

## MARKETING AND SEEDLING DISTRIBUTION OF LONGLEAF PINE SEEDLINGS

Mark J. Hains<sup>1</sup>

The Longleaf Alliance, a partnership of people and organizations interested in longleaf pine, started tracking longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris* Mill.) seedling production in 1996. Total Longleaf seedling production has increased annually from 1996 to 2000. Bareroot seedling production decreased from 1996 to 1997, and decreased again from 1997 to 1998. Many nursery managers decreased longleaf production because demand for loblolly and slash were high in this time period, and more seedlings can be grown per square foot of nursery bed with loblolly or slash than with longleaf pine. Overwhelming demand for longleaf due to CRP Program and surplus production of loblolly and slash led to increased bareroot longleaf production from 1998 to 1999 and 1999 to 2000.

Containerized longleaf seedling production has increased annually since 1996. The number of nurseries growing container longleaf seedlings increased from approximately 24 in 1996 to around 42 nurseries in 2000. Overall, containerized seedling production increased by approximately 240% in this time. Despite this large increase in container longleaf supply, virtually all container seedlings produced were sold and planted.

Frequently, advertising and marketing require a significant percentage of a new business's annual budget. This has not been the case with nurseries growing longleaf pine. In the face of an overwhelming

demand, many new nurseries can sell their seedlings through contacts with existing nurseries, or through the Longleaf Alliance. During periods of short supply, the Longleaf Alliance maintains a list of landowners and foresters in search of longleaf pine seedlings. In several cases, the Longleaf Alliance has provided sufficient referrals to sell 100% of a new nursery's production.

Additionally, the Longleaf Alliance maintains the "Longleaf Nursery List". "The Longleaf Nursery List" is a comprehensive listing of nurseries that grow longleaf seedlings for sale to the public. Foresters, tree planters, the forest industry, State forestry commissions, and many other agencies use the "Longleaf Nursery List" as a tool to locate seedlings for their regeneration needs. To be included in the "Longleaf Nursery List", all one must do is fill out and return a longleaf nursery questionnaire to the Longleaf Alliance. This list is updated several times over the course of a year.

Production of container-grown longleaf seedlings is centered in South Georgia, while production is also increasing rapidly across Alabama. Georgia has the largest amount of farm ground being converted to longleaf through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Consequently, demand is sufficient to deplete supply at this time. In the absence of the CRP, Georgia would likely have an excess supply of longleaf pine seedlings.

<sup>1</sup>Research Coordinator, Longleaf Alliance, Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center, Andalusia, AL 36420