

Promoting Legal Use And Exploitation of Timber Resources

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This brought experts in the domain to brainstorm for better strategies in one day workshop on July 15, 2018 in Centre xxii in vole Yaounde.

By signing the Voluntary Partnership Agreement of the FLEGT Action Plan, Cameroon made a commitment to supply its domestic timber market with sawnwood produced in compliance with the legislation. This report reviews the various types of demands and supplies of sawnwood on the Cameroonian internal market (in Yaoundé and Douala) in order to identify the possibilities of promoting the long-term consumption of sawnwood and furniture of legal origin.

The private and public demands of the national market target three main uses of timber: construction material for the building and the public works sector, door and window frames and furniture. These demands are expressed at four levels of trade: (1) the urban markets, where 830,000 m³ of sawnwood are sold per year; (2) the joinery workshops, which produce a minimum of 130,000 items of furniture a year, for a total volume of 22,000 m³ of sawnwood after the fourth stage transformation and for a turnover in excess of XAF 8 billion; (3) the furniture sales shops and showrooms, which sold at least 22,282 items of furniture in 2015, corresponding to a sawnwood volume of 5788 m³ and a turnover of XAF 3.33 billion; (4) the government procurement contracts, where the demand for sawnwood stands at around 13,000 m³ a year, making the State the main buyer of sawnwood and furniture on the internal market.

To meet these various demands, there are four supplies of sawnwood and furniture of supposed legal origin: (1) the community forests, whose total legal sawnwood production has never reached 10,000 m³ a year since their creation; (2) the timber exploitation permits (PEBOs), which were launched in 2012 but with limited success as they only allow a maximum sawnwood volume of 8000 m³; (3) the industries, which supply the domestic market with 145,000 m³ of sawnwood – mainly in the form of sawmill scrap – but without monitoring the volumes by these companies; (4) the imports of wooden furniture, which have doubled since 2007 and reached a sales level of XAF 3 billion in 2015, for approximately 10,000 m³.

By matching these sawnwood demands and supplies, we realize that there are today two major barriers to the emergence of a legal sawnwood domestic market in Cameroon. On one hand, the buyers' acceptance of an increase in sawnwood prices as a result of their legalization will not be sufficient to cover the current costs of sawnwood from legal sources. On the other hand, the maximum production of artisanal sawnwood from legal sources will cover only a small part of consumers' needs. Thus the legalization of the domestic market of timber in Cameroon faces a double constraint of price and volume.



To address these problems, the most often quoted and, to a certain extent, experimented approach is a decrease in the production cost of legally sawnwood destined for the domestic market. A complementary approach of supporting the private and government demands of sawnwood of legal origin could also be promoted.

In 1994 Cameroon adopted a new forest law that focussed on the large-scale, export-oriented industrial forest sector while timber produced through small-scale logging for the domestic market was ignored, even in official statistics, and is generally produced without a valid permit. As Cameroon prepares to implement the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) it recently signed with the European Union, promising a legal framework for all national timber production, this occasional paper presents a quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the

country's domestic timber market. By adding our estimates for small-scale production of sawn wood sold on the domestic market to national statistics, total national production would amount to about 4.3 million cubic metres per year, in other words close to double the official figure for Cameroonian timber production. Our research also found that the domestic market is profitable for thousands of Cameroonians. Its informal structure, however, contributes to maintaining a huge, inescapable payment system run by State agents to launder the timber sold on local markets, informal transactions that are worth about 6 billion F CFA each year. The paper concludes with technical options to improve market operating conditions. These options may prove ineffective unless they are accompanied by determined efforts to fight the corruption that permeates the industry.