INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TIMBER COUNCIL

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMICS, STATISTICS AND MARKETS

COMMITTEE ON FOREST INDUSTRY

Distr.
GENERAL

CEM-CFI(LX)/4
22 October 2026

Original: English

SIXTIETH SESSION
9-12 November 2026
Yokohama, Japan

EX-POST EVALUATION REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ITTO Project PD 832/16 Rev.2 (M)
Implementing Mechanisms to Improve Traceability in the Forest Production Chain in Guatemala (Guatemala)

Prepared for ITTO

by

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[The full final report (Spanish only) is available on request from the Secretariat]

Executive Summary

Introduction

1. The Committee on Economics, Statistics and Markets of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), convened in Yokohama, Japan, from 2 to 6 December 2024, recommended to the International Tropical Timber Council that an ex-post evaluation be carried out of the completed project PD 832/16 Rev. 2 (M), "Implementing mechanisms to improve traceability in the forest production chain in Guatemala.", in order to determine the extent to which the project achieved its objectives and to make recommendations for future improvements.

2. Project PD 832/16 Rev. 2 (M) was implemented by the Government of Guatemala through the National Forest Institute (INAB), in collaboration with the National Council for Sustainable Forest Management Standards of Guatemala (CONESFORGUA). The project lasted 43 months—running from June 2020 to January 2024, despite the disruption of its implementation schedule caused by the COVID-19 pandemic—with a total approved budget of USD 415,640.00, comprising contributions from the ITTO and the Government of Guatemala.

Evaluation scope, focus and approach

3. The evaluation began with a review and analysis of the project design, its logical framework matrix, the quantitative indicators achieved, and the various outputs produced, as well as the project completion report and other documents provided by the ITTO and the Executing Agency. The ex-post evaluation sought to deepen the analysis of the project by engaging with various stakeholders along the timber value chain—in the departments of Guatemala, El Progreso, Baja Verapaz, Chimaltenango, and Sacatepéquez—as well as with forest managers.

Project facts

4. Over the last 10 years, Guatemala has made significant efforts to reverse the problems of illegal logging and trade. With the support of ITTO, the country has developed platforms for knowledge management, registration, monitoring, and evaluation regarding forest harvesting and processing (TFL-PD 024/10 Rev. 2 (M); PD 340/05 Rev. 1 (M); TMT-PD 004/11 Rev. 2 (M); and TFL-PPD 040/13 Rev. 2 (M)). These platforms have enabled the implementation of traceability and control procedures suited to the prevailing socioeconomic conditions.

5. The project's development objective was to reduce the high incidence of illegal logging, trade, and transport of forest products due to the lack of control of small-scale harvesting activities, which prevented the establishment of forest product traceability in Guatemala. The specific objectives of the project focused on enhancing the capacity of institutions and municipalities to monitor and control forest products by strengthening the legal production chain. Four strategic products and 15 specific support activities were identified.

6. The project began in June 2020; following adjustments to its implementation schedule due to COVID-19 mobility restrictions, it concluded in January 2024, spanning a total duration of 43 months with a budget of USD 415,640.00.

Findings and lessons learned

7. Thanks to the outreach and training activities carried out under the Project's various components, there is widespread acceptance regarding the formalization—or transition to legality—of different segments of Guatemala's forestry sector. The systematization of data and the development of interoperable databases

have significantly improved the efficiency of data collection, archiving, and retrieval, thereby benefiting forestry sector statistics.

8. Institutional coordination mechanisms have been successfully developed to bridge the gap and improve traceability within timber and forest product value chains. Stakeholders across the value chain appreciate the legal certainty provided by participating in these registration systems.

9. Systems and procedures were created that are well-suited to Guatemala's socioeconomic reality, catering to everyone from rural and indigenous communities and small-to-medium-sized forestry enterprises to large-scale, technologically advanced operations.

10. The development and operation of Municipal Forestry Offices have enabled the monitoring of forest harvesting for household consumption, bringing these activities within the legal framework.

11. Deforestation indicators in Guatemala during the 21st century show a significant downward trend; this suggests that control systems, along with mechanisms and incentives encouraging the formalization of various forestry activities, have contributed to reducing both the deforestation rate and the illegal trade in forest products.

12. The established traceability mechanisms enable forestry export companies to demonstrate the legal origin of their products, thereby facilitating access to international markets.

Conclusions and Recommendations

13. The results achieved through the Project warrant a positive assessment, as significant progress has been made in establishing traceability mechanisms for the timber and forest product value chain, as well as in bringing stakeholders who were previously outside the legal framework into compliance with the law.

14. Integrating stakeholders from forest value chains into the system has contributed to the development of better and more reliable forest production statistics; this helps guide Guatemala's public forest policies and will enable the Guatemalan government to establish and monitor the country's investment programme for sustainable forest development.

15. It is advisable to carry out regular evaluations of all tools developed by the Project with a view to adjusting them and ensuring their ongoing improvement. Furthermore, it is essential to secure sufficient funding to provide the human, technological, material and financial resources required for the proper functioning and sustainability of the systems and procedures established.

16. Phased implementation, combined with a commitment to updating and ongoing improvement, facilitates process management, as it allows those in charge to test the system, raise awareness, train users, assess its applicability and feasibility, and address users’ concerns.

17. Developing and establishing timber traceability systems requires significant effort and investment. It demands coordinated stakeholder involvement, capacity building, and changes to the legal framework. In Guatemala, these changes have taken over a decade, as it is necessary to create an enabling environment—comprising an appropriate legal framework, clearly defined inter-institutional collaboration processes, and substantial, ongoing user consultation—to ensure successful implementation and widespread adoption.

Executing Agency's Views

Executing Agency's Views on ITTO Ex-Post Evaluation	
Project Title: Implementing mechanisms to improve traceability in the forest production chain in Guatemala Project ID: PD 832/16 Rev.2 (M)	
Overall View on the Evaluation:	
The ex-post evaluation focused on analyzing the development of mechanisms to improve the traceability and control of timber products throughout the timber value chain in different parts of the country, ensuring their compliance with the law, which helps to reduce illegal logging and trade.	
Evaluation Report Recommendations*	Response to recommendations (e.g. 'accept', 'partially accept' or 'reject' — please provide a brief explanation)
Recommendation 1 Registration, monitoring and enforcement platforms have proved to be an effective tool for bringing the various links in Guatemala's timber forestry value chain into compliance with the law; and to ensure their sustainability and ongoing improvement, it is recommended that regulatory impact analyses, evaluations, updates and continuous improvements be carried out to assess the legal certainty provided to users.	Accept. Regulatory impact assessments and measures to continuously improve the systems will help to ensure their sustainability.
Recommendation 2 Enforcement and compliance measures – with a particular focus on those operating illegally – are more effective if carried out in tandem with development programmes such as PINPEP and PROBOSQUE, thereby strengthening strategies to bridge the gap between supply and demand for forest bioenergy (fuelwood).	Accept. The support programmes run by Guatemala's INAB have been a very important tool in bringing producers with lower levels of economic and social development into the formal sector.
Recommendation 3 Continuous improvement initiatives must take into account state-of-the-art systems that enable more efficient services in terms of time, cost and safety, while bearing in mind that less developed regions require alternative procedures tailored to their specific conditions and infrastructure.	Accept.

Recommendation 4 It is recommended to establish an institutional coordination mechanism, tasked with evaluation, monitoring and enforcement duties, to ensure transparency and compliance with institutional regulations, as well as the consistent application of criteria and procedures.	Accept. As several departments are involved in the monitoring and traceability processes, this recommendation is essential.
Recommendation 5 The sustainability of the monitoring and traceability platforms established depends on the availability of sufficient financial, technological, material and human resources required for their optimal operation and for the necessary improvements; it is therefore recommended that adequate and timely budgetary mechanisms be put in place, along with the necessary training and awareness-raising activities.	Accept.

Name, Title and Institution of Respondent

Signature

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