

## US FOREST SERVICE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS



### Illegal Logging

The US Forest Service, through its International Programs office, actively works around the globe to reduce illegal logging. Illegal logging is a complex problem with myriad implications for the supply and demand aspects of the timber market, both in the US and abroad, and with a diverse array of implications for other sectors including those pertaining to land tenure, enforcement capacity, corruption, rural poverty and environmental management.

Though many US Government agencies play a role in various discrete aspects of the fight against illegal logging (for example, The US Department of Agriculture's Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service the Fish and Wildlife Service is authorized to enforce the recent amendment to the Lacey Act), the Forest Service's International Programs plays a particularly unique role in helping the Department of State as a technical advisor and implementer addressing illegal logging from a robust and comprehensive suite of initiatives. Its programs are wide ranging and include policy advising to the Department of State, the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the US Trade Representative, and international associations, such as the International Tropical Timber Organization; provision of technology and expertise to other domestic agencies tasked with Lacey Act implementation; and technical interventions on a wide array of challenges associated with improving legality in a number of critical countries on key areas, such as timber tracking technologies, reduced impact harvesting techniques, adoption of forest certification schemes, forest management, and enhanced environmental law enforcement.

#### Why This is Important

Illegal logging has far-reaching negative consequences, including detrimental impacts on US timber industry faced with competition from overseas timber suppliers who are not required to adhere to the same environmental safeguards and who provide a steady flow of cheap wood to the market. Beyond these impacts on US industry, illegal logging leads to environmental degradation, disrupted trade and market access, exacerbated rural poverty and unsustainable economic development. Ensuing effects on food water and energy security are of great concern to US geopolitical interests around the world.

#### How International Programs is Addressing Illegal Logging

- **Policy Advising:** International Programs serves the Department of State and the Trade Representative's Office as the primary technical advisor on forestry issues. Additionally, International Programs works closely with the Department of Commerce, the Fish and Wildlife Service, USAID, US forest products industry and the environmental community to advance US interests in international forums, such as at the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), which disseminates practical information on the production and trade of tropical timber and helps countries to sustainably manage and use tropical forests. Through extensive and long-standing engagement with organizations like ITTO, International Programs helps to increase market transparency and promote trade in sustainable forest products.

- **Assisting with the Enforcement of the Lacey Act:** The Lacey Act is a critical tool in the fight against illegal logging. The newly modified act requires wood products importers use only legally-sourced materials and officially declare the genus and species of wood contained in their shipments to the US for certain products. Small US firms depends on a steady supply of legally-sourced tropical hardwoods. International Programs participates in the US Government's interagency coordinating committee and provides funding to the Forest Service's Forest Products Laboratory to develop a prototype handheld device for wood processors, customs officials and civil society organizations to more easily identify commercial species and difficult to recognize tropical hardwoods in the Field with minimal training. This technology, along with training, is welcomed by domestic producers and manufacturers as well as by USDA's Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, who are the lead enforcement agencies but who do not have wood identification expertise.

In addition to providing much needed assistance with wood identification, the Forest Service has other initiatives through funding from the Department of State and USAID to help nongovernmental organizations like TRAFFIC and the The Nature Conservancy to support Lacey implementation. International Programs is currently working with those partners to support forestry and timber industry in the Asia/Pacific region to meet legal compliance under the Lacey Act for exports to the US through workshop in Malaysia. The workshop will share technologies between producers in the region, identify technology gaps and share best practices to enhance traceability of chain of custody as well as to address other challenges to legality.

- **Bilateral Technical Interventions:** International Programs has a large ongoing partnership with USAID in approximately thirty countries to advance sustainable land management. Most of these partnerships are focused on improving forestry practices and, whether directly or indirectly, are aimed at improving legality in the forestry sector. International Programs, through support from DOS and USAID, has been extremely active in recent years in Peru, Russia and Malaysia in directly working to counter illegal logging.

As an example, in Peru, with full funding from USAID, International Programs works to strengthen institutions, promote transparency, participation

and access to information, and to track and verify the legal origins of timber. Through the Peru Forest Sector Initiative, the Forest Service assists the Government of Peru in complying with the obligations of the US-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement. The collaboration in Peru focuses on the development of an information and control system for chain of custody for CITES-listed species, support for population studies for mahogany and cedar, design of forest inventories, specialized expertise in yield determination and methodology, development of skills in forest and wildlife management, organized design and training to regional governments, anti-corruption plans for the forest sector, and environmental investigation and prosecution training. In particular, the forest information and control system will enable verification of legal origin and compliance with chain of custody standards of CITES. The system, which is being designed with input of more than 80 individuals from 18 agencies, will hinder the falsification of harvest records, help facilitate detection of fraud, and make information available to stakeholders.

In Central Africa, the Forest Service, the Forest Legality of Alliance, the Central African Forest Commission, the Inter-African Forest Industries Association and the European Forest Institute are collaborating to highlight technologies and systems to improve transparency in the Central African forest sector. They are working to meet demands for improved forest governance, including needs for new methods of monitoring forests, verification of wood type through physical analysis, and determination of wood origin through genetic testing.

The Forest Service helped to foster discussions between Russia and China through the European Forest Law Enforcement and Governance process by holding a historic workshop to promote resource sustainability and positive returns for local economies in the forest sector. Participants included national and provincial governments, industry and civil society along the Sino-Russian border and focuses in enhancing understanding of sustainable forest products trade, techniques and methodologies to ensure legal and sustainable wood supply chains. Forest Trends, the World Conservation Union, the World Bank, Greenpeace and others collaborated to develop and facilitate the workshop.

#### **For more information**

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