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The Royal Institute of
International Affairs

Tackling Illegal Logging and the Related Trade: What Progress and Where Next?

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Project: [Energy, Environment and Resources Department](#), [Forest Governance, Illegal Logging and Deforestation](#)

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Despite ambitious government action to tackle illegal logging, progress at the global level has stalled as efforts to address the problem have been eclipsed by major changes in the forest sector.



Photo: iStock

Key findings

Efforts to address illegal logging and reduce the trade in illegal timber have borne fruit and prompted some positive reforms in producer countries. However, changes in the sector mean overall trade has not fallen in the last decade.

- China is now the world's largest importer and consumer of wood-based products, as well as a key processing hub, accounting for half of all trade in illegal wood-based products. India, South Korea, and

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Vietnam are also growing markets. The rise in demand from developing countries has diluted the influence of more progressive countries, such as the EU and US.

- Additionally, more forest is being cleared for agriculture and other land uses. As much as half of all tropical timber traded internationally now comes from forest conversion, of which nearly two-thirds is thought to be illegal.
- Finally, logging by small-scale producers has soared in many countries. Such activity is often illegal and remains beyond the scope of many policy and regulatory efforts.

Recommendations

- Following early gains, governance reforms in many producer countries have slowed. Getting back on track will require a step change in political commitment and willingness to tackle the more difficult remaining governance issues – such as corruption.
- The most progressive demand-side approaches remain confined to a small subset of developed consumer countries, which account for a declining share of global imports of wood-based products. Comparable efforts should be undertaken by other developed countries – such as Japan and South Korea – as well as by emerging consumers and processors such as India and China. In addition, producer-country governments should tackle the rapidly growing consumption of illegal timber at home.
- Efforts to date have focused on large-scale logging concessions, but small-scale production should be given much more attention. Small-scale producers and processors should be incorporated into the formal sector by reducing barriers to entry and facilitating legal compliance.
- The pervasive lack of data, particularly in the public domain, undermines efforts to monitor logging by civil society, to implement best practice by the private sector, and to develop effective policies by producer and donor governments. The reporting and accessibility of data should be improved and new technologies explored.
- Increasingly, illegal timber production is resulting from the expansion of agriculture, mining and infrastructure. There is an urgent need for coherent cross-sector strategies that extend efforts to tackle illegal logging beyond the forest sector.

[Read the press release >>](#)

[Chatham House Report: Tackling Illegal Logging and the Related Trade: What Progress and Where Next?](#)

[PDF | 4.19 MB](#)

[Executive Summary: Tackling Illegal Logging and the Related Trade: What Progress and Where Next?](#)

[PDF | 662.06 KB](#)

- See more at: <http://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/tackling-illegal-logging-and-related-trade-what-progress-and-where-next#sthash.G0qlbln2.dpuf>

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