



Britain is largest importer of illegal timber in EU says WWF

[Rhett A. Butler](#), mongabay.com

November 21, 2005

Britain is the biggest importer of illegally-logged timber in Europe, responsible for the destruction of 1.4 million acres of forest a year according to a new report by the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF).

The report, based on estimates of illegal logging by official bodies such as the World Bank, focused on trade between EU countries and the Amazon basin, the Congo basin, East Africa, Indonesia, the Baltic states and Russia. WWF found that Britain was responsible for £2 billion-worth (\$3.4 billion) of illegally harvested timber imports.

The report said that the EU imported £10 billion (\$17.2 billion) in illegally logged wood last year, adding to the destruction of some of the world's most important forests and exacerbating poverty in some of the poorest countries.

Andrew Lee, director of campaigns at WWF, said: "Britain has made poverty a central plank of its EU presidency, yet its consumption of illegal timber is robbing countries such as Cameroon and Indonesia of invaluable income.

"Large-scale illegal logging often deprives local communities who rely on forests for their livelihoods, while big international companies reap the profits," Lee continued.

Last month the EU agreed to a voluntary system to control the illegal timber trade but environmental groups have criticized the plan as one that will not effectively tackle illegal logging.

In a statement, WWF said the agreement "does

MONGABAY.COM

Mongabay.com seeks to raise interest in and appreciation of wild lands and wildlife, while examining the impact of emerging trends in climate, technology, economics, and finance on conservation and development ([more](#))

CONTENTS

[Rainforests](#)

[Tropical Fish](#)

[Madagascar](#)

[Pictures](#)

[Kids' Site](#)

[About](#)

[Contact](#)

[Archives](#)

[Newsletter](#)

[Languages](#)

SUPPORT

Help support mongabay.com when you buy from



not prevent illegal timber going via third countries such as China and ending up in the EU, and it does not cover pulp or paper — responsible for a significant proportion of the EU's timber imports."

Beatrix Richards, Senior Forests Policy Officer at WWF says "The reality is that rather than encouraging responsible forest management, these measures may actually contribute to the laundering of illegal timber via third countries and further undermine efforts to reduce poverty and help preserve the world's forests."



Transporting logs from the felling area to the sawmills. Photo by Roberto Faidutti, courtesy of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

WWF estimates that up to 50 per cent of tropical hardwood imported into Europe is from illegal sources, which is having a significant impact on the depletion of the world's most threatened rainforests.

Related article

[Nigeria has worst deforestation rate, FAO revises figures](#) November 17, 2005

Nigeria has the world's highest deforestation rate of primary forests according to revised deforestation figures from the the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Between 2000 and 2005 the country lost 55.7 percent of its primary forests -- defined as forests with no visible signs of past or present human activities. Logging, subsistence agriculture, and the collection of fuelwood are cited as leading causes of forest clearing in the West African country.

Illegal timber trade in Europe driving global forest loss and poverty

News release from WWF

22 Nov 2005

Gland, Switzerland – Unless urgent action is taken by the European Union, the illegal timber trade in Europe could contribute to large-scale depletion of timber in some areas and loss of important forests, especially in the Congo Basin and Indonesia, in about 10 years time, a new WWF report shows.

The report, which focuses on the trade between EU countries and the Amazon Basin, the Congo Basin, East Africa, Indonesia, the Baltic States and Russia, found that the EU imports roughly 20 million cubic metres of illegal timber from these regions

POPULAR PAGES

Rainforests

[Rain forests](#)

[Amazon deforestation](#)

[Deforestation](#)

[Deforestation stats](#)

[Why rainforests matter](#)

[Saving rainforests](#)

[Deforestation stats](#)

[Rainforest canopy](#)

News

[Most popular](#)

[Worth saving?](#)

[Forest conservation](#)

[Earth Day](#)

[Poverty alleviation](#)

[Cell phones in Africa](#)

[Seniors helping Africa](#)

[Oil palm in rainforests](#)

[Extinction debate](#)

[Extinction crisis](#)

[Extinction debate](#)

[Palm Oil](#)

[Borneo](#)

[Orangutans in Borneo](#)

[Interviews](#)

T-SHIRTS

annually. As a result, the EU is responsible for around €3 billion of the global €10–15 billion in lost revenue due to illegal logging each year.

WWF believes current EU efforts, including the Forests Law Enforcement Governance & Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan, which promotes voluntary agreements between member states importing timber and external countries producing it, fall far short of the measures needed to tackle illegal logging. While the aim of the regulation is to prevent illegal timber being imported into the EU, it is neither mandatory, nor does it prevent illegal timber being imported via third countries, the global conservation organization says.

As Ministers meet to discuss measures to consider illegal logging at a meeting in Brussels today, WWF is calling for new EU-wide legislation to prohibit the import of illegally logged timber. WWF also urges the EU to take far more active steps to encourage other major producers such as China, Japan and the US to eliminate illegal timber from their own imports.

“The EU must take much tougher action if it wants to make a difference in both conserving the world’s most important forests and help alleviate poverty,” said Duncan Pollard, Head of WWF’s European Forest Programme. “Only measures that make it mandatory for EU members to prohibit illegal timber coming into Europe will really help combat illegal logging.”

According to the report, the United Kingdom is the biggest importer of illegal timber in Europe (and the third biggest importer of illegal timber and pulp and paper combined, followed by Sweden and Finland respectively). The trade is responsible for the loss of 600,000 hectares of forest each year – more than twice the size of Luxembourg.

“The has made poverty a central plank of its EU presidency yet its consumption of illegal timber is robbing countries such as Africa and of invaluable income,” said Andrew Lee, Director of Campaigns for WWF-UK. “Illegal logging deprives local communities who often rely on forests for their livelihoods, while big international companies reap the profits.”

This article used information from WWF news releases.

[News index](#) | [RSS](#) | [Add to MyYahoo!](#)



Madagascar Wildlife
Save Madagascar



Sucking on this frog
may make you insane



In Madagascar there are
lemurs that dance



Don't fall asleep
the sloths will
eat you

Copyright mongabay 2007