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China imposes total ban on commercial logging, eyes forest reserves

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China has completely stopped commercial logging in forests, according to the State Forestry Administration (SFA).

Prior to the nationwide ban for business purposes, China had banned all commercial logging in natural forests in key forest zones, including those in Northeast China's Jilin Province and North China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in 2015, followed by a further prohibition of commercial logging in State-owned plantations in 2016, the China News Service reported on Wednesday.

China is the world's largest timber importer and second largest consumer, said Yan Zhen, director of the Department of Development, Planning and Finance under the SFA, adding that "by 2020, China's timber needs will rise to 700 million cubic meters."

China will step up efforts to plan and establish 20 national forest reserves in seven key areas, including southeastern coastal areas and middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River, in hopes of reducing the country's dependence on timber imports to less than 30 percent by 2030, Yan revealed.

China logs about 49.94 million cubic meters of natural forests each year, and launched a landmark pilot program banning all commercial logging of natural forests in key forest zones in Northeast China's Heilongjiang Province in April 2014, the Xinhua News Agency reported.

"Northern China now faces a shortage of mature and usable forests. The plan marked a new phase wherein China protects natural forests instead of developing forestry resources," said Zhang Mingxiang, a professor at Beijing Forestry University.

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