In the last five years, the total New Zealand forest harvest has grown from 16 million m³ to 20 million m³ - and there is a lot more where that came from.

These figures indicate impressive industry growth, yet talk of supply shortages, log dumping and depressed export prices is common. So does this silver lining have some clouds? And how can the industry make the most of its ever-increasing raw resource?

To find out, InWood spoke to a group of people working in a key sector - stumpage and log sales:

Adrian Barker - manager of Carter Holt Harvey Woodmetrics, a private forest and woodlot sales management service.
Ross Bawden - owner of Bawden Associates, a harvester and marketer for large privately owned forests.
Alex Boyo - manager, supply and trading for Fletcher Challenge Forests and a stumpage specialist.
Peter Clark - chief executive of forestry services provider PF Olsen and Company.
Andy Dick - heading up stumpage buyer, Logiztix.

InWood: Some sawmills are reducing operating hours because of supply shortages. Yet the harvest is bigger than ever. What's going on?

Bawden: The situation varies from region to region - while there may be large volumes in some areas, there may be supply shortages by specific log grades. Areas like the southern North Island are short of good quality unpruned wood, like S grade logs, because, in general, a clearwood regime doesn't produce good quality S logs. It's too difficult to produce a big, fat pruned log and a high quality unpruned log from the same tree because of the generally lower stocking levels.

Boyo: There are no shortages of unpruned sawlogs but the supply and demand for pruned logs is currently finely balanced in most regions. Over the next few years there will be a lot more pruned logs coming on stream, particularly in Hawke's Bay and the East Coast, so the situation should improve.

For the December 2002 year, New Zealand log exports are expected to be a record 7 million tonnes - a million more than the previous year. Jane Clement talked to some stumpage and log sales specialists about where their industry is headed.