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## FAO-EU FLEGT PROGRAMME SUCCESS STORY

### GHANA: championing rights and fair compensation for forest communities

*Clarifying regulations to help improve farmers' livelihoods and crack down on illegal logging*

#### KEY FACTS

**Ghana's work** to promote the legal timber trade in partnership with the European Union (EU) places a strong emphasis on involving local communities who live in or near forests. Yet farmers and communities do not always understand their rights, which means that illegal activity by loggers has gone unchecked in Ghana's off-reserve forests. The FAO-EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Programme supported a non-profit association, Sustainable Forest Management Partnership-Ghana, to increase awareness among farmers of their right to negotiate compensation when logging damages crops on their land. The project successfully fostered understanding among farmers and local communities of their entitlements, and also helped loggers better grasp their own responsibilities under the law. The project helped to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by improving local livelihoods and strengthening forest governance by increasing transparency.

**For Farmers** and forest communities living in the 500 000 hectares of forested land outside Ghana's national forest reserves, legal loggers wanting to fell trees on their land can be a mixed blessing. The arrival of loggers may mean a welcome boost to household income. But with falling trees, road construction and heavy equipment and vehicles, logging can seriously damage farmers' food and cash crops, compact their soil and even pollute precious water sources.

Recognizing the rights of communities affected by logging is one of the cornerstones of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) signed by Ghana and the EU in 2009 as part of the EU's Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan. Under the VPA, Ghana's loggers must prove the legality of their timber in order to trade on the domestic or international market. That includes signing social responsibility agreements with forest communities affected by logging and paying fair compensation for any damage caused

#### AT A GLANCE

#### WORKED FOR

Local communities and farmers, loggers and the Forestry Commission of Ghana.

#### WORKED TO

Promote the rights of forest communities and farmers to ensure they are compensated for logging taking place on their land.

#### WORKED WITH

Sustainable Forest Management Partnership-Ghana (SFMP-G), a Ghanaian non-profit association comprising six organizations: National Working Group on Forest Certification, Rural Development and Youth Association, Kumasi Wood Cluster Association, Agribusiness in Sustainable Natural African Plant Products, Friends of the Earth - Ghana, and Wassa Amenfi Traditional Council.

## WORKED THANKS TO

European Union, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Department for International Development of the United Kingdom.

## FAO-EU FLEGT Programme

The FAO-EU FLEGT Programme works with many international partners to help implement the European Union's FLEGT Action Plan to combat illegal logging and associated trade. Since 2008, the FAO-EU FLEGT Programme has supported over 200 projects in 40 countries throughout Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia to improve forest governance and promote the legal timber trade.



## Related links

Sustainable Forest Management Partnership-Ghana (SFMP-Ghana)  
[www.sfmghana.org](http://www.sfmghana.org)

Dos and don'ts booklet: Improving Off-reserve logging in support of functional VPA in Ghana  
[www.sfmghana.org/reports/orl/FINAL%20DO'S%20AND%20DON'TS%20\(VPA\)%20%20August%202016.pdf](http://www.sfmghana.org/reports/orl/FINAL%20DO'S%20AND%20DON'TS%20(VPA)%20%20August%202016.pdf)

Sitio Web AVA-FLEGT de Ghana  
[www.fcghana.org/vpa/index.php](http://www.fcghana.org/vpa/index.php)

## In collaboration with



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[www.fao.org/in-action/eu-fao-flegt-programme/en/](http://www.fao.org/in-action/eu-fao-flegt-programme/en/)

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to their land. The regulation is especially relevant for Ghana's off-reserve forests, a major contributor of wood and wood products to the domestic market. Off-reserve forests are usually in farm land or are dedicated community forests where livelihoods can easily be disrupted.

Despite the law, a study conducted across several forest districts found that many farmers and forest communities were unaware of their rights, and suggested that loggers might be using this to their advantage. Farmers claimed that although loggers had permits, they often delayed payments, failed to deliver on their promises, or even felled trees without the farmers' consent. Ninety percent of farmers interviewed said they were unhappy with any compensation paid to them, which came from verbal agreements made with the loggers.

"I accepted any amount as compensation for my damaged crops," said farmer Barima Agyarkwa Bekoe of the Nkawie Forest District. "Fifty of my cocoa trees were damaged and I accepted just 100 cedis (USD 27)."

## Dos and don'ts

To help rectify the situation, the FAO-EU FLEGT Programme provided support to non-profit association Sustainable Forest Management Partnership-Ghana to foster greater awareness of the law in five forest regions.

The project team created and distributed a concise booklet of 'dos and don'ts' for Ghana Forestry Commission staff, loggers and farmers, clearly setting out the processes required for off-reserve logging and negotiating compensation.

The project provided face-to-face training for farmers on negotiating with loggers, and developed a framework for estimating how much farmers should be compensated in different scenarios. Loggers received training on the need to prove the legality of the wood they place on the market with written records of logging and compensation agreements.

## Enhancing forest governance

The project successfully boosted awareness among loggers, farmers and community representatives in the five regions on their entitlements as well as their responsibilities to manage forest sustainably. Civil society organizations continue to use the compensation framework to make farmers aware of their rights to compensation, payment and verification. Ghana's Forestry Commission has also trained its staff to use templates developed by the project to guide loggers in negotiating and documenting payments.

"I can now confidently negotiate compensation, taking different elements into consideration during the negotiation process with a logger," said Bekoe.

While improving farmers' livelihoods and reducing illegal logging, the project has enhanced forest governance by increasing transparency as well as contributing to SDGs 2 (zero hunger and promoting sustainable agriculture), 15 (life on land), and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

The project has also helped Ghana fulfil its VPA. The country is on track to be the second nation in the world – and the first in Africa – to issue FLEGT licences, which will certify that timber exported to the EU has been harvested, transported, processed and traded according to Ghanaian law. §