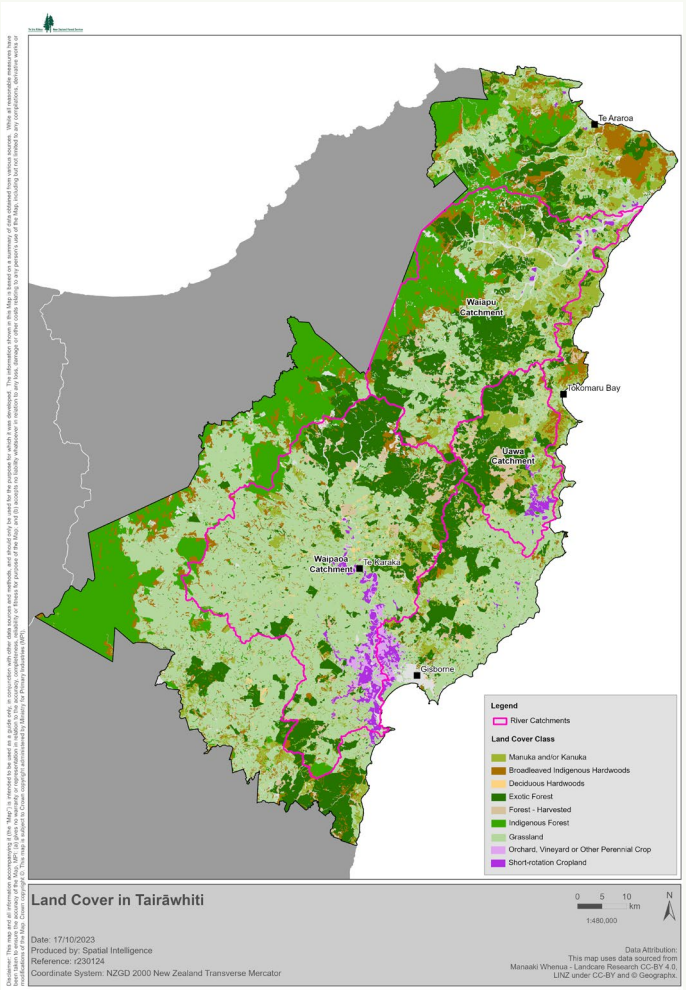


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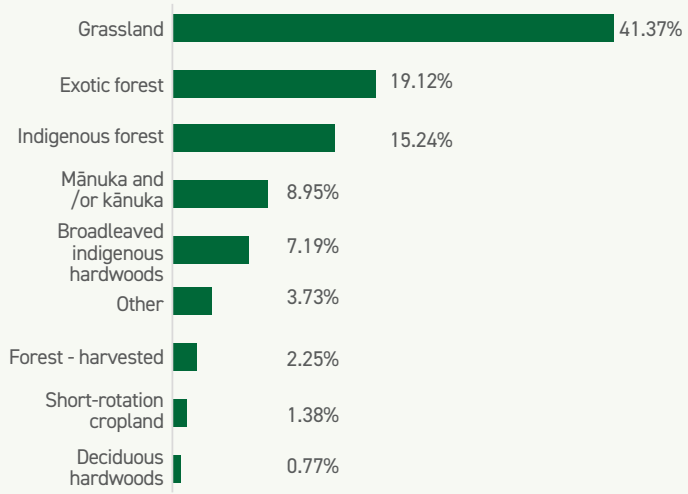
Figure 3. Percentage of different land covers in Tairāwhiti. Source: Land Cover Database (LCDB5)



National Exotic Forest Description (NEFD 2024)[1] for Tairāwhiti

Figure 4. Comparing Tairāwhiti and New Zealand on exotic forestry facts. Source: NEFD 2024

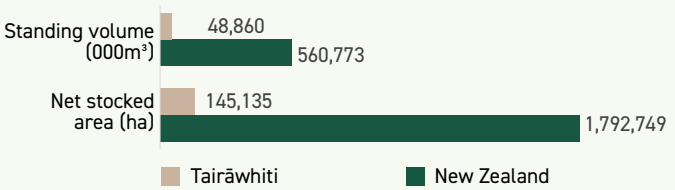
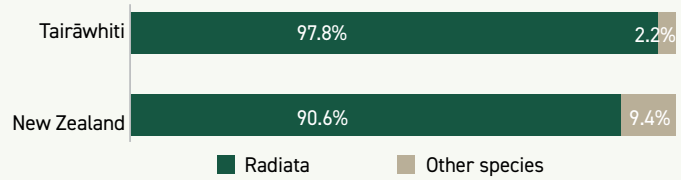


Figure 5. Proportion of exotic forest species in Tairāwhiti in comparison to New Zealand. Source NEFD 2024*



** Age classes 50+ are excluded due to limited data availability for Tairāwhiti.*

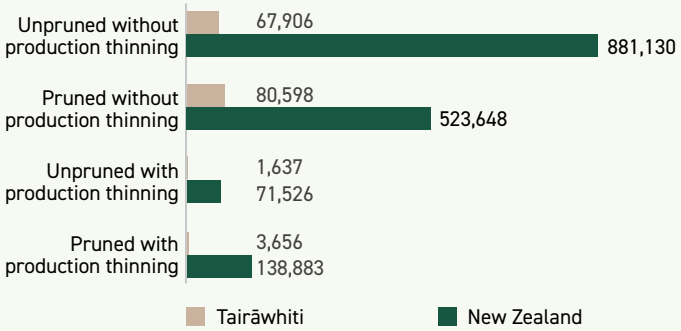
The average age of the exotic forest in the region is 18.6 years, the same as the national average.

1 *The 2024 National Exotic Forest Description provides a detailed description of New Zealand's planted production forest.*

The exotic forest area in Tairāwhiti in 2024 was 145,127 ha. The area of radiata pine comprises 97.8% of the exotic forest in the region. Other exotic forestry species account for 2.2% of the exotic forest estate in the region.

23% of the total planted area of exotic forest in Tairāwhiti is of potentially harvestable age (26–30 years). This compares to 21% of the national total planted area in the same age range.

*Figure 6. Number of hectares of pruned and unpruned regimes of radiata pine in Tairāwhiti. Source: NEFD 2023**



**Note: Regime data is based on NEFD 2023. Due to confidentiality rules, regime data is only available for forests aged 0-50 years. Use caution when comparing this information with other NEFD data in this factsheet as reference years and methodology may differ.*

The forest area broken down by NEFD forest owner national size class for the East Coast wood supply region is:

*Table 1. Forest area by national size class. Source: NEFD 2023**

Tairāwhiti	< 40 ha	40–99 ha	100–999 ha	1000–9999 ha	10,000+ ha
Area (ha)	16,875	2,861	17,771	65,572	55,153
Number of forest owners	NA	46	52	16	3

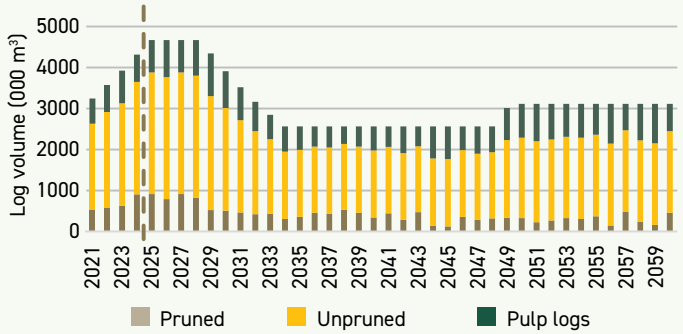
**Note: Ownership data in this table is based on NEFD 2023. The 2024 NEFD does not include ownership data for Tairāwhiti. Use caution when comparing this table with other NEFD sources in this factsheet as they may be based on different reference years and methodologies.*

Wood Availability Forecast (WAF)

Figure 7 shows the availability of pruned, unpruned and pulp logs between 2021 and 2060, for the region. Wood availability remains between 3 and 4 million cubic metres per annum until the early 2030s. Then, there is a 15-year period, from about 2034 to 2048, where wood availability drops to about 2.5 million cubic metres per annum.

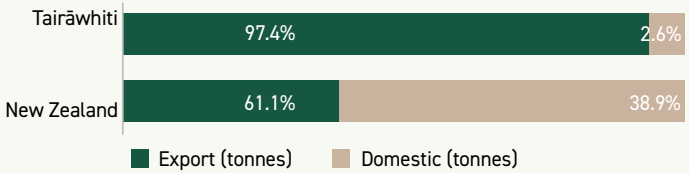
Source: WAF August 2021 - Scenario 3 - Canopy

Figure 7. Wood Availability Forecast (WAF) scenario 3 for Tairāwhiti, in 000 cubic metres (m³). Source: WAF August 2021.



Markets

Figure 8. Percentage of exports vs domestic processing of logs for New Zealand and the East Coast wood supply region. Source: Levy trust data for year ended December 2024



In 2024:

- 2,393,194 tonnes (97%) of logs harvested in the region were exported from Eastland Port and 63,855 tonnes (3%) were used for domestic processing.
- The region harvested 8%, exported 13% and domestically processed 0.5% of New Zealand's logs.

Forestry and wood processing supply chain

Nurseries

There is one major nursery in the region producing exotic tree species. There are also some nurseries producing native tree species in the region. They include private businesses to trusts, and the District Council.

Wood processing

In 2022:

- Tairāwhiti and Hawke's Bay produced 477,023 m³ of **sawn timber**. This is 10.7% of New Zealand's total sawn timber production for the period.
- Tairāwhiti and Hawke's Bay produced 3,241 m³ of **panels**. This is 0.2% of New Zealand's total panels production for the period.
- Tairāwhiti and Hawke's Bay produced 133,264 air dry tonnes of **pulp**. This is 15.1% of New Zealand's total panels production for the period.

Source: Quarterly production statistics MPI. Statistics for calendar year 2022 (Jan-Dec). This data only includes mills that report data quarterly. Data from mills that report annually is not included.

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Government funding

One Billion Trees Programme: as of July 2023, $12.6 million in funding has been approved for direct landowners and partnership grants in the region. As of October 2023, 11.9 ha of exotic and 233.4 ha of native forest have been planted in Tairāwhiti on erosion prone land under the One Billion Trees Programme (1BT). This equates to 0.34% of the total exotic and 4.3% of the total native 1BT planting on erosion prone land nationally.

The One Billion Trees Fund is closed. It was part of the One Billion Trees Programme. The programme's goal is to plant a billion trees by 2028.

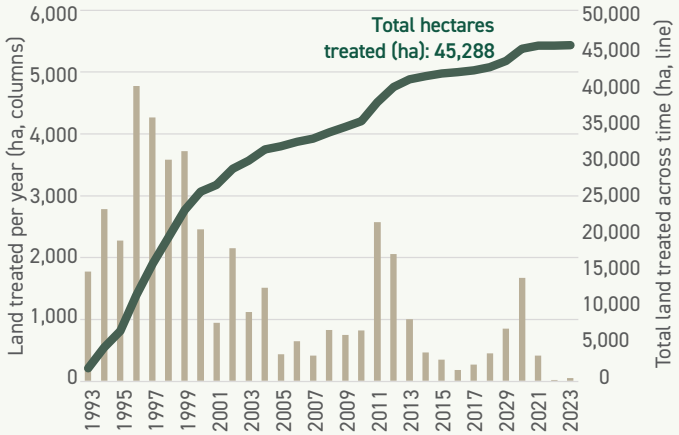
Progress towards planting one billion trees

Erosion Control Funding Programme (ECFP): As of July 2023, $77.8 million in funding had been approved for projects in the region. These projects were a mix of land treatment on individual properties and community partnership projects to foster innovative approaches to addressing erosion in the region. ECFP funding is now closed for new applications and support is now provided through MPI's Hill Country Erosion Programme.

Erosion Control Funding Programme (ECFP) – MPI, Hill Country Erosion Programme for councils – MPI

The ECFP was established in 1992 with the aim to control erosion on significantly eroded or erosion-prone land in the Tairāwhiti region. As of July 2023, the ECFP had treated 45,288 ha of land including 39,488 ha of exotic forest and the remainder in pole planting and native reversion (see Figure 10). Another 9,151 ha of approved treatments are in progress, towards a target of 54,439 ha approved to be treated by 2030.

Figure 9. Hectares of land treated through the ECFP



Provincial Growth Fund (PGF): as of 31 August 2023, $271.44 million in funding has been approved for projects in the region.

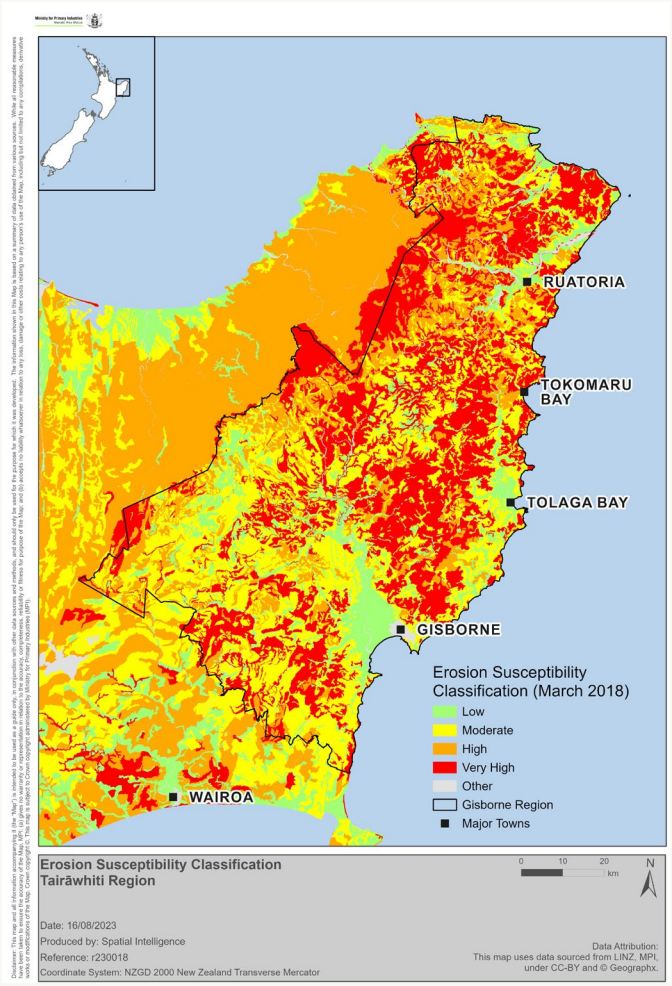
Through this fund, the government seeks to help build a regional economy that is sustainable, inclusive and productive.

The Provincial Growth Fund – Kānoa

Erosion

Figure 10. Erosion Susceptibility Classification (ESC). Source: MPI.

View a high-resolution version of this map.



Around 38% of the district's land (320,000 ha) is classified as very highly susceptible to erosion in the ESC (Erosion Susceptibility Classification) scale (See Figure 10), compared to around 12% for the rest of New Zealand.

In 2009, Gisborne District Council identified the land requiring erosion treatment as Overlay 3A (LO3A). The overlay shows how different areas of land are more or less likely to erode. This information is based on what's in the Tairāwhiti Resource Management Plan.

Land Overlay 3A - Gisborne District Council

Forestry for erosion control
Forestry plays a significant role in stabilising erosion prone land. Trees and forests have a better ability to stabilise hill sides compared with other landcover types such as grasslands. Trees and forests increase rainfall interception, and their roots can reach deeper into the soil, holding it together[2].

2024 Inventory of gully distribution in Tairāwhiti
In 2023, cyclones Hale and Gabrielle caused widespread damage in Tairāwhiti and Wairoa. The government set up a Ministerial Inquiry into Land Use in response. The panel studied the impact of storm damage caused by woody debris and sediment. It recommended ways to reduce the effects of future storms. In response to the inquiry, Te Uru Rākau – New Zealand Forest Service commissioned an inventory of gully distribution in Tairāwhiti.

The inventory showed:

- there are 1,449 active gullies covering 2,279 hectares in the region
- 220 gullies have formed since the last inventory in 2017
- 75% of the active gully area is made up of small gullies less than 10 ha each.

There is a high chance of stabilising small gullies. Once gullies reach 10 ha in size, it's unlikely they can be stabilised.

Source: *Inventory of gully distribution following 4 cyclonic events between 2017 and 2023, Tairāwhiti Region, North Island [PDF, 3 MB]*

Woody biomass

The Regional Energy Transition accelerator programme (RETA) is conducted by the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA). The RETA has estimated the current demand for bioenergy and woody biomass supply available for bioenergy in the Tairāwhiti region from 2024-2050.

On average, over the next 15 years in the Tairāwhiti region, approximately 813,363 tonnes of woody biomass could be available for bioenergy annually, comprising:

- 289,119 tonnes of harvest residues
- 19,465 tonnes of wood processing residues
- 403,136 tonnes of KI and KIS export grade logs
- 95,847 tonnes of domestic pulp logs
- 5,797 tonnes of minor species.

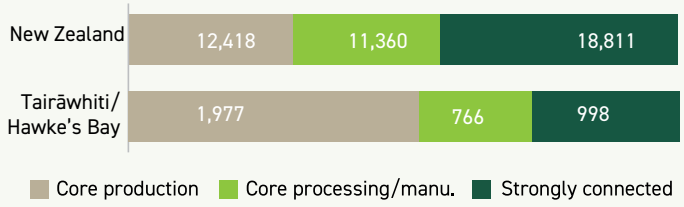
Source: *RETA Tairāwhiti – EECA*

2 Phillips et al. (2015). *Forest and erosion protection - getting to the root of the matter - New Zealand Institute of Forestry (PDF, 381 KB).*

Workforce

For the year ending March 2023, an estimated 42,589 people worked in the forestry and wood processing sectors in New Zealand and nearly 9% (3,741) of these worked in Tairāwhiti and Hawke's Bay.

Figure 11. Comparing the numbers of workers in forestry and wood processing for Tairāwhiti including Hawke's Bay with New Zealand. Source: Forestry and wood processing – Workforce insights



Core production	Core production includes forestry, logging and forestry support services.
Core processing/ manufacturing	Core processing/manufacturing includes log sawmilling, wood chipping, timber resawing and dressing, veneer and plywood manufacturing, reconstituted wood product manufacturing and pulp, paper and paperboard manufacturing.
Strongly connected	Strongly connected activities include wooden structural fitting and component manufacturing, other wood product manufacturing, corrugated paperboard and paperboard container manufacturing, paper bag manufacturing, wooden furniture and upholstered seat manufacturing, timber wholesaling.

Infrastructure

Electricity

Tairāwhiti is connected to the country's electrical network through the Tuai grid exit point situated at the Tuai power station, an integral component of the Waikaremoana Power Scheme. Managed by Genesis Energy, this power facility possesses a collective power generation potential of 60MW.

The Firstlight Network owns the electricity transmission network in the region, which mainly consists of two 110kV and 50kV line circuits.

Roads

Tairāwhiti relies on two state highways to connect with other regions and within the region. SH2 provides the only road connection to the south, while SH2 and SH35 connect Tairāwhiti to the Bay of Plenty via East Cape and Waioeka Gorge, respectively.

Rail

The line between Wairoa and Napier port is a vital link in the region's forestry supply chain which helps to reduce the number of heavy log trucks on the regional roads.

Log trains were suspended on 1January 2023 for logistic reasons. Currently, this rail line is closed with no estimated opening date. Prior to the closure, the line had the capacity to transport 150,000 tonnes of logs a year (around 690-tonne per weekday). This equates to removing 23 log trucks per day on the road between Wairoa and Napier port.

Eastland Port

Eastland Port in Gisborne is at the base of Titirangi hill, where the Tūranganui River flows into the bay. The port is serviced by an on-site business providing debarking facilities, and currently, it does not have a containerised freight capability. The primary exports include logs, squash and kiwifruit.

Eastland port exported the third largest volume of logs (11.8% of New Zealand log exports) after Tauranga and Napier ports.

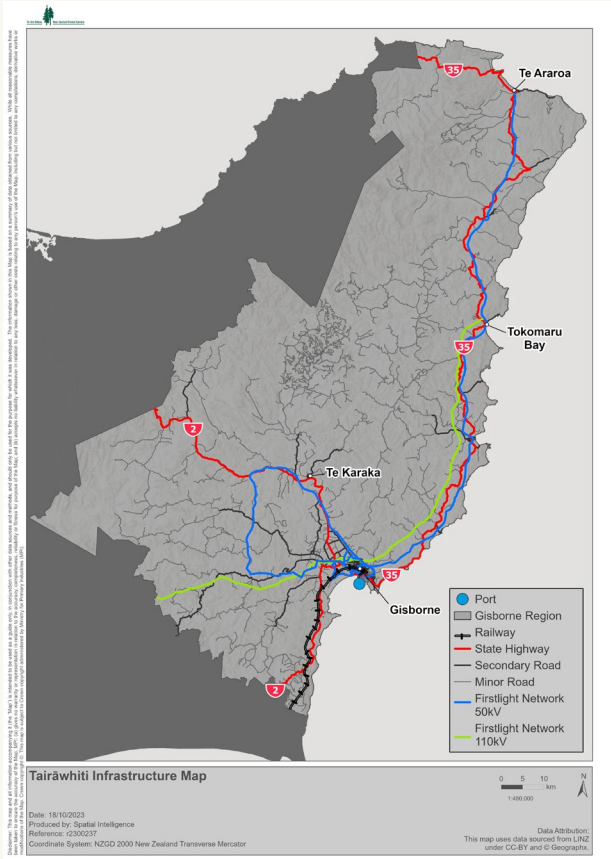
Table 2. Eastland port export volumes and values (Free on board-FOB) for forestry and wood products for the year ending 2024. Source: MPI Overseas Merchandise and Trade

Product	Unit of measure	Export quantity	Export quantity over NZ Total	Export Free On Board ($NZ)	Export Free On Board over NZ total
Logs	Cubic metre	2,403,014	11.8%	$ 375,509,771	12%

Sources: Firstlight network website, Genesisenergy website, Eastland Port website, KiwiRail website, KiwiRail comms

Figure 12. Map of key infrastructure across Tairāwhiti.

View a high-resolution version of this map.



Feedback

Contact email: info@mpi.govt.nz

Published by: Te Uru Rākau – New Zealand Forest Service, Forestry Insights Directorate

Useful links

- Invest in New Zealand wood processing (March 2020) – NZTE
- Local Insights Report: August 2023 – MBIE
- Gisborne region 2018 Census data – Stats NZ
- Regional Economic Activity Web Tool – MBIE
- Tairāwhiti – Gisborne – NZTA
- Waka Kotahi Arataki version 2 - Gisborne - NZTA (PDF, 813 KB)
- Regional FAQ: Gisborne / East Coast - Trees That Count (PDF, 2.8 MB)
- Whenua futures - Understanding the long-term impact of land use decisions in Tairāwhiti
- Tairāwhiti Māori economic development report - Te Puni Kōkiri.
- What we have founded – Kānoa
- East Coast/Tairāwhiti – Kānoa
- Ministerial Inquiry into Land Use – MfE
- New Zealand forest data – MPI
- Tairāwhiti Resource Management Plan - Gisborne District Council
- Maps and data – Gisborne geoportal data hub
- Afforestation and deforestation intentions survey 2023 – MPI (PDF, 943 KB)

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