

Logging

Informal Trade Hurts Cameroon's Economy

■ Center for International Forestry Research has launched a campaign to ensure that only legally sawn wood is used henceforth in the country.

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Although Cameroon is well known as an international timber exporter, being Africa's largest exporter of tropical wood to the European Union, its domestic timber trade seems to be ignored. Forestry researchers hold that Cameroon, which boasts of 20 million hectares of forest - a great portion of the national territory, tends to ignore its domestic timber market and trade in its national forest policies. The result is that Cameroon's forest is left at the mercy of artisanal loggers and traders (some prefer to refer to them as illegal loggers and traders), who on a yearly basis record astronomical volumes of trade. The sector's economic, environmental and social impacts only started being evaluated recently.

According to research findings by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), should small-scale production of sawn wood market in Cameroon be taken into account, total national production would equal 4.3 million cubic meters per year. This will nearly double the official figures cited by the government, the CIFOR research suggested.

The CIFOR study suggests that even government finds herself making use of illegally sawn wood in the construction of public structures.

It is against this backdrop that CIFOR has launched a project to sensitise private and public individuals and entities on the need to encourage the use of wood from legally known sources. While launching the project during a workshop in Yaounde, Thursday November



Users often find it very difficult to differentiate legally sourced wood from illegal timber.

2, 2017, the Central Africa Regional Coordinator of CIFOR, Dr. Richard Eba'a Atyi, said the phenomenon of illegal timber trade is worrisome, with government also involved. "We have been working with the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife as well as other partners to

reverse the tide. The first driver of the use of legal wood should be the government itself," Dr. Richard Eba'a Atyi said. Cameroon Tribune learned a forest law that focused on the export-oriented industrial forestry sector was adopted in

1994. However, the law neglected domestic chainsaw milling operations which in recent years has created 45,000 direct jobs and generated over FCFA 17 trillion. The recent campaign falls in line with the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) of

EU's Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan. The Center for Research and Action for Sustainable Development (CERAD) and the Faculty of Agronomy and Agricultural Sciences of the University of Dschang also launched related projects.