TFU

Promoting the conservation and sustainable development of tropical forests

ISSN 1022–5439

TROPICAL FOREST UPDATE Vol. 31 No. 3/4 2022

# Sustainable tropical forestry: a pathway to a healthy planet

Two major conferences took place towards the end of 2022 that will help determine the fate of the planet and humanity's capacity to deal with the twin threats of climate change and biodiversity loss. The outcomes of both conferences also have major implications for tropical forests and the tropical timber trade.

The first of these conferences, the 27th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in November, agreed to create a "loss and damage" fund to compensate developing countries harmed by climate change. Less positively, there was little new action on reducing greenhouse-gas emissions, although targets set out in the Paris Agreement remain in place.

The second conference, the 15th COP of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which concluded in mid-December, agreed to a new "global biodiversity framework" comprising four goals and 23 targets to be achieved by 2030. One of the new targets (target 10) refers specifically to forestry: it is to "ensure that areas under agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries and forestry are managed sustainably, in particular through the sustainable use of biodiversity, including through a substantial increase of the application of biodiversity friendly practices …"

Efforts to achieve climate-change and biodiversity targets will inevitably be affected by immediate political and economic concerns, including the aftershocks from the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

By disrupting trade, fanning inflation and hurting economies—especially in poorer countries—the global pandemic and Europe's largest conflict in decades risk diluting the political attention needed to engineer a global shift to more sustainable economies.

# Contents

*… Editorial continued*




**Editor** Ramón Carrillo
**Consulting editor** Stephen Graham
**Editorial assistant** Kenneth Sato
**Secretarial assistant** Kanako Ishii
**Design** DesignOne (Australia)
**Printing/distribution** Hakon Holm Grafisk ApS (Denmark)





TFU is distributed free of charge to over 14 000 individuals and organizations in more than 160 countries. To receive it, send your full address to the editor. Please notify us if you change address. TFU is also available online at www.itto.int, as well as in Apple's App Store and Google Play.



International Tropical Timber Organization
International Organizations Center – 5th Floor
Pacifico-Yokohama, 1–1–1 Minato Mirai, Nishi-ku
Yokohama 220–0012 Japan
t 81–45–223 1110
f 81–45–223 1111
tfu@itto.int
www.itto.int


**Cover image:** A pathway alongside a river in a tropical forest in Chiapas, Mexico. Photo: R. Carrillo/ITTO

**Above:** View of Minato-Mirai, Yokohama. *Photo: Y. Kamijo/ITTO*

But they also underscore the importance of organizations like ITTO in fostering cross-border cooperation and sustainable forest production and trade. Achieving climate and biodiversity targets requires putting into practice the principles of sustainable development, including equitable economic improvement and the minimization and, where possible, reversal of environmental harm. Such principles are embodied in ITTO's mission of promoting the sustainable management and conservation of tropical forests and the expansion and diversification of international trade in tropical timber from sustainably managed and legally harvested forests.

It is good news, then, that ITTO's work received strong backing at the most recent session of the International Tropical Timber Council, held on 7–11 November in Yokohama, Japan, as reported on page 3. Among other things, an additional USD 4 million was contributed to support ITTO's efforts around the globe, such as advancing sustainable markets for tropical wood products and developing timber traceability systems.

The Council also discussed another potential source of global support for sustainable forest management: the burgeoning market for carbon credits. Five speakers at the Annual Market Discussion (see a summary on page 4) explored how carbon markets could play an increasingly important role in financing tropical forest management and protection and how ITTO can help build the necessary knowledge and technical capacity.

Elsewhere in this edition, an article by Jürgen Blaser and Olivier Ahimin (page 8) reports on an evaluation they conducted of ten completed ITTO projects in West and Central Africa. They found that the projects delivered significant and sustainable gains for forests, forest management and livelihoods and drew valuable lessons to guide and improve future forest-related initiatives.

The European Union is developing a new regulation designed to counter forest loss embedded in imported commodities such as soy, palm oil and timber, but (as summarized on page 4) ITTO's Trade Advisory Group is concerned that this could constitute a new barrier to trade. Alain Karsenty digs deeper into the proposed regulation on page 12 and suggests an alternative approach.

Manoel Sobral Filho (page 15) evaluates how, despite disruption and delays caused in part by the COVID-19 pandemic, an ITTO-funded project on fire management in Peru successfully communicated the value of forests, trained volunteer firefighters, and tapped remote-sensing data to generate timely warnings.

The outcomes of the Fourth World Teak Conference are reported on page 18. The conference, which took place recently in Ghana, included discussions on adding value in smallholder teak farming, improving the quality of teak planting material, and plantation management models.

ITTO is a small but effective contributor to sustainable development, and it stands ready to scale up to increase its impacts. In coming years we will continue building on the insights gained in hundreds of successful ITTO projects and working with partners to foster industries based on sustainable tropical forest management as means for addressing the biodiversity and climate crises and improving the lives of forest-dependent people. The Secretariat wishes all readers a happy and sustainable 2023.

# Donors announce new funds for ITTO work

***The International Tropical Timber Council also discussed the Organization's policies and project portfolio and made a range of decisions***

**ITTO Secretariat**
(itto@itto.int)


**Handing over:** The Chairperson of the International Tropical Timber Council, Jesse Mahoney, receives a framed gavel from incoming Chairperson, Mohammed Nurudeen Iddrisu, at the close of the 58th session of the International Tropical Timber Council. *Photo: Y. Kamijo/ITTO*

Donors have contributed an additional USD 4 million to support the Organization's work, according to announcements made at the 58th session of the International Tropical Timber Council, which was held as a hybrid session in Yokohama, Japan, and online on 7–11 November 2022.

The Council meets annually to discuss a wide-ranging agenda aimed at promoting sustainable tropical forest management and the trade of sustainably produced tropical timber. This year's session was chaired by Mr Jesse Mahoney, from Australia.

Of the new financial contributions, Japan provided USD 1.66 million, China, Macao SAR USD 1.33 million, the United States of America USD 534 000, Australia USD 305 000, China USD 83 000, the Republic of Korea USD 53 000, the CITES Secretariat USD 25 000 and Kisso-an (a Japan-based company) USD 3 000.[1] Among other things, these funds will be used to promote the sustainable domestic consumption of wood products in Thailand; encourage strong and resilient domestic wood-product consumption in Indonesia; develop the Global Timber Index Platform; elaborate a blockchain-based timber traceability system; and, in Panama, scale up the Forest Traceability and Monitoring System—developed on a pilot basis under a previous ITTO project—to the entire national territory. Some projects and activities received partial funding and will commence should the balance of funding be forthcoming.[2]

[1] Numbers may not be exact.
[2] The full list of activities receiving voluntary contributions is contained in Decision 1(LVIII), which is available at www.itto.int/council_committees/decisions.

## Annual Market Discussion explores potential of carbon markets for tropical forests

Markets for forest carbon are growing fast and have huge potential, but low carbon prices and other challenges are restraining their capacity to benefit tropical forests and their stakeholders. This was a key message emerging from the Annual Market Discussion, which traditionally is convened as part of a joint session of the Council's committees as a means for informing Council members of key trends and issues in the tropical timber trade and increasing understanding among governments, traders and other stakeholders. This year's Discussion, which was chaired by Trade Advisory Group (TAG) co-coordinator Mr Barney Chan, featured five speakers on the theme of the carbon trade and tropical forests (Box 1).

## Statement by the Trade Advisory Group

TAG co-coordinator Mr Bob Tate presented a statement on behalf of TAG immediately following the Annual Market Discussion. TAG was established in 2000 to provide inputs to ITTO's policy and project work. It is open to anyone with an interest in the tropical timber trade, including representatives of tropical forest industries, timber exporters and importers, timber trade and industry consultants, and trade and industry associations.

In the statement, TAG expressed concern about a draft regulation on deforestation under consideration by the European Council and Parliament and the potential for it to present barriers to trade, particularly for tropical countries (see a related article on page 12). Mr Tate said TAG believes

## Box 1: The Annual Market Discussion

The 2022 Annual Market Discussion featured five speakers on the theme of the carbon trade and tropical forests.

**Ms Celina (Kin Yii) Yong**, from the United Nations Development Programme, said there has been a huge increase in transactions in voluntary carbon markets, partly due to clarification of Article 6 of the Paris Agreement on climate change at the 26th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Voluntary carbon markets will play a key role in the transition process but there is a risk of "greenwashing", she said.

Ms Yong said there is growing demand for high-integrity forest carbon credits, but carbon prices are yet to reflect the true costs of maintaining natural forests and high-integrity markets. She said that, among other things, high-integrity carbon markets are those that avoid the double-counting of carbon credits, ensure that emission reductions are real (thus avoiding "greenwashing"), and respect human rights.

**Dr Ivan Tomaselli**, from STCP in Brazil, explored the development of carbon markets in Latin America. There is growing interest in carbon markets across economic sectors in the region and in transactions between countries aimed at emission reductions and achieving net zero emissions. Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Mexico are the front-runners in compliance carbon pricing instruments, and Brazil is pursuing mainly voluntary carbon projects in forests managed for timber production.

Dr Tomaselli estimated the potential value of carbon credits in existing managed forest areas for timber production in Latin America at around USD 2 billion per year, but this will grow if prices increase with rising demand.

**Mr Pierre Schueller**, from TEREA in France, said companies operating in the Congo Basin are increasingly interested in forest carbon trading, but few are well informed about the mechanisms involved and the rules and criteria for engaging in carbon trade. He said REDD+ has attracted significant funding opportunities in many African countries, and some forest carbon initiatives are emerging. In 2021, for example, Gabon became the first country in Africa to receive results-based payments for reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

Mr Schueller said the main challenge for the expansion of forest carbon projects in Africa is removing technical barriers and determining ownership of the resulting carbon credits. There is a role for international organizations such as ITTO in increasing understanding and technical capacity in Africa, he said.

**Mr William Llactayo**, a GIS specialist from Peru, described new research in Peru using machine learning and light detection and ranging (LIDAR, a remote-sensing method) combined with high spatial and temporal resolution satellite imagery to estimate above-ground carbon at a 1-hectare resolution.

Mr Llactayo said that a strategic and cost-effective combination of LIDAR sampling, tactically placed field calibration plots, satellite data and geostatistical modelling showed it is feasible to conduct high-resolution inventories of above-ground carbon stocks, even in a large and environmentally complex country like Peru.

This theme was also explored by **Mr Nicholas Butcher** from CarbonCrop in New Zealand, who reported on integrated solutions using artificial intelligence, remote sensing and automation to monitor changes in forest carbon stock in New Zealand. He said that, to be credible, such solutions require integrity, transparency, traceability and auditability.

Mr Butcher said that the application of the technology in New Zealand has led to the registration of an additional 30 000 hectares of biodiverse forest and delivered NZD 30 million in carbon credits for landholders. The same technology could be applied in any other region, he said.

The presentations were followed by a wide-ranging exchange of views between delegates and speakers, including on the potential of forest carbon to generate significant revenues for forests through voluntary carbon markets and compliance mechanisms as means for increasing the financial viability of sustainable forest management.

*The presentations can be downloaded at www.itto.int/ittc-58/presentations. A video of the entire Annual Market Discussion can be viewed at https://youtu.be/YPs67tzwAwI.*

that "the EU [European Union] should avoid using these [draft] new regulations to curb free and fair trade, and improve on its communication with the stakeholders, including from outside of the EU, to assess the challenges faced by businesses towards compliance".

On another front, the TAG statement asserted that the establishment of new industrial tree plantations in the tropics is being hampered by a lack of reliable information. It called on ITTO to undertake a survey of existing tree plantations in ITTO producer countries and to design a database to assist commercial decision-making on plantation establishment.

The TAG statement noted that ITTO producer countries are yet to benefit significantly from voluntary forest carbon offset markets.

"There is a desperate need to disseminate information and guidance on the opportunities to producing members, and at the same time provide strategic advice and technical assistance," said Mr Tate. He urged ITTO to organize a technical training workshop "to address the weaknesses and shortcomings of members so they can participate in climate-change mitigation while adding to their national revenue".

The full TAG statement is available at www.itto.int/ittc-58/presentations.

**Carbon's role:** ITTO's Annual Market Discussion, convened by the Trade Advisory Group during the 58th session of the International Tropical Timber Council, addressed the theme of carbon trade and tropical forests. *Photo: Y. Kamijo/ITTO*


**Civil views:** Christine Wulandari presents a statement on behalf of the Civil Society Advisory Group at the 58th session of the International Tropical Timber Council. *Photo: Y. Kamijo/ITTO*

## Civil Society Advisory Group seeks greater role

In a statement made during the session, Christine Wulandari, representing the Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG), encouraged the Council to involve CSAG more in its deliberations, including the Annual Market Discussion.

"CSAG brings our expertise and knowledge that can enhance the knowledge-sharing and recommendations from such a platform to Council," said Ms Wulandari.

She expressed the desire of CSAG to partner with ITTO in piloting fundraising initiatives.

"The CSAG network involves women, local communities, Indigenous Peoples groups, who face tenure, access and rights issues within their forest, and they aspire to access the international markets for their legal and sustainable wood products," said Ms Wulandari.

"Local communities, smallholders and other forest communities can also have a huge impact on ensuring the ITTO objective of sustainable forestry management and sustainable trade in timber products."

CSAG recommended that ITTO commission a paper outlining how ITTO members and other stakeholders can contribute towards climate-change adaptation and mitigation.

"Our collective work on forestry supply chains and the best ways to promote the sustainable use and management of forest resources makes us well placed to assist the international community in developing nature-based solutions that harness the power of the natural world to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions and also help communities adapt to the impacts of climate change," said Ms Wulandari.

## Biennial Review and Assessment sees resilient timber market

During the Council session, consultant Fran Maplesden delivered an interim report on ITTO's 2021–2022 Biennial Review and Assessment of the World Timber Situation.

This report compiles the most up-to-date and reliable international statistics available on global production and trade of timber, with an emphasis on the tropics.

Ms Maplesden presented the initial findings from the analysis of the most recent tropical timber trade and production data, with the final version of the report to be published in 2023 following further consultation with members. According to Ms Maplesden, the trade in tropical wood products has been more resilient than was anticipated at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, particularly the trade in secondary processed wood products. A number of shocks to the world economy in 2022, however, are likely to dampen the outlook for tropical wood product markets, particularly the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a cost-of-living crisis caused by inflation, and the economic slowdown in China. Other interim findings include the following:

- The tropical log trade has been on a downward trend from a peak in 2014, largely reflecting a downturn in Chinese demand and the declining availability of tropical logs, particularly from Southeast Asia, with Malaysia's exports now about 10% lower than they were a decade ago. Tropical log exports reached their lowest level in ITTO's records in 2020, with some indications of recovery in 2021 and 2022.
- The trade in tropical sawnwood, plywood and veneer has been more resilient due to a sharp recovery in final-product consumer markets, particularly the United States of America.
- China was the major tropical log importer in 2021, but the country's imports have contracted by 44% from a peak in 2014 and were affected in 2021 by a tightening of regulatory controls (designed to limit property speculation and cool the housing market) and disruptions to supply chains. Although there were signs of recovery in the first six months of 2022, the economic outlook for the second half of 2022 is more pessimistic.
- The major trade flows in tropical plywood have changed significantly and now feature the United States of America as the major destination. Viet Nam's exports have surged from a low base in 2013, and that country is now the second-largest exporter of tropical plywood after Indonesia.

**Timber data:** Consultant Fran Maplesden delivers an interim report on ITTO's Biennial Review and Assessment of the World Timber Situation. *Photo: Y. Kamijo/ITTO*

- Exports of secondary processed wood products from tropical producer countries have soared in the last decade, mostly wooden furniture from Viet Nam to the United States of America, the largest country-to-country flow in the world furniture trade in 2021.
- The appreciation of the United States dollar in 2022 relative to most other currencies is reducing the competitiveness of tropical exports traded in euros, as well as consumption volumes in consumer markets.
- There is considerable uncertainty in the outlook for the tropical timber trade. A resurgence of COVID-19, or a worsening of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, could exacerbate supply-chain risks such as the further escalation of freight and manufacturing costs.

Ms Maplesden noted that the information received to date from ITTO members for the 2021–2022 assessment contains many gaps, and she encouraged members to make every effort to provide more complete information for inclusion in the final report.

## Support for women restoring forest landscapes in Togo

CSAG and Soka Gakkai, a non-governmental group in Japan, jointly presented the outputs of a community project implemented recently in two prefectures in Togo. The project has involved 100 women in the restoration of about 20 hectares of degraded forest landscapes. The women planted about 27 000 seedlings of 12 species.

"The project is not only helping to solve climate-change issues through reforestation, but also empowering women living in areas that are often left behind," said Mr Aishima Tomohiko, Chair of the Soka Gakkai Peace Committee, which funded the project. "As this pilot project is entering its third year, we would like to actively engage in this project to create further value together with ITTO."

Ms Rose Pélagie Masso, from the Cameroon-based implementing agency, African Women's Network for Community Forest Management (Réseau des Femmes Africaines pour la Gestion Communautaires des Forêts, or REFACOF), listed some of the benefits of the project for the participating women:

- The women have acquired seedling production skills and can now produce seedlings for their own needs and those of their communities.
- Food production has enabled beneficiary households to meet their food needs and sell the surplus to generate substantial income.
- The women have improved their livelihoods and diversified their sources of income.
- The beneficiary groups have improved their visibility at the regional, prefectural and even national level.
- Social cohesion has been strengthened.

Other work presented during the Council session included an update on issues related to tropical timber market access and certification and the status of the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Independent Market Monitoring programme. The Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) informed delegates of seven proposals for listings of tree species in the CITES Appendices. The ITTO Secretariat's Dr Steven Johnson reported on collaborative work undertaken by the two secretariats in the previous 12 months under the CITES Tree Species Programme.

**Wood rising:** Delegates pose in the foyer of Japan's first fully wooden high-rise building, Port Plus. *Photo: Y. Kamijo/ITTO*


**New energy:** ITTO Executive Director Sheam Satkuru during the 58th session of the International Tropical Timber Council. *Photo: Y. Kamijo/ITTO*

## New ITTO Fellowships

The Council awarded ITTO Fellowships to 13 candidates (including six women), of whom four are from Africa, five are from the Asia-Pacific region and four are from Latin America and the Caribbean. The total value of the 13 Fellowships is approximately USD 77 000.

ITTO offers Fellowships through the Freezailah Fellowship Fund to promote human-resource development and strengthen professional expertise in member countries in tropical forestry and related disciplines, including the sustainable management of tropical forests, the efficient use and processing of tropical timber, and the improvement of economic information on the international trade in tropical timber. The ITTO Fellowship Programme, established in 1989, has enabled more than 1400 young and mid-career professionals from 49 countries to pursue career development opportunities. Prominent donors to the programme are the governments of Japan, the United States of America, the Netherlands and Australia.

Articles on ITTO Fellowships are published regularly in TFU.

Full details of the Fellowships awardees are available at www.itto.int/fellowship/previous_awardee_detail/id=7307.

## Council decisions

The Council made four decisions, including one to endorse six project proposals, three of which received full funding, thus enabling implementation to commence immediately. The other decisions comprised a one-year extension to the Biennial Work Programme 2021–2022 to bring it into line with the biennial approval cycle of the ITTO Administrative Budget; matters related to the management of the Administrative Budget, including a one-year extension of the mandate of a virtual intersessional working group on this issue; and the extension of another working group established to assess the need for renegotiation and/or further extension of the International Tropical Timber Agreement, 2006.

The four decisions are available on the ITTO website at www.itto.int/council_committees/decisions.

## Closing highlights and a timber high-rise

Delegates participated in brief excursions to sites of interest near the conference centre. One site was Port Plus, Japan's first fully wooden high-rise building. The facility takes advantage of new wood technologies such as laminated veneer lumber and cross-laminated timber to create a striking new architectural appearance to a height previously only possible using steel or concrete. Port Plus also uses an innovative wood technology designed to connect wooden columns with wooden beams by combining "glued-in-rod" joints with *nuki*, a traditional Japanese carpentry joint. The 12-storey building features 1990 cubic metres of wood, and its construction achieved a reduction in carbon-dioxide emissions of 1700 tonnes over a comparable steel structure. Its wooden columns and beams are certified as three-hour fire-resistant.

In closing statements to the Council, delegates praised the spirit in which the session had been conducted. A delegate of Malaysia commented that all decisions had been taken "in a friendly and cordial manner" and a delegate for the European Commission concluded that the Council is "making progress to build a robust organization". The Executive Director, Sheam Satkuru, won plaudits for bringing "new energy" to the role, and the Government of Japan and the City of Yokohama were thanked for their generous support of the session and the Organization.

The 59th session of the Council is tentatively scheduled for 4–8 December 2023. The Government of Thailand, through its Royal Forest Department, is considering an opportunity to host the session. Mr Mohammed Nurudeen Iddrisu, from Ghana, was elected incoming Chairperson of the Council.

Daily highlights of the session and presentations are available at www.itto.int/ittc-58

# ITTO projects in Africa are delivering sustainable gains

***An evaluation of completed projects in West and Central Africa found positive impacts for forests, forest management and livelihoods as well as valuable lessons for future initiatives***

**By Jürgen Blaser[1] and Olivier Ahimin[2]**

[1] Bern University of Applied Sciences, School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences, Switzerland (juergen.blaser@bfh.ch)

[2] Consultant

**Community benefits:** Farmers in a restored forest area at the Pamu Berekum Forest Reserve, Ghana (PD 530/08). *Photo: Emmanuel Antwi Bawuah*

Ten ITTO projects have delivered significant and sustainable gains for forests, forest management and livelihoods across West Africa and in the Congo Basin. The initiatives have also advanced ITTO's strategic priorities and the achievement of wider development objectives, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

These are among the key findings of a detailed independent evaluation of ten completed ITTO-funded projects in West and Central Africa. As well as assessing the performance of the projects, the appraisal delivered an array of valuable lessons to guide and improve future forest-related efforts in Africa, including those supported through ITTO and the Tokyo International Conference for African Development (TICAD).[1]

The evaluation was requested by the International Tropical Timber Council at its 57th session in 2021. The evaluation report,[2] which is summarized in this article and in a recently published ITTO policy brief,[3] was presented at the Council's 58th session on 7–11 November 2022, in Yokahama, Japan.

## Ten projects evaluated

The projects included in the evaluation (Table 1) were approved between 2010 and 2020 and implemented under the ITTO Strategic Action Plan 2013–2021.[4] Six projects were in West Africa (three in Côte d'Ivoire, two in Benin and one in Ghana) and four spanned multiple countries, mainly in the Congo Basin.

All the targeted countries are experiencing deforestation, biodiversity loss and forest degradation, even as large numbers of people in these countries depend on forests for their subsistence.

The evaluation looked at the projects' success in delivering planned outputs and achieving their objectives as well as their policy implications, their impacts on the welfare of local communities, forest management, conservation of biodiversity and climate change, and the likelihood of their long-term sustainability. The projects were also reviewed against ITTO's strategic priorities,[5] the five focus areas identified in the TICAD process,[6] and other development objectives, including the SDGs[7] and Global Forest Goals (GFGs).[8]

## Relevant, efficient and effective

The evaluation found that the ten projects were successfully designed to work towards reducing forest cover loss, restoring forests and improving enabling conditions. Four projects dealt directly with forest recovery and management, two were designed to directly improve sustainable management systems at regional level, three improved forest staff capacity, one project assisted several countries to bolster forest product value and regional trade, and one was designed to assist with timber tracking as a means to improve enforcement capacity. In all cases, the projects addressed at least two ITTO strategic priorities and several SDGs and GFGs, indicating highly relevant work benefitting both the countries and global efforts to improve forest management and reduce deforestation and degradation.

[1] TICAD is a Japanese-led initiative to promote high-level policy dialogue between African leaders and development partners and mobilize knowledge and resources for development in Africa. For more information, see: www.mofa.go.jp/region/africa/ticad/index.html

[2] www.itto.int/council_committees/documents/

[3] www.itto.int/policy_papers/

[4] www.itto.int/council_committees/action_plans/previous/

[5] ITTO. 2022. *ITTO Strategic Action Plan 2022–2026*. Policy Development Series No. 25. Yokohama, Japan. Available at: www.itto.int/council_committees/action_plans.

[6] TICAD focuses its policy work in the following five areas: 1) Boosting economic growth; 2) Ensuring human security; 3) Consolidation of peace; 4) Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals; 5) Addressing environmental issues such as climate change.

[7] https://sdgs.un.org

[8] www.un.org/esa/forests/documents/un-strategic-plan-for-forests-2030/index.html

**Table 1: The ten ITTO projects included in the evaluation and implemented in West and Central Africa between 2010 and 2020**

| Project identifier | Project name | Country/countries | Duration |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Forest management, conservation, community participation, and forest landscape restoration* | | | |
| PD 456/07 | Capacity building for sustainable management of tropical rainforests and biodiversity conservation in the ITTO Congo Basin countries | Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon | 2012–2019 |
| PD 754/14 | Rehabilitation and sustainable management of sacred forests on Ramsar sites 1017 and 1028 in Benin | Benin | 2017–2020 |
| PD 725/13 | Rehabilitation of degraded forest land in the Ahua forest reserve by the women members of association MALEBI in compensation for the forest resources removed to meet the need for fuelwood (charcoal and firewood) | Côte d'Ivoire | 2016–2018 |
| PD 419/06 (TICAD-5) | Forest seeds management and conservation: rehabilitation and restoration of degraded forests with the involvement of local communities (refugees, internally displaced people and local populations) | Côte d'Ivoire | 2013–2018 |
| PD 530/08 | Management of forests established through rehabilitation of degraded forests by local communities in Ghana | Ghana | 2012–2018 |
| *National information systems, statistics, timber trade and timber tracking* | | | |
| PD 692/13 | Implementation and operationalization of a national information system for the sustainable management of forest resources | Côte d'Ivoire | 2015–2019 |
| PD 124/01 | Promotion of sustainable management of African forests (implemented by the ITTO Secretariat) – Phase III, Stages 1 and 2 | Congo Basin | 2011–2016 |
| PD 678/12 | Establishment of a national forest statistics information management system | Benin | 2013–2016 |
| PD 700/13 | Development of intra-African trade and further processing in tropical timber and timber products – Phase 1, Stage 1 | Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo | 2015–2016 |
| PD 620/11 | Development and implementation of a species-identification and timber-tracking system in Africa with DNA fingerprints and stable isotopes | Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Ghana | 2012–2016 |

The projects were highly efficient, delivering in most cases substantial achievements with limited funding. Key reasons for success were careful project selection, working with willing and dedicated partners, proper project design, strong on-site project management by the implementing agencies, and effective monitoring by ITTO.

Most of the projects have shown good results, including in cases where some activities could not be completed. Overall, the projects have advanced the application of sustainable forest management (SFM) across the region and, as a result, achieved some success in improving SFM practices. Among the most effective aspects of these projects was the training provided to a large number of people (more than 1300 individuals) in various aspects of forest management.

## Sustainability

Several projects promise long-term sustainability because of the training provided, including PD 456/07, PD 124/01 and PD 620/11. These projects increased the capacity of government staff to implement and monitor SFM, and improved enforcement capacity. Important going forward will be whether governments give priority to improving forest management and collecting data to measure performance.

Project PD 700/13 provided a much-needed analysis of the trade in wood products from Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Gabon to neighbouring countries. This project was designed to assist industry through training, and government through policy analysis. As a result, governments have improved their policies to encourage trade, and industry has developed a better understanding of value-added processing, including local transformation. Hence the probability of sustainability is high for this project.

At the community level, where training was provided and areas were restored or reforested, including by enhancing agroforestry and including small credit schemes, the projects can be anticipated to have long-term sustainability (PD 530/08, PD 419/06, PD 754/14). In the case of PD 725/13 (Côte d'Ivoire), the outcomes are likely sustainable because of the strong involvement and empowerment of women, who formed an association and implemented the initial project.

**Nursing forests:** Workers tending seedlings in a tree nursery in Banamè, Benin. Nursery production is one of the variables measured in the country's National Forest Statistics Information Management System (PD 678/12). *Photo: PAGEFCOM*

**Building capacity:** Professor Mbeté demonstrates forest-measuring equipment to a group of students at the National School of Agronomy and Forestry, the Congo (PD 456/07). *Photo: Mamonékéné*

## Lessons learned

Important lessons were learned in the implementation of the projects that can be applied in the wider framework of ITTO and TICAD as well as in future projects. The ten projects can be classified into two broad areas: (1) forest management, conservation, community participation, and forest landscape restoration; and (2) national information systems, statistics, timber trade, and timber tracking (Table 1). The key lessons learned are presented below under these two broad categories.

### *Forest management, conservation, community participation, and forest landscape restoration*

Of the five projects in this category, PD 456/07, implemented by the Network of Forestry and Environmental Training Institutions in Central Africa (*Réseau des Institutions de Formation Forestière et Environnementale en Afrique Centrale*, or RIFFEAC), was much larger than the others. Its main purpose was to develop capacity for SFM in the Congo Basin. It generated several valuable lessons, including:

- Upgrading forest-sector education and training in Africa is essential for ensuring SFM, efficient domestic processing, and sustainable supply chains.
- The effectiveness of multistakeholder platforms is enhanced when key groups of actors in leading institutions champion the identified priority actions and ensure the ongoing flow of information.
- Thematic working groups play a crucial role in the implementation and ownership of the training modules and programme developed under a project and in promulgating the associated teaching methods in training institutions.
- There is a need to assess the compatibility of computer systems and the availability of infrastructure and background information, and to conduct needs assessments before embarking on projects to revamp or create databases at either the national or local level.

In light of the increased attention of the international community to the Congo Basin, creating local knowledge capacity is essential. RIFFEAC maintains an active network and current work programme and is well embedded in the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC) process.[9] Lessons learned here could also prove valuable for other major collaborative efforts in the Congo Basin, including the Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI).[10]

The other four projects (implemented in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana) broadly addressed forest management and forest landscape restoration. All involved local communities and many other stakeholders. The projects tested new approaches and tools for scaling up by countries and their development partners.

Main lessons learned included the need for: long-term forest- and land-use planning; the building of relationships and trust to underpin collaboration among stakeholders; secured tenure and access to forest resources; and community ownership.

The experience gained from these four projects can inform wider international initiatives, including the AFR100 initiative to restore 100 million hectares of forest land in Africa. ITTO has developed tools and expertise to help countries in such efforts.

### *National information systems, statistics, timber trade and timber tracking*

Two of the five projects—in Benin and Côte d'Ivoire—addressed national forest information systems. The projects helped build capacities and improve transparency. However, the rapid development in information and communications technology (ICT) makes it difficult to achieve sustainability with these types of projects. ICT in forestry needs be tackled as part of wider ICT development in a country.

[9] www.comifac.org/
[10] www.cafi.org/welcome

The other three projects in this category were implemented regionally. The key lessons from these projects include:

- In projects and activities related to trade and industry, as far as possible, regional economic communities should be involved in implementation (e.g. the Economic Community for Western African States or the Economic Community for Central African States). For the Congo Basin, COMIFAC and the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) are important counterparts. New ITTO projects in the Congo Basin should consider using the platform installed by CAFI.
- The establishment of a regional coordination team, including an ITTO regional manager, will help ensure adequate oversight of project implementation across countries.
- It is important when using a regional approach that all participating countries reach a common understanding of project objectives, as well as of scope and targets.

Project PD 124/01, implemented by the ITTO Secretariat in two stages over several years and dealing with monitoring and reporting of SFM, was instrumental for policy development in many of the participating countries, including Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon and Mali.[11] Several countries involved in the European Union's forest law enforcement, governance and trade process have taken advantage of the procedures and instruments put in place within the framework of the project to advance in negotiations on voluntary partnership agreements with the EU.

Project PD 620/11 stood out for its focus on training laboratory staff in advanced timber-tracking methodologies. Lessons learned from this project include the need for sufficient training on quality control for the collection of reference samples. Overall, there is a need for wider use of genetic identification tools for forest law enforcement and management in African countries. Ultimately, these tools will increase access to markets for African forest products by ensuring their legality. The topic thus remains highly relevant for ITTO.

## Policy guidance for ITTO and TICAD

A framework for collaboration between ITTO and TICAD can be identified that responds to the challenges and needs of African people in the pursuit of sustainable development and which is in line with the objectives of the two institutions.

ITTO's focus is on SFM and timber value-adding and trade. Its projects are usually implemented over 1–4 years (but can also be phased and thus span much longer periods); they emphasize best practices, capacity development in communities and institutions, and scaling up at the local, national and international levels. ITTO has considerable experience in project implementation and a well-developed process, with safeguards, that provides transparency, oversight, monitoring and reporting.

Collaboration between ITTO and TICAD, with sufficient seed funding from the Japanese government, has the potential to attract funding from other donors and financing institutions due to the strong interest among many such donors in promoting SFM in Africa. Project proposals could also explore co-funding options by associating ITTO/TICAD projects with broader initiatives and programmes in West Africa and the Congo Basin, such as those of the Global Environment Facility and CAFI.

To maximize the contributions of projects to the shared objectives of supporting partners, as well as national and regional goals, projects submitted by African countries to ITTO should:

- be designed by ITTO member countries and partners in the region and focus on forest landscape-based solutions, recognizing the importance of restoring landscape intactness, conserving biodiversity, and enhancing ecosystem services for present and future generations;[12]
- be designed to function at multiple scales based on spatial planning;
- have specific objectives on biodiversity conservation and the delivery of ecosystem services;
- have robust monitoring, evaluation and learning systems with clear, measurable indicators;
- lead to improved economic outcomes in local communities and at the national level; and
- continue to involve local communities in managing their own local forests.

The evaluation process was supported by the Government of Japan. The total ITTO budget for the ten projects was about USD 12.2 million, which was contributed mainly by the Government of Japan, with other donors comprising the governments of Australia, Belgium, China, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States of America.

Outputs of individual projects can be found by inserting the project code into the ITTO project search function at www.itto.int/project_search.

JAPANGOV
THE GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN

TICAD

[11] See the full evaluation report and policy brief for details.

[12] Forest landscape-based solutions seek to enhance the role of forests in combating climate change (mitigation and adaptation) and achieving the SDGs, focusing on (for example) the roles of green supply chains, bio-corridor restoration, community-based REDD+ projects, innovative forest monitoring systems, and research and development. See ITTO's *Guidelines for Forest Landscape Restoration in the Tropics*, available at: www.itto.int/guidelines

# Europe's regulation of imported deforestation: the limits of an undifferentiated approach

***Unless amended, draft rules to ban deforestation-tainted commodities could unfairly penalize less-developed countries***

**By Alain Karsenty**

Senior scientist,
French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD)
(alain.karsenty@cirad.fr)

**Fit for Europe?** Artisanal sawnwood with traceability tags in Madagascar. *Photo: A. Karsenty*

The European Commission unveiled its plan to address deforestation and forest degradation associated with certain imported agricultural and forestry products in November 2021.[1] Around 20–25% of global deforestation is linked to international trade,[2] and the consumption of goods and services in the European Union is responsible for the "embedded deforestation" of an estimated 730 000 hectares of land per year, or about 10% of the global total (2004 figures).[3]

The proposed regulation states that, before placing a product on the European market, a company must guarantee that it is not linked to an area that has been deforested after 31 December 2020. It must also geolocate the plots of lands from which the product originates and set up a tracing system. The Commission proposed that the regulation initially apply to palm oil, soy, cocoa, coffee, beef, and wood. However, the European Parliament has proposed, through amendments adopted in September 2022,[4] to include swine, sheep and goats, poultry, corn, natural rubber, charcoal and printed paper products, and to tighten the cutoff date by one year to 31 December 2019.

The cornerstone of the draft regulation is the obligation on importers to perform "due diligence"—a set of checks to establish the product's origin, legality, and "deforestation-free" status. The European Parliament requested that due diligence also take into account "human rights abuses associated with deforestation, forest degradation and conversion, including violations of the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities and land rights holders". As of November 2022, the regulation still needs to be finalized in "trilogue" negotiations between the Commission, the European Council (where governments of Member States are represented) and the Parliament.

## Thorny issues

A key element of the draft regulation is the cutoff date. Any commodities produced on land that was converted from forest to agriculture or pasture before this date are not considered linked to deforestation. While they differ by a year, the dates proposed by the Commission and Parliament represent a gesture to the importing industries and producing countries by granting an effective "amnesty" to a lot of recent deforestation in countries such as Brazil and Côte d'Ivoire. Countries with relatively low deforestation, such as Gabon, who wish to now develop their agriculture, may feel penalized by this arrangement.

The other important point is the adoption in the regulation of the definition of forest used by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations: a minimum of 10% tree cover (excluding oil palm or fruit trees) on a minimum area of 0.5 hectare. However, many countries have adopted a minimum threshold of 30% tree cover to define forests. With the threshold at 10%, production considered legal in the country of origin (where land with, for example, 20% tree cover has been recently cleared for agriculture) will be unacceptable in the European Union. This discrepancy risks creating trade disputes and triggering possible retaliatory measures. Indeed, a leaked memo from the Commission's Directorate-General for Trade considers that the regulation as drafted constitutes "a direct challenge to notions of sovereignty over land use decisions" because it does not

[1] https://environment.ec.europa.eu/publications/proposal-regulation-deforestation-free-products_en
[2] Pendrill et al. 2019. Agriculture and forestry trade drives large share of tropical deforestation emissions. *Global Environmental Change*, 56, 1-10
[3] https://ec.europa.eu/environment/forests/pdf/1.%20Report%20analysis%20of%20impact.pdf
[4] https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/summary.do?id=1716198&t=e&l=en

**Forest or farm?** A landscape in Acre, Brazil, where some forest land has been converted to pasture. *Photo: Kate Evans/CIFOR*

distinguish between legal and illegal production, unlike similar regulations in the United Kingdom[5] and the United States[6] and even existing European regulations (Box 1). In the memo, the trade officials also argued that the law should be limited to deforestation rather than include forest degradation. The absence of international definitions of forest degradation would make the law hard to enforce, they said, while including degradation "poses serious policy and legal concerns and [it is] a risky avenue to try to justify this on the basis of public morals".[7]

Moreover, the idea of having only one definition of forest for all countries and all biomes reveals a lack of realism. It would be better to examine land units on a case-by-case basis, and even biome by biome, as some countries have several forest biomes.

## A collective penalty?

Under the proposed regulation, a benchmarking of countries will be carried out to establish different levels of due diligence according to country risk. Three levels of risk (low, standard and high) will be established. The criteria include deforestation and forest degradation rates, production trends for commodities associated with deforestation, national policies and quality of governance.

While this approach follows a certain logic, it may deter importers from sourcing timber from countries such as Cambodia, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, given the effort they will have to make to provide sufficient guarantees. The Commission's draft states that "certification or other third-party verified systems could be used in the risk assessment process" but adds that "these systems should not substitute the operator's responsibility for due diligence". Who will decide whether the importer's due diligence effort in addition to certification is sufficient? Interpretations are likely to vary greatly depending on the authorities of the European country concerned, creating uncertainty for economic actors.

By not trusting private certification schemes that integrate zero-deforestation criteria to declare a product "negligible risk", the European Union will also sanction "clean" producers in contexts of difficult governance and rampant corruption. This will result in a collective penalty (especially for less-developed countries) that is likely to further accentuate the shift of trade flows away from the European Union and towards Asia and emerging countries. It will also discourage responsible producers from operating in some developing countries. Thus, the European Union risks depriving itself of the lever of trade to promote sustainable practices through the incentive to develop zero-deforestation production, even in challenging contexts, in order to access lucrative European markets.

### Box 1: End of the voluntary partnership agreements for legal timber trade?

The Commission is not questioning the European Union Timber Regulation (EUTR) of 2013, which aims to sanction importers who place illegally logged timber on the European market. However, the Commission appears to be considering abandoning the voluntary partnership agreements (VPAs) established under its 2003 Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) initiative to help producer countries export only legal timber. The cornerstone of the VPAs are "FLEGT licences" for exported timber. Licences must be verified through a "national legality verification system" that has in turn been audited by national authorities and the Commission. Licences exempt importers in the European Union from tedious paperwork linked to due diligence, facilitating trade flows. However, of the 15 exporting countries involved in this process, only Indonesia has managed to issue FLEGT licences since 2016. This situation is considered a failure in light of the large sums committed by Europe to the initiative.

Against this background, Commission officials have indicated the need to "move from legality to sustainability" (hence the issue of degradation). The EUTR/VPA FLEGT coupling is therefore destined to be subsumed into the new European multi-commodity regulation, which will make due diligence for all shipments, including consideration of "degradation" for timber, unavoidable. FLEGT licenses are therefore diminishing in importance, even if they may still be used for some time to meet the "legality" criterion in future due diligence procedures.

## An alternative approach

Distinguishing between illegal and legal deforestation is likely a more effective way to combat deforestation and forest degradation. This distinction is more politically acceptable than a boycott of agricultural imports associated with deforestation that are considered legal in the producing country but deemed environmentally problematic under the proposed European regulation.

It would be more realistic to adopt a "graduated response" model with the following elements:

- prohibit the import of agricultural products linked to illegal deforestation.

[5] U.K. Environment Act 2021
[6] U.S. Fostering Overseas Rule of law and Environmentally Sound Trade Act (2021)
[7] www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/12/trade-officials-taking-a-chainsaw-to-eu-forest-protection-plans

**Commodity under scrutiny:** A worker in Muara Kaman District of East Kalimantan, Indonesia, loading oil palm fruit onto a truck to be taken for processing. *Photo: Ricky Martin/CIFOR*

- modulate tariffs on imported products according to their implication in forest degradation and loss;
- require information and guarantees from sector actors that products are deforestation-free; and
- certify product status by independent bodies accredited by public authorities, subject to continuous evaluation.

Switzerland has just paved the way for this kind of approach through an agreement with Indonesia that lowers tariffs by up to 40% for certified palm oil.

While the current lack of zero-deforestation certification for some commodities could be an obstacle for this alternative approach, the situation is evolving. In recent years, organizations like the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil and Rainforest Alliance have included such criteria in their certification programmes for palm oil, cocoa and other commodities (timber certification schemes already have provisions about deforestation). More certification programmes would likely follow suit and demand from businesses would grow if the prospect of differentiated taxation at European Union borders became clear.

For public authorities, this would be a way to spur the evolution of third-party certification, insofar as they could endorse programmes that integrate a zero-deforestation approach and whose verification mechanisms are deemed credible. Certification can also address other topics, such as wildlife conservation, fair earnings for small producers, and gender issues, which are further driving interest in using these levers.

A weakness of certification systems is the risk that auditors from private-sector verification bodies are influenced by the companies that select and pay them. To some extent, the assessment of sustainability criteria is still subjective, and companies may seek out auditors with a reputation for complacency. However, public authorities can require certification systems to ensure auditor independence. This can be done, for instance, through continuous performance evaluation and conditional re-accreditation, or auditors can be randomly assigned instead of selected by the customer.

The proposed alternative can be summarized as follows. In all cases, importers should comply with a legal requirement to perform due diligence and ensure that the product is not associated with illegal land conversion. If this condition is fulfilled and importation takes place, to secure a favourable customs tariff, the importer must demonstrate that his product can be labelled "zero-deforestation" through an independent certification system accredited in the European Union. Otherwise, a higher tariff is applied.

The logical sequence would be as follows:

- If due diligence suggests a high risk of illegality, the importer should not proceed with the shipment.
- If due diligence establishes zero or negligible risk of illegality, but the product is not certified zero-deforestation, then a higher tariff is applied.
- If due diligence establishes zero or negligible risk of illegality, and the product is certified as zero-deforestation, a favourable tariff is applied (zero-deforestation certification may also incorporate the guarantee of legality, facilitating due diligence).

An issue with this approach is that many tariffs are currently set at zero, for example for soy, natural rubber, and cocoa. Introducing a tax differential between zero-deforestation products and others requires an increase in some tariffs, and thus a revision of existing bilateral trade agreements. Unilateral increases in some tariffs could be challenged at the World Trade Organization (WTO). However, there is room for manoeuvre in the provisions of GATT Article XX, which allows some exceptions for measures deemed necessary to pursue a legitimate objective (such as the conservation of non-renewable natural resources).

The additional revenue from tariffs could be used to fund programmes that help small producers adopt sustainable practices. As well as individual certification, such programmes could support certification and zero-deforestation labelling for groups and whole territories.

Allocating additional revenues to producing countries in line with the taxes levied on their imports would ward off accusations of protectionism and provide a "good faith" basis for defending this measure at the WTO. And, as with all ecological tax mechanisms, the objective would be for the yield from the duty to decrease, with the European Union only importing certified zero-deforestation products with the lowest tariffs.

## A call for common sense

With the loss of forests along with their biodiversity and carbon stocks so high on the political agenda, the proposed European regulation has drawn sharp scrutiny—and criticism—from many interested parties. Some environmental groups, for instance, consider its provisions too weak.

As the Commission, ministers and lawmakers seek to finalize the regulation, they should keep in mind that, to succeed in advancing global sustainability, it should provide positive incentives for exporters as well as importers, and support a fair trade in agricultural commodities that can help countries in the global South to realize their legitimate development goals alongside the conservation of their forests.

# Protecting forests and their value from wildfire in Peru

***An ITTO-funded project has built understanding of the value of forests and the importance of preventing wildfires as well as capacity to respond to outbreaks***

**By Manoel Sobral Filho**

Consultant
(msf3591@hotmail.com)

**Know your weapons:** Fire brigade training in Pasco, Peru. *Photo: SERFOR*

Communicating the value of forests, training volunteer firefighters and tapping remote-sensing data to generate timely warnings are among the steps taken under a project in Peru to conserve the country's forest ecosystems by improving forest fire prevention and control.

A mid-term evaluation has found that the ITTO-funded project is on track for successful completion, despite disruption and delay caused in part by the COVID-19 pandemic. An indicator of success is that, in the five departments covered by the project, a lower total forest area was affected by fire in 2021 than in 2019 (before project commencement).

## A project spanning five departments

Implemented by the National Forest and Wildlife Service of Peru (SERFOR), ITTO project PP-A/56-340-2 was designed to strengthen fire prevention and response to protect tropical forests, forest plantations and other wild vegetation across five departments: Cajamarca, Huanuco, Junin, Pasco and Ucayali.

The project aimed to counter the inappropriate and illegal use of fire and the lack of awareness about its negative effects on the environment and human health. In Peru, this problem is aggravated by the traditional use of burning to attract rain and to clear stubble after harvest. This results in a high incidence of wildfires, leading to the loss of forest cover and natural wild flora and fauna habitats; damage to the physical integrity, health and property of individuals; greenhouse gas emissions; and the loss of economic value of forest lands and wildlife resources.

The project aimed to reduce forest fire and loss and its associated negative impacts by:

- raising awareness of forest value and forest fire damage and fostering/enhancing cooperation and coordination between local communities and public and private institutions to strengthen forest fire prevention and response;
- implementing a capacity-building programme to improve the forest fire prevention and response actions of national and regional government bodies, volunteer firefighting corps, the private sector, and local and indigenous communities;
- strengthening SERFOR's geographical information system (GIS) and remote-sensing unit and its work on forest fire prevention and response; and
- fostering knowledge management and outreach for fire prevention and response.

## Progress despite pandemic

The implementation period for the project was originally 12 months, starting in January 2021. However, ITTO granted a six-month extension to make up for unforeseen delays, mainly caused by the COVID-19 pandemic but also by time-consuming government operational rules and procedures.

Working in close cooperation with SERFOR, particularly its project coordinator Juan Carlos Vasquez and project director Erasmo Otarola, the author undertook the evaluation in June 2022, the final month of the extended implementation period. By this point, most of the planned activities had been realized or were very near completion, and the project had delivered the following key results:

- over 1100 residents and representatives of public and private institutions trained and with increased awareness (about 80% of the target, with more activities imminent);
- sound coordination between communities and public and private institutions and strengthened forest fire prevention and response (100% achievement of the target);
- a decrease in forest area affected by fire in four of the five departments. Although part of the reduction may be attributable to the project, fewer forest fires (and less forest loss) may also have occurred because of the slowdown in the Peruvian economy—including the agriculture and forest sectors—due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As part of its awareness-raising activities, the project promoted best practices in forest and agroforestry management and agricultural waste management, including through workshops and training courses as well as materials such as manuals, leaflets and a 2023 calendar (titled "Menos Incendios, Más Vida" or "Less Fire, More Life").

The actions designed to build forest fire prevention and response capacity included online training courses and workshops that drew 185 participants from public and private institutions. More than 200 volunteers from local communities and fire brigades received training in forest fire prevention and response, while firefighting equipment and gear was purchased for fire brigades.

Strengthening SERFOR's GIS and remote-sensing unit involved upgrading its hardware and software equipment and accessing more satellite data to improve wildfire monitoring and early warning systems. Some 287 people attended relevant workshops. Authorities in the five departments have already begun using data from the improved SERFOR web platform in their prevention and response operations.


**Mobilizing the community:** Fire management training in Huanuco. *Photo: SERFOR*

The overarching knowledge management and outreach component of the project included the production of six videos, including on managing agricultural residues and measures to take after a forest fire has occurred, and five audio spots across the five departments. The project also worked with the Ministry of Culture to engage more effectively with local communities, resulting in, for example, the establishment of community fire prevention and response networks and forest brigades and translating some of the dissemination materials into Quechua and Shipibo.

**A fire-prone landscape:** A mountainous area of Huanuco, one of five departments where the project was implemented. *Photo: SERFOR*

**Theory before practice:** Training of firefighters in Ucayali department. *Photo: SERFOR*

## Key findings

The evaluation commended the project for completing its important and ambitious capacity-building and training component, despite the COVID-19 pandemic. An ex-post evaluation would help establish the effectiveness of this component, which had to implement a large share of its activities virtually, rather than in person as originally planned. Such an evaluation could also better assess the project's contribution to reductions in forest fires and forest loss, both in the five departments covered by the project and at the national level.

By strengthening SERFOR's GIS and remote sensing work, the project significantly enhanced Peru's national capability to monitor forest cover and issue alerts on forest fires to parties and stakeholders with interest and/or responsibilities in forest fire prevention and control. This, coupled with the project outcomes related to greater awareness, training and capacity building, as well as improved coordination and cooperation between government agencies, has significantly advanced forest fire prevention and response, particularly in the five departments covered by the project.

The project has had an important "seed" effect, enhancing the capacity of Peruvian regional and national institutions to plan and implement larger and more comprehensive forest fire prevention and response projects. An example is an upcoming project, "Improving supporting services for sustainable use of biodiversity to prevent and control forest fires" to be implemented in Ucayali.

## Sustaining the impacts

The evaluation included recommendations, several of which were aimed at ensuring that the impacts of this project as well as those of future programmes with similar goals are sustainable.

For instance, measures should be taken to avoid a post-project situation with diminishing support and decreasing provision of the tools and incentives needed to maintain local communities' and volunteer fire brigades' commitment to and participation in forest fire prevention and response. This could be done by providing SERFOR with resources to provide this support on an interim basis, until a long-term solution is in place.

Steps should also be taken to continue to deliver the project services in the five departments on a more permanent basis, as well as to scale them up to cover other parts of the country. This can be achieved both by a substantial increase in SERFOR's annual regular budget allocation to forest fire prevention and response and by securing international financial assistance for longer-term projects or programmes, as proposed in the concept note, "Strengthening the prevention and attention of forest fires intensified by climate change in Peru", submitted by the Government of Peru to the Green Climate Fund.

When designing similar projects for implementation by government agencies, it is also suggested that longer project durations be considered, as cumbersome and time-consuming government regulations and high personnel turnover, which often affect these agencies, delay the delivery of project inputs and the implementation of activities.

This ITTO project was made possible by funding from the Government of Japan and was declared completed at the 58th session of the International Tropical Timber Council held in November 2022. The evaluation report is available at www.itto.int/council_committees/documents/

JAPAN GOV
THE GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN

# Planting materials, gene pools among top concerns at 4th World Teak Conference

***Ghana-hosted gathering discusses key issues for the sustainability of the high-value global teak industry***

**By P.K. Thulasidas,[1] Yongyut Trisurat,[2] Hwan Ok Ma[3] and Tetra Yanuariadi[4]**

[1] Former TEAKNET Coordinator Kerala Forest Research Institute, India, (thulasidas.teak@gmail.com)
[2] Faculty of Forestry, Kasetsart University, Thailand
[3] ITTO Senior Projects Manager
[4] ITTO Projects Manager


**A first for Africa:** The 4th World Teak Conference was held in Accra, Ghana, on 5–8 September 2022. *Photo: P.K. Thulasidas*

The central role of plantations in the global teak sector was a key theme at the 4th World Teak Conference, which took place in Ghana on 5–8 September 2022, the first time the gathering has been held in Africa. Quality planting materials and a deep gene pool will also be vital for securing a sustainable future for this valuable hardwood sector, delegates heard at the conference, which drew 270 participants from 28 countries.

The World Teak Conference brings together experts and decision-makers from government institutions, the private sector, universities, research institutes and local communities to share knowledge, experience and ideas on the many economic, social and environmental benefits that teak resources can provide.

The fourth edition of the event was jointly organized by the International Teak Information Network (TEAKNET), the Forestry Commission of Ghana, ITTO, the International Union of Forest Research Organizations, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations under the theme "Global teak market: challenges and opportunities for emerging markets and developing economies."

The four-day programme included plenary discussions covering all aspects of teak management, genetics, marketing and trade, community farming and forest landscape restoration; side events organized by ITTO (Box 1), the International Forestry Students Association and the Forestry Research Network of Sub-Saharan Africa; and field trips to natural and plantation forests to get a closer look at the teak industry in Ghana.

## Teak in Ghana

In the opening session, Samuel Abu Jinapor, Ghana's Minister of Lands and Natural Resources, commended the selection of his country to host the conference at a time when


**A post-pandemic opportunity:** Samuel Abu Jinapor, Ghana's Minister of Lands and Natural Resources, said cooperation can power development. *Photo: P.K. Thulasidas*

the world was recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. This, he said, was an opportunity for governments and the private sector to work together to conserve natural resources, protect global ecosystems, support people's health and advance sustainable development—including through the utilization of teak.

The minister recounted how teak was introduced to Ghana around 1905, with seeds sourced mainly from India and Burma (now Myanmar). Today, teak covers about 70% of the forest plantations in Ghana, which has prioritized forest landscape restoration and commercial forest plantations. This year, about 5.2 million teak trees were planted under the country's Green Ghana Initiative on an estimated 200 000 hectares of government and privately owned land, Jinapor said.

### Box 1: ITTO session on sustainable teak management in the Mekong Subregion

In a side-event at the World Teak Conference, ITTO shared the results of a three-year project, "Enhancing the conservation and sustainable management of teak forests and legal and sustainable wood supply chains in the Greater Mekong Subregion." The session presented an overview of how the initiative has assisted governments, local communities and smallholders to improve natural teak forest management as well as production and marketing.

The project (technically an activity in ITTO's Biennial Work Programme) was launched in 2019 with funding from the Government of Germany. It has assisted five participating countries—Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam—to conserve unique natural teak forests and their gene pools; increase incomes for forest communities and smallholders; improve wood processing and marketing; and enhance regional collaboration and coordination in teak management.

During the event, ITTO also released "Teak in Mekong for a Sustainable Future", a publication developed by the project to promote best practices in planting, managing, harvesting and processing teak and demonstrating legality and sustainability along supply chains.

**Teak in the Mekong:** ITTO Project Manager Dr Tetra Yanuariadi moderated the ITTO side event. *Photo: P. K. Thulasidas*

## Thematic discussions

Ahead of the conference, TEAKNET published five papers covering the themes of the plenary sessions:[1]

- Smallholder teak farming: value-addition management for enhancement of livelihoods in Southeast Asia (Dr James M. Roshetko, World Agroforestry)
- Cost-benefit analysis of teak investments and promoting responsible trade and markets of teakwood (Dr Walter Kollert, WaKa Forest Investment Services AG)
- Improving the quality of teak planting material (Mr Lars Graudal, University of Copenhagen)
- Plantation management models incorporating trees in farming systems in Ghana (Dr Ernest G. Foli, Forestry Research Institute of Ghana, Kumasi)
- Teak: Opportunities for forest and landscape restoration and climate change mitigation (Dr S. Sandeep, TEAKNET Coordinator, Kerala Forest Research Institute).

After fruitful discussions of these topics in the thematic sessions, conference chairman Prof Victor Agyeman presented a summary report based on the deliberations, and the organizers later issued a communique detailing its main points.[2]

## Keys to the future

On the outlook for the industry, the communique noted that the supply of quality teak logs from old-growth forests is on a downward trajectory because of log export bans in natural-teak-growing countries.

Supply constraints have already spurred investment in planted teak forests, and "the quality of teak wood originating in planted teak forests has improved where superior planting material and good management practices are applied," according to the communique.

A prerequisite for future sustainability, it added, is to conserve "the highly differentiated gene pools of teak both within and outside its natural habitat" so that breeding programmes can maintain diversity in the planting stock.

The communique also provided a useful overview of the teak sector.

Teak represents a small proportion of world timber production and trade. But it has become a major component of the forest economies of many tropical countries. Planted teak forests have attracted large private-sector investments in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Globally, teak constitutes the only valuable hardwood resource that is increasing in terms of area.

Teakwood prices had been on an upward trajectory in most countries since 2021, but this trend was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, price trends have been erratic and difficult to evaluate, the communique noted.

As well as discussing teak's economic potential, conference delegates explored the importance of teak plantations for rural livelihoods and food security, and for environmental protection.

In many tropical countries, smallholders and farmers own planted teak forests or trees and depend on them for their livelihoods, gaining employment and income from nursery operations, land preparation, plantation establishment and maintenance, and in wood-based industries.

[1] Available at www.teaknet.org under "Alerts & News"

[2] Available at www.teaknet.org under "Alerts & News"

**Field trip:** Conference delegates visiting a FORM Ghana teak plantation. *Photo: Forestry Commission of Ghana*

Teak plantations could also play a major role in sequestering carbon and represent a viable option in forest landscape restoration, in particular on degraded lands. Tapping into the carbon credit markets would provide additional incentives and support the global effort on climate change mitigation.

## Recommendations

At its conclusion, the conference delivered recommendations for action to support the development of a sustainable teak industry. Stakeholders in the sector should work together to:

- make available superior planting material to private companies and local communities to improve planted teak forests;
- facilitate capacity building for local community and field workers, particularly in teak management techniques and intercropping of teak with profitable agricultural crops;
- establish confidence in teak investments with smallholders and farmers through the provision of realistic cost-benefit analyses, market price information and enabling government policies;

**Expert discussions:** Dr Walter Kollert, Member of the Steering Committee of TEAKNET, addressing the conference. *Photo: Forestry Commission of Ghana*

- encourage smallholder growers to apply better silvicultural techniques and use intercropping systems to bridge the initial years without earnings from forestry, to organize group marketing, and to make better use of marketing data and information;
- investigate opportunities to link teak plantations with carbon credit markets; and
- commit more resources to research and development to advance the sustainable management of planted teak forests and investigate in particular the quality of teak wood grown in plantations as compared to natural forests.

The next World Teak Conference is due to be held in India in 2025.

***Data show Viet Nam's wood and wood products industry becoming less reliant on imports from countries that might struggle to meet growing timber legality assurance requirements***

**By Dr Hoang Lien Son[1] and Ngo Sy Hoai[2]**

[1] Director, Forest Economics Research Centre, Vietnamese Academy of Forest Science
[2] Vice President and Secretary General, Vietnam Timber and Forest Products Association

**Key supplier:** A worker in Cameroon tracing and marking timber. *Photo: FAO/Marc Vandenhaute*

With 15 free trade agreements covering more than 50 trade partners, Viet Nam has become tightly integrated into the global economy,[1] a development reflected in the growth of its wood industries. Viet Nam exports wood and wood products to more than 140 overseas markets, while also importing timber from more than 100 source countries.

In 2016–2020, the volume of imported timber amounted to 7–9 million $m^3$ of roundwood equivalent, with a value of USD 2.2–2.5 billion. Locally sourced wood has been gradually displacing imports. However, imports still contributed 25% of raw material inputs in Viet Nam's wood industry in 2022 (down from 30% in 2010) (Viet Nam Administration of Forestry, 2022).

A challenge to the sector's continued expansion are increasingly tight timber legality regulations put in place by the top five importers of Viet Nam's wood and wood products—the United States of America, Japan, China, the European Union and the Republic of Korea.

As part of its efforts to support timber operators, in 1998, Viet Nam reached a voluntary partnership agreement (VPA) with the European Union under the bloc's Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) initiative, which aims to promote sustainable and legal production and trade of wood and wood products and counter illegal logging.

Viet Nam has also established the Viet Nam Timber Legality Assurance System (VNTLAS) and has been developing policies and legislation under VNTLAS to implement the VPA. The European Union has encouraged Viet Nam to expand the scope of VNTLAS to include importers and domestic producers as well as processors and exporters —a condition for the eventual issuing of FLEGT licences for shipments from Viet Nam to Europe.[2]

Under a 2020 decision issued by Viet Nam's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, about half of the countries from where Viet Nam imports timber are considered "high-risk", meaning importers of timber from these sources have to submit additional documents and evidence to prove its legality.

This article, part of a broader assessment of the conditions surrounding the import of timber into Viet Nam and risk-based control and management mechanisms instituted under the VNTLAS readiness process, analyzes timber imports in the period 2015–2020.

The analysis was carried out using data and information on the import and export of timber and timber products published by the Viet Nam Timber and Forest Products Association (VIFOREST); import and export data published by the Viet Nam General Department of Customs; and reports prepared by Forest Trends, VIFOREST and local organizations.

## Roundwood imports

The assessment found that the volume of imported roundwood rose from 1.69 million $m^3$ in 2015 to 2.32 million $m^3$ in 2019, an increase of 37%. The value of imported roundwood also increased, from USD 511 million in 2015 to a peak of USD 698 million in 2018. In 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the volume of imported roundwood fell to 2.02 million $m^3$ and had a value of USD 563 million. The

[1] https://wtocenter.vn/fta

[2] www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/vietnam/voluntary-partnership-agreement-forest-law-enforcement-governance-and-trade-eu_en

**Table 1: Volume of roundwood (1000 m$^3$) imported into Viet Nam from major exporting countries (2015–2020) grouped by risk category**

| | Countries | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I** | **Low-risk countries** | **420.16** | **419.95** | **639.27** | **734.62** | **834.62** | **680.67** | **3,729.29** |
| 1 | United States of America | 65.70 | 76.70 | 145.79 | 198.37 | 245.79 | 214.10 | 946.46 |
| 2 | Belgium | 74.30 | 92.90 | 145.79 | 173.68 | 256.25 | 188.19 | 931.11 |
| 3 | Germany | 77.20 | 76.20 | 112.50 | 96.95 | 115.11 | 78.06 | 556.02 |
| 4 | France | 32.52 | 36.59 | 59.92 | 60.85 | 70.52 | 73.68 | 334.08 |
| 5 | Netherlands | 56.24 | 60.16 | 115.01 | 81.22 | 96.73 | 63.34 | 472.69 |
| 6 | Uruguay | 114.20 | 77.40 | 60.27 | 123.55 | 50.23 | 63.30 | 488.94 |
| **II** | **High-risk countries** | **806.07** | **797.14** | **857.93** | **813.51** | **803.64** | **701.11** | **4,779.40** |
| 7 | Cameroon | 314.70 | 420.70 | 507.39 | 513.86 | 495.53 | 393.67 | 2,645.85 |
| 8 | Papua New Guinea | 105.20 | 183.10 | 123.03 | 195.16 | 236.86 | 228.57 | 1,071.92 |
| 9 | Lao PDR | 321.70 | 36.20 | 7.11 | 2.44 | 5.68 | 12.82 | 385.95 |
| 10 | Cambodia | 59.30 | 139.30 | 163.07 | 38.26 | 10.55 | 1.50 | 411.98 |
| 11 | Republic of the Congo | 5.17 | 17.84 | 57.33 | 63.79 | 55.03 | 64.55 | 263.70 |

Sources: VIFOREST, Forest Trends, General Department of Viet Nam Customs.

**Figure 1: Volume and value of roundwood imported into Viet Nam (2015-2020)**

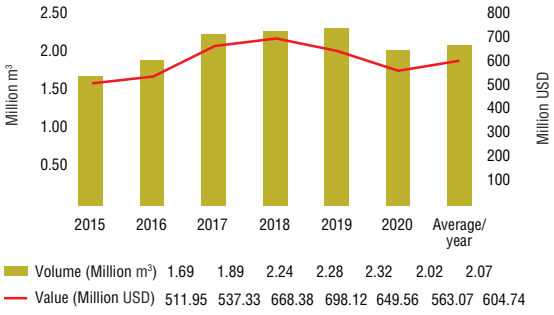
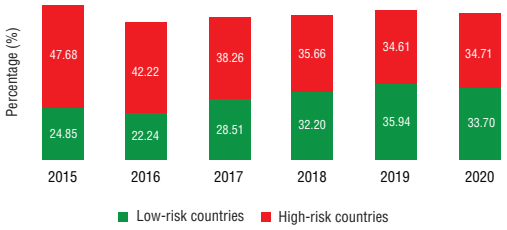



**Figure 2: Percentage share of volume of roundwood imported into Viet Nam from major low- and high-risk exporting countries (2015–2020)**




average annual volume of imported roundwood across the period was 2.07 million m$^3$, equivalent to USD 604.7 million (Figure 1).

## Major roundwood suppliers

While timber is imported into Viet Nam from more than 100 countries and territories, 11 countries account for about two-thirds of Viet Nam's total imports of roundwood. These major suppliers can be classified into two categories, namely "low-risk" and "high-risk" (Table 1).

Countries considered low-risk include the United States of America, Belgium and Germany. The United States of America is the largest low-risk roundwood exporter to Viet Nam, with an average of 157 000 m$^3$ per year and a total of 946 460 m$^3$ in 2015–2020. Countries considered high-risk include Cameroon, Papua New Guinea and Cambodia. Cameroon is the most significant among them, exporting an average of 441 000 m$^3$ of roundwood to Viet Nam per year and 2.6 million m$^3$ for the whole period.

Table 1 and Figure 2 show that in 2015 the volume of timber imported from major source countries categorized as high-risk totalled 806 070 m$^3$, nearly double the volume of timber imported from major low-risk suppliers and accounting for nearly 48% of total roundwood supplies for Viet Nam. However, by 2020, the volume of timber imported from the high-risk countries had fallen to 701 110 m$^3$, or about 35% of the total, while the volume from the low-risk countries increased to 680 670 m$^3$, or nearly 34%, driven by significant increases in imports from the United States of America and Belgium. The volume of roundwood imported from the United States alone more than tripled from 65 700 m$^3$ in 2015 to 214 100 m$^3$ in 2020. In contrast, volumes from countries such as the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Cambodia—once Viet Nam's biggest suppliers—have fallen sharply as they have introduced export restrictions. For instance, the volume of roundwood imported from the Lao People's Democratic Republic decreased from 321 700 m$^3$ in 2015 to 12 820 m$^3$ in 2020, a 96% drop.

A similar picture emerges from an analysis of the value of roundwood imports (Table 2 and Figure 3). Roundwood imported from the 11 countries accounted for 65–75% of the total import value in the period, with the share from high-risk countries falling from 55% in 2015 to 38% in 2020. Cameroon was again the leading supplier, supplying roundwood worth USD 150–200 million per year or more than USD 1 million in total over the 2015–2020 period.

**Table 2: Value of roundwood (USD million) imported into Viet Nam from major exporting countries (2015–2020) grouped by risk category**

| | Countries | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I** | **Low-risk countries** | **99.53** | **99.04** | **146.43** | **175.41** | **204.23** | **169.60** | **894.23** |
| 1 | United States of America | 29.74 | 33.69 | 44.81 | 63.27 | 82.97 | 71.61 | 326.09 |
| 2 | Belgium | 16.39 | 18.51 | 31.80 | 38.33 | 54.15 | 41.16 | 200.34 |
| 3 | Germany | 15.93 | 15.07 | 24.40 | 20.93 | 23.85 | 17.03 | 117.20 |
| 4 | France | 7.29 | 7.61 | 13.05 | 13.49 | 15.09 | 16.35 | 72.87 |
| 5 | Netherlands | 11.81 | 12.63 | 22.92 | 18.70 | 19.79 | 13.32 | 99.18 |
| 6 | Uruguay | 18.37 | 11.53 | 9.46 | 20.70 | 8.38 | 10.12 | 78.55 |
| **II** | **High-risk countries** | **281.88** | **239.11** | **300.52** | **302.29** | **255.06** | **216.29** | **1,595.15** |
| 7 | Cameroon | 133.53 | 164.28 | 207.58 | 215.85 | 181.16 | 146.16 | 1,048.56 |
| 8 | Papua New Guinea | 19.64 | 29.37 | 23.37 | 40.43 | 42.84 | 37.92 | 193.58 |
| 9 | Lao PDR | 109.30 | 4.45 | 1.20 | 0.46 | 0.40 | 0.82 | 116.63 |
| 10 | Cambodia | 16.90 | 32.86 | 39.45 | 7.30 | 1.70 | 0.20 | 98.41 |
| 11 | Republic of the Congo | 2.51 | 8.15 | 28.92 | 38.24 | 28.96 | 31.19 | 137.97 |

Sources: VIFOREST, Forest Trends, General Department of Viet Nam Customs.

**Figure 3: Percentage share of value of roundwood imported into Viet Nam from major high- and low-risk exporting countries (2015–2020)**

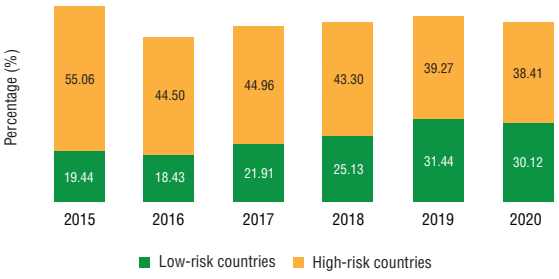
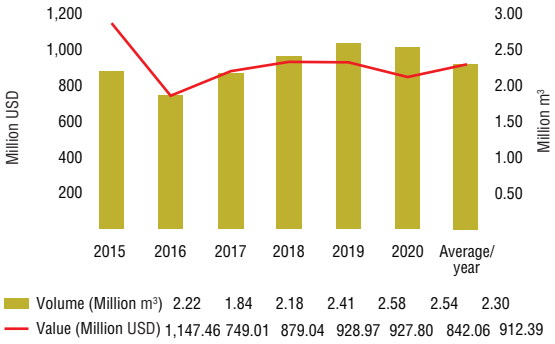



**Figure 4: Volume and value of roundwood imported into Viet Nam (2015–2020)**




## Sawnwood imports

Between 2015 and 2020, the volume of sawnwood imported into Viet Nam rose from 2.22 million $m^3$ to 2.54 million $m^3$, an increase of about 14%, despite a notable decline in 2016 (Figure 4). Measured by value, imports of sawnwood fell even more sharply in 2016—to USD 842 million from USD 1.1 billion in 2015—and only partly recovered across the period. Import values were likely influenced by the decline in imports of rare and precious timber species from the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Cambodia. On average, more sawnwood than roundwood was imported into Viet Nam during the period, whether measured by volume or by value.

### *Major sawnwood suppliers*

Viet Nam imports most of its sawnwood from 11 major supplier countries. The United States of America is the largest supplier, with volumes increasing from 474 000 $m^3$ in 2015 to 597 000 $m^3$ in 2020. Across the period, the major suppliers accounted for roughly 75% of the total import volume of sawnwood (Table 3). However, the volume of sawnwood imported from the low-risk suppliers rose strongly in the period, while the volume from the high-risk suppliers sharply declined. For comparison, in 2015, the volumes of sawnwood imported from main suppliers in the high- and low-risk groups were comparable, accounting for 38% and 40% of total import volumes, respectively. But by 2020, low-risk main suppliers represented 69% of total import volumes, with just 14% sourced from the high-risk exporters.

Mirroring the analysis of volumes, trends in the value of sawnwood imports into Viet Nam were strongly impacted by a decline in exports from the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Cambodia (Table 4). For example, the value of imports from Cambodia plummeted from USD 362 million in 2015 to little more than USD 7 million in 2020. More broadly, the total import value of sawnwood from all major suppliers considered high-risk dropped from about USD 656 million in 2015 to USD 150 million in 2020 and, at the end of the period, accounted for just 18% of total import value. Major suppliers considered low-risk saw their share more than double from 27% to 56% of total sawnwood import value over the same period.

**Table 3: Volume of sawnwood (1000 $m^3$) imported into Viet Nam from major exporting countries (2015–2020) grouped by risk category**

| | Country | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I** | **Low-risk countries** | **892.30** | **936.70** | **1,130.40** | **1,222.41** | **1,442.74** | **1,529.66** | **7,154.21** |
| 1 | United States of America | 474.30 | 460.40 | 496.63 | 541.51 | 562.55 | 597.54 | 3,132.92 |
| 2 | Chile | 163.60 | 187.90 | 246.43 | 209.35 | 322.12 | 284.61 | 1,414.01 |
| 3 | Brazil | 91.80 | 110.70 | 170.40 | 209.71 | 227.80 | 230.22 | 1,040.62 |
| 4 | New Zealand | 155.10 | 164.80 | 171.30 | 166.35 | 169.98 | 178.38 | 1,005.91 |
| 5 | Russia | | | 11.76 | 14.24 | 62.57 | 138.41 | 226.98 |
| 6 | China | 7.50 | 12.90 | 32.64 | 79.85 | 76.33 | 50.74 | 259.95 |
| 7 | South Africa | | | 1.24 | 1.41 | 21.41 | 49.76 | 73.82 |
| **II** | **High-risk countries** | **842.90** | **374.80** | **507.53** | **457.29** | **446.67** | **313.16** | **2,942.34** |
| 8 | Cameroon | 33.80 | 47.60 | 85.35 | 117.38 | 227.39 | 153.63 | 665.15 |
| 9 | Lao PDR | 383.10 | 97.10 | 43.70 | 40.15 | 63.34 | 81.29 | 708.68 |
| 10 | Gabon | 51.00 | 58.70 | 105.78 | 79.85 | 76.33 | 50.74 | 422.39 |
| 11 | Cambodia | 375.00 | 171.40 | 272.70 | 219.91 | 79.61 | 27.50 | 1,146.12 |

Sources: VIFOREST, Forest Trends, General Department of Viet Nam Customs.

**Figure 5: Percentage share of volume of sawnwood imported into Viet Nam from major high- and low-risk exporting countries (2015–2020)**

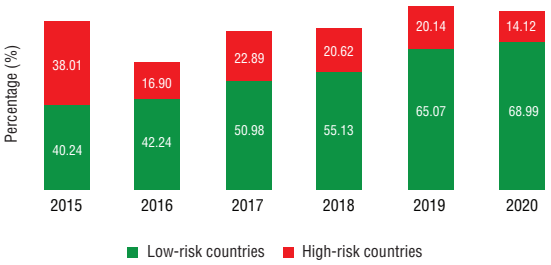



**Figure 6: Percentage share of value of sawnwood imported into Viet Nam from major high- and low-risk exporting countries (2015–2020)**



**Wood products:** Workers in the MIFACO sawmill, Viet Nam. *Photo: FAO Forestry/MIFACO*

**Table 4: Value of sawnwood (USD million) imported into Viet Nam from major exporting countries (2015–2020) grouped by risk category**

| | Countries | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I** | **Low-risk countries** | **312.87** | **296.30** | **364.74** | **444.32** | **464.84** | **472.38** | **2,355.45** |
| 1 | United States of America | 194.09 | 173.86 | 192.18 | 229.83 | 234.23 | 221.85 | 1,246.03 |
| 2 | Chile | 44.50 | 45.33 | 59.77 | 78.53 | 76.38 | 64.65 | 369.16 |
| 3 | Brazil | 27.00 | 26.24 | 41.19 | 57.00 | 60.83 | 52.75 | 265.01 |
| 4 | New Zealand | 41.30 | 41.92 | 43.15 | 43.35 | 42.92 | 43.49 | 256.13 |
| 5 | Russia | - | - | 3.00 | 4.09 | 17.06 | 44.62 | 68.77 |
| 6 | China | 5.98 | 8.95 | 24.72 | 30.15 | 26.42 | 32.02 | 128.25 |
| 7 | South Africa | - | - | 0.73 | 1.37 | 7.01 | 13.01 | 22.11 |
| **II** | **High-risk countries** | **655.90** | **273.47** | **312.30** | **223.87** | **220.99** | **150.39** | **1,836.91** |
| 8 | Cameroon | 23.80 | 26.26 | 38.76 | 53.59 | 102.37 | 69.00 | 313.78 |
| 9 | Lao PDR | 239.20 | 63.68 | 36.43 | 29.42 | 49.02 | 53.43 | 471.18 |
| 10 | Gabon | 30.80 | 35.28 | 63.96 | 48.26 | 39.98 | 20.79 | 239.07 |
| 11 | Cambodia | 362.10 | 148.25 | 173.15 | 92.60 | 29.62 | 7.17 | 812.89 |

Sources: VIFOREST, Forest Trends, General Department of Viet Nam Customs.

## Conclusion

Trade data show how Viet Nam's wood and wood products industry has become less dependent on timber imports from high-risk countries. That is making it easier for the sector to comply with timber legality assurance requirements both under VNTLAS and in export markets.

Further improvements in the country's control and management mechanisms could be achieved by, for instance, adjusting the criteria for classifying countries as high- or low-risk, providing more details on requirements for conducting due diligence on timber legality and clarifying which international forest certification schemes are applicable in Viet Nam. Authorities could also seek to strengthen bilateral relations with low-risk countries, make greater use of information technology to establish timber origin, and instigate studies to identify new low-risk countries for legally sourced timber procurement.

## Reference

Viet Nam Administration of Forestry. 2022. *Report on establishment of material plantation forests for timber processing industry and export*. Conference presentation at Establishment of material areas for timber processing industry and export, 2022, Binh Dinh Province, Viet Nam.

# Tropical and topical

**Compiled by Ken Sato**

## COP27: Leaders launch forest partnership

Governments at the 27th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, underlined their commitment to sustainable forest management with the official launch of the Forest and Climate Leaders' Partnership. The Partnership aims to accelerate implementation of the commitment made by over 140 countries at COP26 in 2021 to stop forest loss and land degradation by 2030, the conference organizers said. The latest State of the World's Forests report (see "Recent editions" on p. 27), has emphasized the need to ramp up action to realize forests' full potential in combating climate change and biodiversity loss.

*Read the full story: https://unfccc.int/news/cop27-leaders-boost-sustainable-forest-management*

## COP27 agrees climate "loss and damage" fund, steps to boost adaptation

COP27 reached a breakthrough agreement to provide "loss and damage" funding for vulnerable countries hit hard by climate disasters. As well as creating the new fund, countries agreed decisions that, the organizers said, reaffirmed their commitment to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The package strengthened action to cut greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the inevitable impacts of climate change, as well as boosting the finance, technology and capacity building needed by developing countries.

*Read the full story: https://unfccc.int/news/cop27-reaches-breakthrough-agreement-on-new-loss-and-damage-fund-for-vulnerable-countries*

## Sustainability pledges help Indonesia produce palm oil with less deforestation

Deforestation associated with palm oil has fallen by 82% over the past decade in Indonesia, the world's top producer of the commodity, Mongabay reported, citing a new study. The decline comes despite a rise in palm oil prices, which historically has been associated with a rise in deforestation as land is cleared for new plantings. Researchers said the drop may be due to more companies making zero-deforestation pledges and reporting on their supply chains.

*Read the full story: https://news.mongabay.com/2022/10/sustainability-pledges-help-indonesia-produce-palm-oil-with-less-deforestation/*

## More than 100 tree species brought under CITES control

Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) have listed more than 100 tree species in its Appendixes with the aim of ensuring their sustainability in the wild while allowing their international trade. Species granted new protections at the 19th Conference of the Parties on 14–25 November in Panama include Malagasy ebonies (*Diospyros* spp.) and brazilwood (*Paubrasilia echinate*). Parties also moved to tighten customs checks on timber shipments to counter illegal trading in CITES-listed tree species. Other tree species impacted by decisions at the meeting were *Boswellia* and rosewood species as well as agarwood-producing taxa.

*Read the full story: https://enb.iisd.org/convention-international-trade-endangered-species-wild-fauna-flora-cites-cop19-summary*

## Brazil, Democratic Republic of Congo and Indonesia push for rainforest protection funding

Brazil, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Indonesia are seeking more funds to help safeguard half of the planet's rainforests, Mongabay reported. The three countries signed a cooperation agreement requesting greater support during the recent G20 Summit in Bali, Indonesia. The announcement follows the loss of 2.3 million hectares of primary forest in the three countries in 2021, primarily due to accelerating deforestation in Brazil. Brazil's president-elect Lula da Silva has urged wealthy nations to meet a pledge of USD 100 billion to assist less-developed nations in coping with climate change and promised that deforestation trends will be reversed in his country.

*Read the full story: https://news.mongabay.com/2022/11/where-is-the-money-brazil-indonesia-and-congo-join-forces-in-push-for-rainforest-protection-cash/*

## Indigenous lands hold world's healthiest forests—but only when rights are protected

A new study says that the healthiest tropical forests in the world are in protected Indigenous areas, Mongabay reported. However, Indigenous lands that lack protected status suffer lower forest integrity. Researchers believe that mineral, oil, and gas deposits found on Indigenous lands where communities don't have land tenure and can't stop extractive projects may be to blame for the poor condition of the forests there. So strengthening the land rights of Indigenous peoples is a key part of meeting global conservation and climate goals, the report said.

*Read the full story: https://news.mongabay.com/2022/11/indigenous-lands-hold-the-worlds-healthiest-forests-but-only-when-their-rights-are-protected*

# Recent editions

**Compiled by Ken Sato**


**Thompson, I.D., Lim, T., & Turjaman, M. 2022. *Expensive, Exploited and Endangered. A review of the agarwood-producing genera* Aquilaria *and* Gyrinops*: CITES considerations, trade patterns, conservation, and management*. ITTO Technical Series No. 51. International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), Yokohama, Japan.**

ISBN: 978-4-86507-089-7

Available at: www.itto.int/technical_report/

Agarwood-producing genera have been listed on Appendix II of CITES since 1994. Since then, the sustainable, legal, and traceable trade of agarwood, agarwood oil and other derivatives has been a key focus of CITES' work on plants in the Asian region. Agarwood has also been discussed in the context of ITTO and the present report is a testimony to the joint work on agarwood-producing species by the two organizations. This report comprehensively discusses the conservation status and trade in agarwood species, takes stock of previous CITES work on agarwood, and proposes new priorities to support the sustainable use of agarwood in the future. For example, it points out that previous work has often focused on artificial propagation of agarwood-producing tree species. Yet, legal and illegal harvest and trade from wild sources is continuing, and insufficient management of the wild populations contributes to their continued decline.


**Blaser, J. & Ahimin, O. 2022. *Lessons for working well together in African forests. A review of recent ITTO projects implemented in West and Central Africa relevant to collaboration with the Tokyo International Conference on African Development*. Policy Brief. International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), Yokohama, Japan.**

Available at: www.itto.int/policy_papers/

This policy brief summarizes lessons learnt from an evaluation of ten ITTO projects in West and Central Africa that were completed between 2010 and 2020 and proposes areas for future collaboration between ITTO and the Tokyo International Conference on African Development. It presents lessons learnt in areas including: management, conservation, community participation, and forest landscape restoration; and national information systems, statistics, timber trade and timber-tracking. It also provides guidance addressed to stakeholders including governments, field practitioners, and academic and research institutions.


**ITTO/IMM. 2022. *VPA partner country timber trade and market perceptions update*. Modular reports I & II. ITTO, Yokohama, Japan, and Independent Market Monitor, Brussels.**

Available at: www.itto.int/other_technical_reports

Between 2017 and 2021, the Independent Market Monitor (IMM) distributed market overviews and survey results in its annual reports. To provide this information in more timely fashion in 2022, IMM is publishing three short reports. It will publish a final report in early 2023, when the IMM project will complete its activities.

The first report provides a trade update for 2021, with a focus on trade between the European Union and Indonesia and Indonesia's efforts to rebrand its SVLK timber legality assurance system. It also presents results from the 2021 IMM European Union trade survey. The second report gives a trade update for the first quarter of 2022, again with a focus on trade between the European Union and Indonesia, and commentary on market trends from the European Union 2022 trade.


**Rekola, M., Sharik, T.L. 2022. *Global assessment of forest education: Creation of a Global Forest Education Platform and Launch of a Joint Initiative under the Aegis of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (FAO-ITTO-IUFRO project GCP / GLO/044/GER)*. Forestry Working Paper No. 32. FAO. Rome.**

ISBN: 978-92-5-136926-5

Available at: www.itto.int/other_technical_reports/

This report captures the results of a global survey, expert consultations and literature review carried out under the Global Forest Education Project, which was launched in 2019 to address shortcoming in forest-related education and training around the world. Carried out jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organizations of the United Nations, the International Union of Forest Research Organizations and ITTO, the assessment examines the status of forest education and identifies actions required to meet global needs. Its purpose is to inform individual and multi-actor efforts—including those of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests—to strengthen forest education, training and knowledge-sharing systems. It also provides information to support the achievement of various Sustainable Development Goals and global forest-related goals, including through the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization-led "Education for sustainable development" programme.


**FAO. 2022. *The State of the World's Forests 2022. Forest pathways for green recovery and building inclusive, resilient and sustainable economies*. FAO, Rome.**

ISBN: 978-92-5-135984-6

Available at: www.fao.org/publications/sofo/2022/en/

The State of the World's Forests 2022 explores the potential of three pathways for achieving green recovery and tackling planetary crises including climate change and biodiversity loss: halting deforestation and maintaining forests; restoring degraded lands and expanding agroforestry; and sustainably using forests and building green value chains. It argues that the balanced, simultaneous pursuit of these pathways can generate sustainable economic and social benefits, help sustainably meet increasing global demand for materials, and address environmental challenges. The report presents evidence on the feasibility and value of the pathways and outlines initial steps that could be taken to pursue them.


**Kasetsart University, ITTO and TEAKNET. 2022. *Teak in Mekong for a Sustainable Future*. Kasetsart University, Bangkok, Thailand; International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), Yokohama, Japan; and TEAKNET, Kerala, India.**

ISBN: 978-616-278-693-8

Available at: www.itto.int/other_technical_reports

The book contains technical data and information that greatly expands the knowledge base available to the global teak community. It provides up-to-date information regarding the conservation of teak genetic resources, sets out best practices for sustainable forest management, and makes recommendations concerning the use of legally harvested teakwood from natural and planted teak forests. The authors invite scientists, policymakers, smallholders, and individuals in related commercial sectors in Thailand and other countries to explore the concepts and lessons learned from the research presented in the book, and to contribute their own experiences and insights in ongoing dialogues.

# Meetings

## ITTO meetings

**4–8 June 2023**
**ITTO co-organized session at IUFRO Division 5 Conference 2023: Sustainable Supply and Value Chains of Quality Teakwood Products—Global Challenges and Opportunities**
Cairns, Australia
In collaboration with IUFRO and the International Teak Information Network, ITTO will hold a session on the challenges and opportunities for sustainable supply and value chains for teakwood products during the IUFRO Division 5 Conference 2023 (see separate entry). The exact date of the session has not yet been confirmed.
More: www.itto.int/events/

**Call for proposals at ITTO**

For the **Autumn 2023 Project Cycle**, the deadline for receipt by the Secretariat of new and revised project and pre-project proposals is **10 April 2023**.

Members who wish to submit a **concept note** in accordance with Decision 4(LVI), Financing Scenario 4, please utilize the Online Submission System at www.itto.int/concept_note/login.

For more details, visit www.itto.int/call_proposals/

**ITTO appoints new Director of Operations**

ITTO is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr Gerhard Breulmann as ITTO Director of Operations, as of 1 November 2022. Dr Breulmann, a citizen of Germany, holds a Masters in Biology and a PhD in Forest Ecology. He joined the ITTO Secretariat in 2009 as Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, ensuring the development and employment of the Organization's monitoring and evaluation systems, and planning and coordinating its programmes, projects and activities. He served as Officer-in-Charge of the Operations Division between November 2015 and October 2017. Before joining ITTO, he worked as Program Manager for Science at the Asia-Pacific Network for Global Change Research in Kobe, Japan, and then as Assistant Director for Science Programs at the Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research in Sao Jose dos Campos, Brazil.

**Photo:** *Y. Kamijo/ITTO*

## Other meetings

**18 January 2023**
**Forest Innovation Workshop: The role of innovation in managing new challenges in the forest-based sector at regional level in the EU**
Brussels, Belgium
More: https://efi.int/events

**27 February–2 March 2023**
**Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development 2023**
Niamey, Niger (hybrid event)
More: www.uneca.org/events/main-events

**7 March 2023**
**Women in Forestry 2023**
Virtual event
More: www.woodbusiness.ca/virtual-events/women-in-forestry-2023/

**8–12 May 2023**
**18th session of the UN Forum on Forests**
New York, United States of America
More: www.un.org/esa/forests/forum/index.html

**15–19 May 2023**
**LIGNA**
Hanover, Germany
www.ligna.de/en

**16–19 May 2023**
**8th International Wildland Fire Conference**
Porto, Portugal
More: www.wildfire2023.pt

**4–8 June 2023**
**IUFRO Division 5 Conference: The Forest Treasure Chest—Delivering Outcomes for Everyone**
Cairns, Australia
More: www.iufro-div5-2023.com/

**14–17 June 2023**
**Wood & Forestry Show**
Semarang, Indonesia
More: https://woodforestryshow.com/home

**22–27 August 2023**
**27th Lucerne International Forestry Fair 2023**
Lucerne, Switzerland
More: www.forstmesse.com

**18–20 September 2023**
**IUFRO 1.05 & 1.09 Conference: Uneven-aged silviculture—insights into forest adaptation in times of global change**
Brno, Czech Republic
More: https://iufro2023.ldf.mendelu.cz/

**17–19 October 2023**
**IUFRO Latin American Conference: Sustainable Landscape Management—the Role of Forests, Forestry, Agroforestry, and Agriculture**
Curitiba, Brazil
More: www.iufro.org/events/calendar/current/

**23–29 June 2024**
**IUFRO World Congress 2024: Forests and Society Towards 2050**
Stockholm, Sweden
More: https://iufro2024.com/

Note that all meetings are subject to change or cancellation in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Please check the contact addresses for the latest information.

ITTO provides this list of international meetings as a public service and is not responsible for changes in date or venue or for other errors.