

After 50 Years, Shift Genetic Emphasis Toward the True Tree Value – Pine Sawtimber

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The forest landowner in the South over a rotation receives 75 to 85% of their stumpage income from pine sawtimber. Lumber products derived from today's sawtimber trees are not the same as 25, 50 or 100 years ago. A lack of clear, dense, heartwood characteristics means few, if any, windows, doors, siding, flooring, boxing, trim boards used in home construction from Southern pine. "Forest Management" has robbed the grade from Southern pine. Coarse grain is the normal grain pattern today due to periodic thinnings to increase diameter growth and reduced age of rotations, plantings produce uniform tree characteristics with increased juvenile wood content which will not meet SPIB #2 strength standards and less than 5% of lumber allows prices twice the species average. The two "true strengths" of Southern pine, treatability and strength, could be in jeopardy if nothing is done now to address forest genetics traits, such as, quicker transition to mature wood, higher percentage summerwood, increase cell wall thickness, determine best microfibril angle, etc. Meanwhile, for the next 25-30 years, how do we manage what we've got, and not lose more market share due to poorer lumber properties, and can temperature and chemical modification of the wood provide interim product improvements?

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