

# TIMBER



*The UK uses around 40 million m<sup>3</sup> of timber every year, of which approximately two thirds is imported. Such imports come from tropical and non-tropical forests all over the globe. Whilst wood and forests are clearly associated with pure environmental concerns, a wide range of social and poverty issues are also associated with the growing and production of forest products.*

## The issues

### Forests and poverty

Forests of the tropics and sub-tropics are of particular significance for some of the world's poorest people. A range of figures are quoted for the number of poor people dependent on forests, varying from 350 million to 1.2 billion.

Timber exports are of particular significance to some of the poorest countries in the world, making a large contribution to some countries' GDP. As such, different methods and approaches to the procurement of timber can make positive and negative contributions to poverty issues in timber producing countries.

The potential impacts on poor people of forestry activity include

- employment, although such jobs can be dangerous and poorly paid
- damage to people already dependent upon forests for food, fuel etc.
- illegal extraction, where timber is "stolen" from its lawful owners

A wide range of organisations have focused upon the development of approaches to guarantee improved management of timber production, labelling of products and traceability of supplies. This information sheet provides an overview of such approaches together with recommendations for improved procurement practice.



### Timber products

The principal uses of timber in Further and Higher Education are:

- beams laminated/glued usually using urea formaldehyde
- facings
- flooring - from hardwood
- external cladding
- shuttering for concrete
- furniture

The timber for these uses comes from different sources:

- sawn logs – the larger trees used for structural purposes, furniture, flooring and facings
- veneers - also made from larger trees—used to face particle boards or furniture
- plywood - made from thin cuts of either softwood or hardwood glued with either protein or formaldehyde based glues; or
- pulp – made generally from smaller diameter trees – used for paper and for fibreboard and "particle boards"

Here we focus particularly on timber and timber products derived from the tropics and sub-tropics because this is where most poverty-related issues arise and also where the responsible procurement can have a significant impact.

#### Forest Types

There are three main types of forest globally; tropical, temperate and boreal.

**Tropical forests**, around and near the equator, have constant warm, wet conditions, high levels of biodiversity and grow all year.

**Temperate forests**, in N America, Northern Asia and Europe have varied seasons and grow 140-200 days per year.

**Boreal forests**, occur in more northern latitudes including Siberia, Scandinavia, Alaska and Canada, have wide variations in temperature and a growing season of 130 days per year.

## Solutions

Irresponsible procurement can of course be very damaging to less developed countries but conversely, responsible procurement of timber can bring significant benefits.

The following key areas of focus contribute to responsible forestry practice:

- sustainable forestry management;
- ensuring legality in forest management;
- health and safety and environmental issues in manufacturing processes.

## Existing Certification schemes

Certification schemes provide independent verification that timber has been grown in sustainably managed forests and/or has been extracted legally and include a mechanism for tracing products from forest to end use. Both international and national schemes operate around the world. Two of the most significant are:

### The Forest Stewardship Council

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is an independent, not for profit, non-government organisation which promotes environmentally responsible, socially beneficial and economically viable forest management by establishing a worldwide standard of recognized and respected principles and criteria for forest stewardship.

### Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (PEFC)

The PEFC Council is an independent, non-profit, non-government organisation which promotes sustainably managed forests through independent third party certification. PEFC is a global umbrella organisation for the assessment and recognition of national forest certification schemes and has in its membership 35 independent national forest certification systems of which 25 to date have been through a rigorous assessment process.

## UK Government policy

Since April 2009, DEFRA has a policy that only timber and timber products originating either from independently verified legal and sustainable sources or from a licensed Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) partner can be used on the Government estate. Appropriate documentation is required to prove this. Non-FLEGT timber solely meeting the legality criteria will be accepted only in special circumstances where no legal and sustainable or FLEGT source is available. Alternatively, contracting authorities can demand recycled timber. This policy applies to all central government departments, executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs). Other public sector bodies, such as local authorities, have voluntarily adopted the policy.

Four certification schemes have been approved as meeting the UK Government's requirements for sustainable and legal timber:

- Canadian Standards Association (CSA)
- Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)
- Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC)
- Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI).



# T I M B E R

## Recommendations

- ⊙ *Do not exclude tropical timber.*
- ⊙ *Communicate your requirements to suppliers to stimulate them to support your commitments.*
- ⊙ *Procure only timber that is equivalent to or exceeds the FSC or PEFC standards or is from forests certified to be working to achieve the standard.*
- ⊙ *Look out for Fairtrade FSC timber coming on the market.*

### FURTHER INFORMATION

UK Timber Trade Federation: [www.ttf.co.uk](http://www.ttf.co.uk)

Tropical Forest Trust: [www.tropicalforesttrust.com](http://www.tropicalforesttrust.com)

FSC: [www.fsc.org](http://www.fsc.org)

PEFC: [www.pefc.org](http://www.pefc.org)

International Institute for Environment and Development: [www.ied.org/theme/3/Forestry/about](http://www.ied.org/theme/3/Forestry/about)

This sheet is part of a series of 14 on different commodities written for EAUC's Promoting Poverty Aware Procurement project to enable universities and colleges to be more aware of poverty issues when they make procurement decisions. For more information about the project visit [www.eauc.org.uk/promoting\\_poverty\\_aware\\_procurement\\_on\\_campus](http://www.eauc.org.uk/promoting_poverty_aware_procurement_on_campus)



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