

Abstract

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<p>Argentina and Chile Stretch from tropical zones in the North to Tierra del Fuego in the southern tip of South America. The region encompasses an extraordinary biological wealth - from deserts to forests, from the sea level to high mountain peaks above 6000 meters. Argentina however, has 3.6-times larger area than Chile.</p> <p>Chile possesses a total of 15.6 million hectares of forests; 13.4 million are native forests where broad-leaved species are dominant, and 2.1 million hectares of plantation forests. Radiata pine represents more than 85% of the planted species.</p> <p>There are not accurate values for the total extension of forests in Argentina. SAGPyA reveals that of the 100 million hectares of natural forests that Argentina had at beginning of the century, 30-35 million are left. Eighteen to twenty million hectares are classified as "productive or potentially" commercial forests.</p> <p>Plantation forestry began in Chile at beginning of the century, with the first industrial plantation forest established in 1907. However, the massive clearing and burning of forests began in the mid-nineteen century with the arrival of immigrants. Activities such as mining drastically reduced the forest cover in some regions due to their demand for fuelwood and charcoal.</p> <p>Forest plantations began to spread in Argentina since the 1940's. Nowadays they cover 8.1 hundred thousand hectares, made up mainly by rapid growth forests.</p> <p>The development of the Chilean forest sector could be considered as a good example of modern forestry. Chile has focussed its production, since the beginning, on the exports. Native forest supplied about 16% of the wood used by the forest products industry in 1995-1996.</p> <p>Although Argentina is also increasing its production of forest products, the level of imports also continues growing.</p> <p>The lower costs of land and production in Argentina and the incentives offered by the government are diverting capital investments towards the country. Also Chilean companies are investing in Argentina.</p>			
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