



Options for forest verification



Workshop Announcement

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON 'LEGALITY OF TRADED TIMBER: THE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES'

24-26 November 2008, FAO, Rome

Co-hosted by FAO's Forestry Department and the VERIFOR Project

Background

The legality of traded timber is currently of central interest in national and international forestry arenas and a key element of policy on forest law enforcement, governance and trade (FLEGT). It has also triggered forest policy processes at the regional level, for example the ALFA initiative in the Amazon Basin as well as the development of voluntary partnership agreements between producer and consumer countries. Predatory forest exploitation and illegal timber trade have far-reaching impacts; they are recognised to cost producer countries millions of dollars in lost revenues, to have negative effects on the environment, to be associated with corruption and crime and to undermine good governance. Forest Governance reform offers an opportunity for concerned governments to re-examine laws, regulations, institutional settings and practices relating to forests and forestry, with a view to maximising the benefits for their populations and economies. In countries with multiple and diverse interests in forest areas and products, this is a challenging task. Measures to improve the governance of the forest sector should be socially, economically and environmentally sound and outcomes should enhance development, especially as regards the rural poor. Producer countries also need to act together to improve forest law compliance in border regions. International partnerships are needed to harmonise and strengthen strategies to promote legal timber trade.

Objectives of the workshop

This workshop aims to strengthen the dialogue between countries on the legality of traded timber and help develop appropriate strategies to improve forest law compliance. It will take stock of the various initiatives now in process to ensure that the forest industry conforms to higher standards of legality and provide a forum in which forestry professionals can share ideas on international best practice. It will propose ways to build robust and sustainable systems for legality assurance that satisfy the requirements of both producer and consumers at national and international level. The primary (though not only) focus will be the tropical timber trade because this is where some of the greatest challenges – and potential gains – arise. The workshop will prioritise Southern voices and viewpoints. Among the themes to be discussed at the workshop will be the following:

- Multi-stakeholder dialogue processes and their management
- The economics of legality assurance of traded timber
- The role of new technologies in forest governance reform
- Mechanisms and structures for independent forest monitoring
- Legality standards and their definition
- The convergence of policy processes: national and international perspectives including forest law compliance and governance, National Forest Programmes and initiatives to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

In each case, developmental dimensions and impacts will be central concerns.

Outcomes of the meeting will include:

- Sharing of experiences, ideas and lessons learned regarding legality of traded timber
- Recommendations on better integration of FLEG policies and instruments in national and international forest-related policies
- Recommendations on the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in legality assurance systems
- Recommendations on next steps to move forward and the roles of timber producing and consuming countries

A major output of the workshop will be a policy brief on the legality of traded timber from the development perspective.

Who We Are

The workshop is being organised jointly by FAO's Forest Policy Service and VERIFOR, an international applied research collaboration on the verification of legality in the timber trade.

In recent years, the Forest Policy Service of FAO's Forestry Department has been working jointly with the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) on the identification and promotion of best practices for improving forest law compliance and governance, conducting a series of regional workshops that has brought together different stakeholders to exchange experiences and identify priority actions to address illegal logging and trade as well as strengthening regional networks. With financial support from the European Commission, FAO is also embarking on a major initiative to support FLEGT-related activities in the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP countries). The issues surrounding the legality of traded timber are of utmost importance to this programme. For more information see www.fao.org/forestry

VERIFOR is a partnership involving ODI (UK – lead partner); CATIE (Costa Rica – South America); CIFOR (Cameroon - Africa); and RECOFTC (Thailand – Asia). VERIFOR's particular interest is in the institutional dimensions of verification of legality, in the sense of those measures that have been brought to bear on the forest industry in recent years, over and above the routine structures of forest control. Profound doubts have been expressed in many situations about the functioning of these routine controls, and additional measures introduced to ensure that they are properly executed. They range from arrangements such as the Outsourced Monitoring System in Ecuador, aiming at quite far reaching governance reform, to specialist monitoring bodies, such as the Forest Practices Board/Authority in British Columbia (Canada), as well as independent observation missions of environmental rights monitors in various tropical countries. VERIFOR has also undertaken a series of case studies of relevant extra-sectoral experiences. Outputs of VERIFOR can be downloaded from the project website, www.verifor.org.

Workshop Methodology

The workshop will involve a mix of:

- Keynote and plenary addresses by invited speakers
- Expert panel discussions
- Working groups and feedback sessions.

Participants

The workshop will be of interest to all those interested in forest governance and law reform as well as the verification of international agreements, and include:

- Public policy makers in the forest sector and cognate areas (e.g. extractive industries),
- Development assistance agencies with an interest in the forest governance reform
- Foresters and those working in forest industries, particularly in the tropics
- NGOs involved in FLEGT issues
- Certifiers and verifiers in the private forest sector and those involved in standards for extractive industries

Attendance

Participation in the workshop will be by invitation, with due regard to the need for broad cross-regional representation, and for an appropriate balance between state and non-state agencies, and national and international institutions. Persons interested in participating are asked to contact the organisers. Participants will normally be asked to cover their own travel and accommodation costs. Limited provision may be available to support the attendance of persons without access to independent funding, particularly non-official participants with relevant experience from the developing world. Applications should be made to the organisers.

Contacts

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