Australian Government
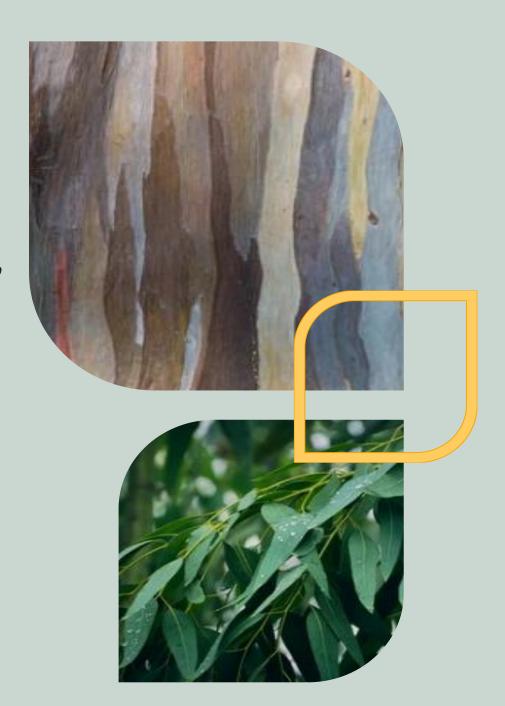**Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

Informing Australia's illegal logging law reforms:

Timber testing pilot

2 May 2024

Forest Governance and Policy Conference (FGP24)

Australia's illegal logging laws

- Require due diligence to be undertaken before importing or processing regulated timber products

- Review and public consultation undertaken in 2021-22 before Regulation was due to 'sunset'

- Proposed legislative reforms outlined in a Regulation Impact Statement (RIS)

- Amendment Bill introduced to Parliament in April

Sampling and testing powers

Enable the sampling & testing of products entering the Australian market to verify species and origin

- Timber identification technologies viewed as key to strengthening laws

- Wide support by stakeholders

- Timber testing technologies are becoming an important global tool in establishing timber legality

- Two primary regulatory approaches possible:

    o At point of entry to Australia

    o In the market (after entry)

Australian government investment

- The Australian Government has invested AU$4.4 million over two years (2022-24):

1.
Timber testing trial

2.
New IT system

3.
WFID global reference database

1. Timber testing trial

- Involved the purchase and sampling of various products on Australian market

- Provide samples to labs around the world for testing

- Includes purchase of testing equipment to trial

- Training staff in sample collection

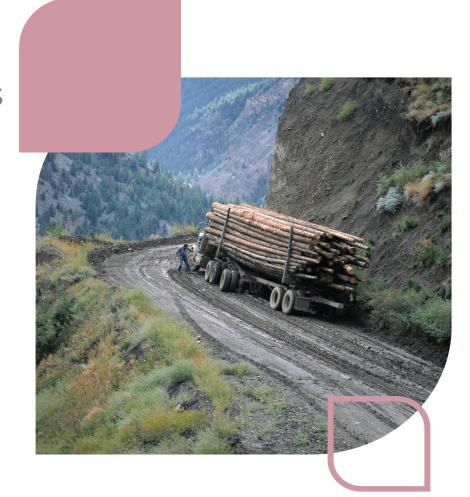- Outcomes will determine best practice for timber testing under future legislative powers

Progress to date

- Testing is now mostly complete

  o   176 regulated timber products collected

  o   149 taxa sampled (39 distinct) and distributed to labs

- Testing techniques include:

  o   DNA

  o   isotope

  o   trace element

  o   fibre analysis

  o   wood anatomy

- Also developing training package

Key learnings

- Different methods suit differing circumstances

- Importance of adapting science to a service

  - Responsiveness, coverage, reliability key

- Having a product declaration helps testing

- Public perception needs to be planned and managed when purchasing & trialing

- Some misdeclared species and origins according to findings

2. Product declarations

- Exploring IT solutions to collect and manage declaration data.

- Provide better visibility of what's entering the Australian market.

- Help target timber testing efforts.

- Working with IT specialists to first identifying options.

3. World Forest ID grant

- AU Government grant of USD $0.8 million in 2023 to expand WFID open-source library of geo-referenced timber samples

- Add approx. 1000 reference samples to database for timber species of interest

  o Increase number of reference samples for species of interest from across Australia & SE Asia

  o Improve our ability to detect misrepresented timber
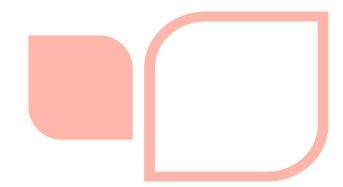
  o Verify due diligence claims

Progress to date

- Local partnerships established, training delivered & collection expeditions began in January 2024 (*Phase 1*)

- Identifying specialist collectors across Australia (*Phase 2*)

- Challenges gaining access & permission to collect samples in some regions

- Priority species in Asia-Pacific region: Paduak, Rosewood, Teak, Meranti, Merbau, Ramin & Eucalyptus

Next steps

- Pilot ending June 2024

- Department will:

  - Analyse final outcomes and consider most suitable implementation under regulatory regime
  - Quantify likely associated costs
  - Make recommendations to government on implementing testing under reformed laws

Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Thank you

**Contact us at
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