

Wal-Mart pledges to phase out illegal timber

Retail giant joins with WWF to undertake assessment of wood sourcing practices

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Wal-Mart's attempts to reduce the environmental impact of its supply chain took another step forward yesterday, with the announcement it is to phase out use of illegal timber in its products and increase the proportion of sustainably certified wood products that it sources.

The announcement came as the retail giant confirmed that it has joined the WWF's [Global Forest & Trade Network](#), an initiative designed to help protect threatened forests.

Under the terms of its membership, Wal-Mart has agreed to undertake a complete assessment of where its wood furniture is sourced, and whether the timber is legally felled and from well-managed forests. Once the assessment, which is scheduled to take a year, is completed the company has committed to eliminating purchasing of wood from illegal and unknown sources within five years.

WWF said that Wal-Mart sources wood from some of the most the biologically diverse regions on Earth, including the Amazon, Russian Far East, northern China, Indonesia, and the Mekong region of south east Asia, and as such the move represents a major breakthrough.

"One of our goals at Wal-Mart is to sell products that sustain and protect our resources," said Matt Kistler, Wal-Mart's senior vice president of sustainability. "By joining the GFTN, we can further this goal by providing our customers with a reliable supply of wood products that come from responsibly managed forests."

The move is the latest in a series of initiatives from Wal-Mart designed to help reduce the environmental impact of its supply chain. The company last year launched a programme requiring many of its largest suppliers to report on their environmental performance and earlier this year announced it was extending the programme to [include many of its Chinese suppliers](#). Meanwhile, earlier this month the company unveiled a new initiative to increase the proportion of produce it buys from sources [local to its stores](#).

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