

The Forest Legality Alliance

An International Initiative to Support Trade in Legal Forest Products

THE CHALLENGE

Timber and other forest products are considered some of the world's truly renewable resources. If managed properly, forests can supply human needs indefinitely. In many regions of the world, however, forests are under threat from a variety of activities such as conversion to agriculture and illegal logging—the harvesting, transport, and/or sale of timber in contravention of national or local laws. Illegal logging undermines sustainable management of forests and damages protected forests. It can contribute to unplanned deforestation, biodiversity loss, and greenhouse gas emissions. It deprives nations of income and hurts legal operations by putting them at an unfair disadvantage. In developing countries, millions of poor rural residents who rely on forests for food, fiber and medicine are affected. In these and other ways, illegal logging puts the reputation of wood as a sustainable material at risk.

Policy developments over the past few years could give much needed impetus to tackling the problem of illegal logging. The United States now prohibits trade in illegal forest products, thanks to the recent amendments to the Lacey Act. The European Union is helping selected countries stem illegal logging through Voluntary Partnership Agreements and now requires timber importers to screen out illegal wood through the EU Timber Regulation. Australia has also passed its Illegal Logging Prohibition to curb trade in illegal forest products, while public policies banning procurement of illegal wood have been adopted in many countries around the world.

These new forms of “demand-side” forest-product legislation will have a major impact on international trade in forest products. However, many companies and stakeholders are not fully aware of these policies or how best to respond to their requirements.

THE FOREST LEGALITY ALLIANCE

Launched in 2010, the Alliance is designed to reduce global market demand for illegally harvested forest products by supporting supply chain efforts to deliver legal wood and paper. To achieve this goal, the Alliance seeks to help all supply chain actors—both large and small—understand and respond to emerging, demand-side forest-product legality policies by leveraging the networks, market power, resources, and professional expertise of Alliance members.

ACTIVITIES

To achieve its goals, the Alliance is pursuing a series of activities, including:

- Building awareness among forest product supply chains about emerging demand-side forest legality policies and about new tools for increasing transparency and legality.
- Establishing national alliances, based on the Forest Legality Alliance model, in major forest products producer countries.
- Equipping forest product supply chain participants with practical, interactive, and freely accessible tools for exercising due care and keeping illegally harvested forest products out of the market. Tools will include, but are not limited to:
 - A dedicated “one-stop shop” website about forest product legality measures;
 - An online resource that helps companies along the supply chain assess the risk of encountering illegal wood and exercise due care; and
 - A toolkit to help importers manage customs declarations.
- Supporting the advancement of technologies used to verify and track the origin and species of wood and wood products.
- Demonstrating through a series of pilot tests with volunteer Alliance members and small-scale community enterprises that compliance with new demand-side requirements can be feasible and cost-effective, and identifying practical ways to reduce and mitigate any unintended burdens on importers and producers.

MEMBERS

Alliance membership is open to companies, industry associations, financial institutions, and nongovernmental organizations from around the world with a stake in legal forest product supply chains.

ENGAGEMENT

Alliance members meet twice per year for a two-day event convened by WRI and USAID. Members have the opportunity to guide the frequency, agenda, and focus of these events. Between these meetings, WRI engages members interested in supporting outreach activities in particular regions or sectors or in providing input to issue-specific work groups (e.g., risk assessment tool development, customs declaration toolkit development).

BENEFITS

Benefits of Alliance membership include:

- Accelerated learning about forest product legality policies;
- Opportunities to collaborate in the design and rollout of forest product legality tools, and to support legality by providing timely on-the-ground information to other members;
- Technical assistance in assessing business risks and opportunities and in developing strategic responses to new demand-side policies;
- Insights from other companies and stakeholders along the full length of the supply chain, from stump to shelf, about their strategies for mitigating risk and mainstreaming legality;
- Access to experts and service providers in forestry, forest laws, environmental standards, and supply chain management;
- Networking opportunities with like-minded managers, customers, suppliers, and information sources in the non-profit and academic communities;
- Timely updates on illegal logging and procurement requirements from around the world; and
- Opportunities to work constructively with the U.S. government in resolving issues of mutual interest.

To access the membership application form, please visit www.forestlegality.org.

Contacts

Charles (Chip) Barber | WRI | +1 202.729.7852 | cbarber@wri.org

Alicia Grimes | USAID | +1 202.712.1642 | agrimes@usaid.gov