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Government to procure only legal timber for all projects

Cabinet is yet to approve a proposal that would ensure that every government project that requires timber be acquired from only legal source.

Deputy Minister for Lands and Natural Resources, Miss Barbara Serwaa Asamoah, announced, at the 5th National Forestry Forum held at Dodowa in Accra.

The Minister said though efforts have been made in the past to curb the problem of illegal logging, results yielded have not been satisfactory. This she attributed in part to weak law enforcement, high demand for arable land and encroachment.



©NDF Deputy Minister for Lands & Natural Resources addressing National Forestry Forum participants

She was however hopeful that "once the policy before cabinet is implemented, it will constrict the market for illegal timber". She added that a rapid Response Unit has been deployed by the Forestry Commission as a step to help curb these problems, while Forest Prosecutors have been trained to prosecute forestry offences. She recommended dialogue between various stakeholders and support from media in curbing the rate of deforestation in Ghana.

assistance from all stakeholders to support FC to achieve its mandate of protecting, managing and supervising the utilization of forest and wildlife resources for the benefits of all Ghanaians.

He thanked NFF-G for creating a platform that would bring harmony between the Commission and Civil society.

Visit www.ndfwestafrica.org for more details.

Quick Teasers

"We are small scale operators and don't even have enough money to buy from the saw-millers how then can we buy imported wood..."

See story on Page 4

"I can say on record that no District Manager collects money from illegal chainsaw operators"

See story on Page 6

"No illegally harvested timber and its products shall be procured with public funds nor used in government projects"

See story on Page 6

In a presentation, the Programme Director of Tropenbos International, Mr. K.S. Nketia, explained that though the domestic market reform seeks to supply sustainable and adequate legal timber to the domestic market, strong support by local communities for illegal chain saw millers poses a challenge to its success.

He however proposed the creation of avenues for small-scale actors to have equal access to the forest resource since it serves as a source of livelihood for them.

On his part, Mr. Oppong Sasu, Director in charge of donor relations at the Forestry Commission, called for



©NDF Cross section of participants at the National Forestry Forum at Dodowa.

Stakeholders consulted on maiden Timber Procurement guidelines



©NDF Cross section of participants at a workshop in Ada

Public sector procurement is a major force in national economies all over the world. Procurement policies aimed at excluding illegal and unsustainable timber products have proved a valuable weapon in the armoury of consumer states.

In Ghana, public procurement budget of government is said to exceed 50% of the total government expenditure. Thus making it prudent to adopt the instrument of timber procurement policy as a way to avert illegality and make positive impact on the economy, particularly the timber industry.

A nationwide stakeholders' consultations workshop on the draft implementation guidelines on the

Public Procurement Policy on timber and timber products was organised by Nature and Development Foundation in collaboration with the Timber Industry Development Division (TIDD) of the forestry commission and the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources (MLNR). The aim was to sort views and inputs from stakeholders across all levels of the public and private sector to the implementation guidelines that would regulate and serve as a guide to all public institutions in the procurement of timber for domestic use.

The three consultations workshop which took place in the Southern (Ada), Middle (Kumasi) and Northern (Tamale) zones respectively and funded by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), was also expected to standardize the procurement of timber and timber products for all government projects across the country. That is by using the 'purchasing power' of government to send a market signal in favour of legally and sustainably-produced timber and wood products.

The Chief Executive of the Forestry Commission, Mr. Samuel Afari Dartey, said the policy would provide a mechanism for tracing timber and timber products from its source, through production, point of sale to the

final consumer, to the domestic market supply chain.

This he believes would send a strong signal to the international community that Ghana is committed to combating illegal production and trade of timber and timber products for both export and the domestic market.

Meanwhile, the Vice President of the Chartered Institute of Building, Africa Mr. Rockson Dogbegah, indicated that identifying an illegal wood on the shelves is a difficult task and that can only be avoided when forestry officials desist from accepting bribes from illegal operators.

He added that unless there is a constant orientation of the need to change our attitude towards implementation of policies in the country, laws made would be of no importance.

For further details, visit www.ndfwestafrica.org



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CSOs & NSAs refreshed on tools of engagement

The memories of twenty individuals from various civil society organisations and other non-state actors were refreshed in a two day training on how to engage forest authorities to effectively comply with forest laws.

The refresher training addressed problems such as how to choose advocacy priorities and how to deal with difficult individuals to achieve success.

This was demonstrated in a group dynamics exercise where participants were blind folded and tasked to make a perfect square from a rope. The aim was to unveil the different characteristics that exist within a team and how to handle them especially during



©NDF Blindfolded participants forming a perfect square from a rope in a group dynamics exercise

facilitation.

Participants were grateful for the opportunity given them to broaden

their understanding on advocacy and facilitation. Read more on www.ndfwestafrica.org

NFF-G, NDF & FoE present communiqué to Minister for Lands and Natural Resources

About 200 stakeholders from the forestry sector made up of members from the Forestry Commission, chiefs and opinion leaders, representatives from forest fringe communities, civil society organisations and government officials converged at the Dodowa Forest hotel in Accra to deliberate on pertinent issues that are regularly raised concerning the forest governance agenda.

The forum which was preceded by various local, district and regional forums, lined-up issues bothering on the domestic market reforms, barriers to the FLEGT license



©NDF Hon. Nii Osah Mills signing National Forestry Forum Communiqué

realisation, encroachment on forest lands as well as plantation development in Ghana.

At the end of the forum, comments and contributions raised by participants were put together in a communiqué. In the presence of NDF and FOE, the communiqué was presented to the Minister for Lands and Natural Resources, Nii Osah Mills by executive members of the National Forestry forum-Ghana led by Mr. Dwumor and Doreen Asuman-Yeboah.

Mr Osah Mills who gratefully received the document did not readily commit to responding to all issues raised at the national forum, but was hopeful that the communiqué would be given the needed attention by government. Visit www.ndfwestafrica.org for more

Ghana's VPA/FLEGT update

FLEGT/TVD Unit	OUTPUTS	Date	Venue
	Activity/What Was Done		
Timber Validation Committee/ Complaints	No activity		
WTS Development	1.Mills processes, trials in Three(3) Selected sawmills 2.TIDD operational Department training 3.Training of TIDD Inspectors and Graders 4.FLEGT trials 5. GWTS training for FSD field staff	May 27-29, 2015	Ofinso
FAO EU FLEGT Project	FAO/FLEGT Project Training Workshops on Support to improve national traceability, verification and control systems	April 20 & 21, 2015	Sefwi-Wiawso
		May 18 & 19, 2015	FCTC, Akyeakrom near Kumasi
Audit/Verification Protocols	1. Planned audits in 18 forest districts spread across Western, Central, Brong Ahafo Ashanti, Volta, Eastern and Northern Regions 2. Planned audits in 6 TIDD Area Offices spread across Eastern, Brong-Ahafo, Ashanti, Western & Volta Regions	May 3-26, 2015	Bechem, New Edubiase, Nkawie, Mampong, Kumawu, Bibiani, Cape coast, Winneba, Kintampo, Bole, Yendi, Begoro, Kade, Donkorkrom, Jasikan, Ho & Nkwanta
General FLEGT Issues	Meetings with Consultant engaged by the EU FLEGT program to discuss with the; General GoG team as well as Specific agencies, departments concerned with related Impact Areas Aimed at improving the IM framework towards development of IM Plan	May, 2015	FC Accra
	Contributed by the Timber Validation Department	(TVD) of the Forestry	Commission of Ghana

Wood sellers on government's importation of timber

The fast depletion of the country's forest over the last few decades has triggered government's decision to import timber from Cameroun and Guyana to complement its local demand.

The effort is to stem the tide of illegal logging and lumbering in the country.

Nonetheless, the decision has been greeted with mixed reactions among some individuals in the wood business.

Kwaku Asante, a carpenter who couples as a wood seller at the Akyem Oda timber market, admitted that the materials they use for their jobs are from illegal sources but can barely do anything about it.

Kwaku said it is through the illegal operations that most of the youth in

the community make ends meet because there are no jobs.

"We are small scale operators and don't even have enough money to buy from the saw-millers how then can we buy imported wood. We will only run at a loss" said Kwame Nyamekye, another carpenter.

Nyamekye however suggested that the appropriate measures be put in place to assist the local market instead of importation.

On the contrary, others believe that the imported timber would help their



©NDF *Wood sellers at the Akim Oda Timber Market*

work thrive since that would be of higher quality compared to the immature ones they buy from the illegal loggers.

Visit www.ndfwestafrica.org for more

Armed illegal loggers intimidate forest guards



© NDF *Logs left behind by illegal chainsaw operators.*

Government's efforts at preventing illegal logging of forests reserves are being hindered by serious intimidation of forest guards by illegal chainsaw operators, some of whom are armed to the teeth.

A visit to the Atiwa forest reserve did not only confirm the devastating rate of illegal activities in the forest but also the difficulties faced by forest guards to overpower the law breakers who take advantage of the size of the forest, the cover of darkness and their ammunition to carry out the destruction of the forest

for their private gain.

Though the Atiwa forest reserve is said to be strictly under protection from logging activities due to the presence of some water sources, several illegal chain saw operators still find their way into the reserve to cut down trees.

On one of the special operations to apprehend illegal chainsaw operators cutting down trees in the forest reserve, the forest guards chased the chainsaw operators who had wind of the operation and fled, leaving behind the wood they had cut into lumber and the oil used to fuel the chainsaw.

It was a wild goose chase but at least the guards managed to stop them from benefitting from their act.

After the operations, the range supervisor of the area, Mr Isaac Gyakyee, revealed that the loggers often travel deep into the bumpy areas of the forest, mainly at dawn to cut down trees. "It is difficult to get them in the act because of the areas they operate in. Sometimes they are also armed so intimidate you and carry on with their illegal act," he disclosed.

Mr. Gyakyee explained that, some of the communities around the reserve allegedly aid the illegal loggers in their act and serve as spies or informants who alert them of the presence of the forest guards during their nefarious operations.

He, however, added that in spite of those challenges the guards are doing their best to minimise the encroachment through a rapid response unit under which forest guards would be trained and armed to assist in their operations.

For more on this article, visit www.ndfwestafrica.org.



©NDF *Range Supervisor, Isaac Gyakyee (right), pointing at illegal farming in the Atiwa Forest Reserve.*

Tree Conservation is Collective Responsibility



©NDF

Oboyow Forest Reserve

By Theodore Mawuli Viwotor

When the last tree dies, the last man dies, so the saying goes.

This saying inseparably links the life of humans to trees, implying that human life becomes non-existent without trees.

Considering the seriousness of the statement, humans need to give trees the most of their attention to preserve their lives.

Therefore, actions taken to conserve trees are directly aimed at

preserving life on earth.

Undeniably, the role of trees in human lives is too vital to ignore or toy with. That is the reason for which all and sundry ought to devote some time and energy at conserving trees.

Trees absorb Carbon dioxide (CO₂), while releasing oxygen back into the air. In one year, an acre of matured trees absorbs the equivalent amount of Carbon dioxide produced when you drive your car 26,000 miles.

This is in addition to other gases such as nitrogen oxides, ammonia, sulfur dioxide and ozone that trees filter by trapping them on their barks and leaves. It shows how much trees save humans from absorbing poisonous gases from the numerous cars on our roads.

It remains a mystery why humans would continue to abandon trees to their fate or cut them down indiscriminately instead of being active participants in their growth and conservation.

Trees deserve more attention than we have given them so far; it is a big

"...humans need to give trees the most of their attention to preserve their lives".

risk leaving to chance the conservation of trees since they sustain lives.

So collectively, we have a responsibility to conserve our forest in order to preserve our lives.

Article contributed by a concerned Journalist.



©WWF

Tree Planting exercise against cancer in Madagascar

Communities seek alternative livelihoods to fight illegal logging

Some communities around the Asenanyo and Numia forest reserves in the New Edubiase district of the Ashanti region are pleading for alternative livelihoods to serve as incentive in their fight against illegal logging in the area.

In separate interactions with residents of Kwame Adu, Mbenai, Bonkro and Breku during a tour to monitor and empower the activities of community forest committees (CFCs), NDF discovered that the major reason for apathy towards the fight against illegal logging and related forest activities on the part of CFCs is the absence of alternative livelihood programmes to motivate them.

According to some committee members, in view of the dangers and costs involved in such activities, they need motivation in

the form of funds, resources and projects that would generate extra revenue for those involved in the protection of forest reserves.

Mr. Owusu Prempeh, a resident of Kwame Adu community said "we are committed to doing all we can to protect the forest but we need some compensation to be more effective in the work. Telling an unemployed young man to protect the forest for free is very discouraging".

"After monitoring the forest, what guarantee do I have as a form of support for my family at the end of the day?" Mr. Edward Ansah, a resident of Breku asked, adding that "if you give someone work to do, you provide support for it".

The Operations Director of NDF, Mr. Glen Asomaning, assured residents that support in the form of wellington boots, machetes, torch lights and



©NDF Glen Asomaning (NDF's Operations Dir.) interacting with CFC members of Kwame Adu on preserving the forest

raincoats would be provided for committee members to aid their work.

visit www.ndfwestafrica.org.

Forestry Commission Staff denies aiding illegal chainsaw operators

Nkawie Assistant District Manager of the Forestry Commission (FC), Mr. Mark Aidoo, has denied allegations levelled against the Commission that its officers extort monies from illegal chainsaw operators, giving them leeway to steal timber from forest reserves.

Mr. Aidoo, who was speaking to officers of the Nature and Development Foundation (NDF) and National Forestry Forum-Ghana (NFFG), who were on a sensitization and monitoring mission in the district, emphasized that, "I can say on record that no District Manager collects money from illegal chainsaw operators".

He, however, admitted that some forest guards have been arrested and expelled for posing as District managers and extorting money from illegal chainsaw operators, adding that there are bad nuts in every human institution.

He maintained that the Commission was always on guard to bring such persons to book.

Communities around the Asenanyo forest reserve in the Nkawie district of the Ashanti region had accused forestry authorities of being the main drivers of illegal logging activities in the forest.

They alleged that forestry authorities extorted money from illegal chainsaw operators which gave them a 'license' to operate. They bemoaned that, reporting an illegal chainsaw operator to a forest officer was like handing over a fish to a cat.

To forestall the incidence of illegal chainsaw operations in their area, some residents in the Akota, Kansakron and Takoradi communities have for their part, volunteered, with support from their traditional authorities, to form monitoring committees that would ensure sanity in the Asenanyo forest reserve.

Atta King, a member of the Kansakrom community monitoring team, revealed that the illegal chainsaw operators had really left the forest bare, recalling that,



©NDF Mark Aidoo — Assistant District Manager, FC- Nkawie

previously, one could easily get lost in the forest due to its thickness "but now you can walk through and even see people from afar."

"I'm afraid if we don't tackle this problem I may not have wood to roof my house in future" Atta lamented.

NDF with support from the EU is working with the NFFG to assist these community monitoring groups with safety equipment and logistics to enhance their monitoring. Visit www.ndfwestafrica.org.

Illegal logging costing Ghana in revenue – FAO Country Rep.



©NDF Public Procurement Officers in a Training at Kumasi

The country representative of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), Mr. Thiombiano Lamourdia has stated that Ghana is losing much revenue due to the activities of illegal loggers in the country.

At a two day National training workshop to build the capacity of public procurement officers, Mr. Lamourdia in a speech read on his behalf by Mr. Godwin Cudjoe revealed that illegal

loggers dodge the requisite taxes and levies thereby denying government of the revenue to undertake development projects for its inhabitants.

He added that illegally logged timber poses a major threat to the integrity of the forest and livelihoods of the citizenry especially forest dwellers.

The Technical Director of the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Mr. Musah Abu Juam, said everybody uses wood in one way or the other but government is the higher consumer, urging the procurement officers to be conscious of the type of wood they buy for projects since any illegal wood purchased has a direct effect on the forests.

The consultant who developed the implementation guidelines of the upcoming public procurement policy Mr. Jerry Ackotia, urged participants to insist on legal timber from their suppliers in all public procurements of timber and timber products.

"No illegally harvested timber and its products shall be procured with public funds nor used in government projects" he warned.

Mr. Ackotia added that with the passing into law of the Public Procurement Policy "we are saying good-bye to 'bush cut' and welcoming legal wood".

A group exercise on how to procure legal wood from suppliers was undertaken by participants.

The training was organised in Kumasi and replicated in Accra.

Source: www.ndfwestafrica.org.



©NDF Public Procurement Officers in a group exercise on how to procure legal wood

DR Congo and EU advance on VPA implementation

The Republic of Congo and the European Union have held the second meeting of the Joint Implementation Committee (JIC) in Brazzaville.

The discussions followed up on recent progress that will help foster the implementation of the agreement after a failed timber legality assurance system (TLAS) software development project had slowed down the process for more than a year.

Some of the implementation priorities identified for 2015 are the preparation of the national deployment of a TLAS, the recognition process of private certification schemes, and the reinforcement of communication activities.



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The next JIC meeting will be held on 18 and 19 November 2015.

Click www.euflegt.efi.int for more.

China to phase out commercial logging of natural forests by 2017

The State Forestry Administration (SFA) has made public plans to phase out commercial logging in the country's natural forests by 2017.

The deputy head of the SFA, Zhang Jianlong, said the phase-out program will be carried out in three steps.

A pilot program kicked off last year, and all state-owned forest farms and areas will be banned from commercial logging of natural forests from 2016, Zhang explained, adding that a similar ban on collectively-owned and private forest farms would follow in 2017.

Despite the ban, local residents are still allowed to log, though subject to quotas.

www.europ.chinadaily.com.cn



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Evaluation of the EU FLEGT Action Plan

The European Commission has launched an external evaluation of the implementation of the EU FLEGT Action Plan.

The evaluation is an opportunity to reflect with key stakeholders on progress and achievements and to compile, evaluate and summarise the views and expectations of constituents in Europe and in EU partner countries.

It is expected to cover the first 11 years of implementation of the EU FLEGT Action Plan from 2004 to 2014.

Evaluators will look at the seven areas of the Action Plan and their interrelationships with particular attention

dedicated to Voluntary Partnership Agreements.

The evaluation will aim at covering all actions under the EU FLEGT Action Plan by EU institutions, Member States and partner countries. It will look at relevant action in the EU, other consumer markets and producer countries, both VPA and non-VPA countries.

In addition it will cover the development of multilateral and global initiatives to combat illegal logging.

Click www.euflegt.efi.int for more.



EUROPEAN
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FAO and IKEA of Sweden to work together on sustainable forest management

FAO and IKEA of Sweden have agreed to begin working together on a forestry certification initiative aimed at promoting the sustainable management of forest plantations and empowering forest-reliant communities in Vietnam.

Following the signing of a cooperation agreement by Anders Hildeman, Global Forestry Manager for IKEA of Sweden, and FAO's Assistant-Director General for Forestry, Eduardo Rojas-Briales, the two organizations will undertake an initial analysis to evaluate options for advancing forest certification schemes and sustainable forest management in

Northern Vietnam.

A good forest certification scheme seeks to monitor the social and economic well-being of forest workers and communities, promoting their equitable access to international markets.

To gain certification, products are evaluated according to an independent, third-party standard. Those that meet the standard earn a "stamp of approval" or "ecolabel" so that purchasers and consumers know they were produced in a legal, sustainable and socially responsible way. www.fao.org/news

THE FLEGT NEWSLETTER

NATURE & DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION (NDF)

Ghana to tackle climate change collectively through Earth Hour

Climate change experts have called for a collective approach by way of attitudinal change to addressing issues that will help reduce global emissions.

The Senior Manager of Sustainability & Climate Change Advisory of Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC), Mr. Venan Sondo, said no little effort made by any individual towards reducing emissions such as putting off non-essential lights every day can be ignored in the fight against climate change. This is because "every little action counts but more collective action would make a bigger difference" he said.

Mr. Sondo commended the organisers, Nature and Development Foundation (NDF), for introducing Earth Hour in Ghana and assured them of PWC's support in subsequent years.

The Director of NDF, Mr. Mustapha Seidu, said, making every day an Earth Hour day by consciously

switching off non-essential lights and electrical appliances in homes will go a long way to help protect the planet.

He disclosed that NDF was motivated to join Earth Hour this year especially due to the current energy crisis "Dumsor" facing the country.

He believes that it is ideal to conserve in scarcity in order to cultivate the habit to save when there is more.

Mr. Seidu said a regular educational youth campaign on climate change and construction of irrigation dams for farmers are some of the initiatives to be embarked on by NDF in subsequent years. He called on individuals, government and corporate bodies to support these activities to come to fruition.



©NDF Participants lighting the GH 60+ logo

Earth Hour is a global campaign aimed at creating awareness on the negative effects of Climate change.

Celebrated on the last Saturday of March annually, the symbolic event is aimed at inspiring people to reduce their energy consumption every day by putting off their non-essential lights and electrical appliances for one hour to alert people on the need to protect the planet from the numerous environmental challenges.

www.ndfwestafrica.org

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About NDF

The Nature & Development Foundation (NDF) was legally established in November 2013 in Ghana. It was born out of the long presence of WWF in Ghana and across the West African region as a non-profit organization, limited by guarantee.

The foundation has a mission to help build a society in which human development and nature conservation complement each other. It also believes that, ways exist to balance the needs of development with sustainable land uses that do not threaten forest biodiversity and forest dependent livelihoods of the region.

NDF understands that it must not limit itself to working only with those in the forest industries itself, but must engage more widely in multiple sectors and processes if it is to achieve its mission.

Though currently active in Ghana, it aims to increase its activities in Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia in the future.



COLLABORATING
ON FOREST
CONSERVATION IN
WEST AFRICA

