



Edited
by
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Liberia revokes all forest concessions

Recently elected Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf cancelled all forest concessions in the country in February 2006. She has accordingly established the Forestry Reform Monitoring Committee (FRMC) to be led by the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) with the participation and assistance of the Liberia Forest Initiative (LFI). The LFI comprises Liberian and international representatives including international and local civil society.

The FRMC is charged with the responsibility of overseeing, monitoring and verifying the formulation, development and implementation of the measures prescribed as conditions for the resumption of concession grants and allocations. Concession agreements will be restored only after the FRMC, in collaboration with the FDA, "certifies that they are consistent with international standards and basic principles of accountability, transparency, and sustainability as provided for in the Public Procurement and Concession Act of 2005". The FDA and FRMC will "identify appropriate land areas for establishing a concession system based on land-use planning principles, establish an appropriate chain of custody system that tracks logging operators from the point of enumeration to export and work with the international community to define an appropriate tax system (based on international timber prices) and equitable sharing of the benefits with local communities and institute that system".

In May 2003, the UN Security Council imposed a ban on all Liberian timber trade due to its link to the country's civil war. The ban came into effect in July 2003 and has been renewed. The operation of the FRMC is expected to facilitate the lifting of the trade ban. See *TFU 15/3* for a comprehensive report of the forestry situation in Liberia.

Training opportunities at forest tree breeding center

Japan's Forest Tree Breeding Center (FTBC) offers tailor-made training opportunities for researchers in tree improvement and genetic conservation and practitioners in the development of high-quality planting stock. Specific areas include: tree improvement and relevant research practices; genetic conservation and relevant research practices; design, construction and management of nurseries and orchards; management of seeds; propagation techniques including tissue culture; and DNA analysis; etc.

The estimated cost of one-month training is around US\$3000 at headquarters in Ibaraki, Japan (near Tokyo) and US\$4000 on Iriomote Island, Okinawa. This includes accommodation, meals, domestic transportation in Japan and other necessary expenses but excludes the cost of international travel.

FTBC was founded in 1957 under the Forestry Agency and became autonomous in 2001. Its main tasks are: research and development in tree improvement and the promotion of use of the improved planting materials; the conservation of genetic resources; and overseas cooperation. In its fiscal year 2004, a total of 89 foreign trainees visited FTBC.

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Bamboo journal

The Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI) has taken over the publication of the *Journal of Bamboo and Rattan* published by Brill Academic Publishers, starting from Volume 5 (2006). To subscribe, or to advertise in the journal, contact: The Circulation Officer, *Journal of Bamboo and Rattan*, KFRI, Peechi, Thrissur 680 653, India; Tel 91-487-269 9037; Fax 91-487-269 9249; jbr@kfri.org.

Trade news

Highlights from the ITTO *Tropical Timber Market Report* (11:6, 16-31 March 2006)

Southeast Asian plywood availability shrinks

Facing declining plywood supply from Indonesia, European buyers have turned to Malaysia to replenish stocks, but Malaysian mills are reported to be producing almost at top capacity. A similar situation is seen in Japan, despite the dull market there. This is putting pressure on FOB prices.

Uncertainty puts investment on hold

The Peruvian currency, the nuevo sol, has devalued in recent weeks due to the proximity of presidential elections and the payment of annual tax liabilities. The uncertainty about who will be Peru's next president has affected new investments and industrial activities in the country. Wood firms are refraining from attending relevant international events and purchasing machinery despite growing international demand for Peruvian manufactured products.

African log prices edge up

West and Central African log prices at the end of March reflected brisk trading conditions and generally stable markets, with an ongoing trend of rising prices for species in strong demand. The log trade continued to be driven by high demand from China, India and, to a lesser degree, Japan, with Europe continuing its long-term reduction in the volume and number of imported tropical timber species. Sawn lumber prices were also on a rising trend, due in part to the strong performance and rising prices of competing Asian species and to increased demand from European buyers closing business for their spring and summer stocks.

Fires in Riau

The Malaysian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment has expressed concern over haze coming from forest fires in the Indonesian province of Riau, the head of the Riau environmental impact management agency, Khairul Zainal, said recently. Mr Zainal dispatched a 45-member quick-reaction team to monitor the Bukit Batu reserved forests in Riau's Bengkalis district and to put out hot spots. Malaysia has offered to cooperate in putting out hot spots in Riau and to exchange information on how to handle forest fires, which have become a recurrent problem in Indonesia. Data from the Bengkalis district administration showed 75 hot spots in Bengkalis and Rokan Hilir districts and in Dumai.

The ITTO Tropical Timber Market Report is published every two weeks and distributed by email. In addition to news affecting the tropical timber trade, the report contains prices for a wide range of tropical timber products. For a free subscription contact Dr Jairo Castaño at itto-mis@itto.or.jp