

# The Rainforest Alliance's Legality Verification Services: Helping Companies Identify and Verify Their Wood Sources

Around the world, illegal logging and its associated trade continue to destroy forests and undermine the economic well-being of legitimate businesses and local communities. By creating unfair competition, illegal logging can pose severe challenges to legally operated, responsibly managed forest companies. As awareness of the problem grows, both the private sector and national governments have been taking steps to combat it. Businesses are pursuing voluntary certification and verification while governments are strengthening their laws and working to improve the transparency of the wood products trade.

As a company concerned with legality, transparency and traceability...

- How do you verify and track the origin of your wood products?
- How can you establish that your wood products were harvested in accordance with the applicable laws in the country of their origin?
- How do you ensure sufficient compliance with trade regulations and the changing requirements of the marketplace?

The SmartWood Program of The Rainforest Alliance can help. Through SmartWood's Verification of Legal Origin (VLO) and Verification of Legal Compliance (VLC) services, we provide you with a high level of security and transparency. Whether you are a forest manager, a processing or trading company or a retailer, the Rainforest Alliance can work with you to help demonstrate your adherence to existing laws and regulations.



## A Changing Legal Environment for Wood Product Manufacturers

Illegal logging damages not just the environment and local communities but also companies that operate responsibly and within the boundaries of existing laws and regulations. In developing countries alone, illegal logging results in lost assets and revenue in excess of US\$10 billion annually. By current estimates, 80 percent of the logging in Indonesia and the Brazilian Amazon is illegal.

To help reduce the proliferation and trade of illegally sourced timber, the private and public sectors have developed a range of voluntary schemes for verifying the origin and legality of wood. Increasingly, governments are also strengthening the legal frameworks that regulate the trade of wood and wood products.

In the United States, for example, an amendment to the Lacey Act was passed in May, 2008, prohibiting the trade of illegally sourced plants or plant products — including all wood and items made with wood. The amendment also calls for increased transparency and requires importers to declare the species, country of origin, and other related information of these products.

The European Union's Action Plan on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) encourages businesses to adopt purchasing policies that exclude illegal timber from their supply chains and promotes the implementation of sound public procurement policies by its member states. Thus far, the FLEGT plan has operated through Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) between individual EU states and selected producing countries. However, a proposal has been made to the European Commission that would establish regulations to govern the import and trade of wood and wood products within the EU.

## Tracing Your Products Back to the Forest

As an independent, third-party certifier with over 20 years of experience in assessing forest operations worldwide, the Rainforest Alliance's SmartWood program has the expertise to help you verify the legal origin of your wood and wood products. Our team of professional forestry staff and auditors can assist you in determining if your wood originates from a source with a documented legal right to harvest and if that source complies with harvesting regulations in the country of origin. We will provide you with a complete report and support your claim of legality with a "Verification Statement".

In addition to legality verification, our SmartSource program can help you implement a comprehensive responsible purchasing policy designed to meet all of your wood and wood product needs, and connect you to forest companies that have been independently certified according to the strict international standards of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

*The Rainforest Alliance works to conserve biodiversity and ensure sustainable livelihoods by transforming land-use practices, business practices and consumer behavior.*

[www.rainforest-alliance.org](http://www.rainforest-alliance.org)

The Rainforest Alliance's verification services are "top of the class" among all legality verification systems. "It is the only scheme truly developed in a balanced multi-stakeholder manner."

*Wood Products Legality Verification Systems: An Assessment*  
Greenpeace (January, 2008)

## The Rainforest Alliance Advantage

The Rainforest Alliance works in over 60 countries, collaborating with forest companies, the wood processing industry, trading companies, farmers, tourism enterprises and local communities to manage and conserve natural resources and help responsible businesses benefit from their efforts.

Our SmartWood program pioneered sustainable forest management on a global scale and helped establish the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), which is widely considered the world's most rigorous forestry accreditation body. With our expertise in addressing environmental, economic and social concerns as well as our extensive knowledge of wood product markets, we offer the most comprehensive approach to sustainability and legality verification. The breadth and depth of our experience make the Rainforest Alliance your ideal partner in today's highly competitive global marketplace.

*Photos: Stock, Forestland Group LLC*



*For more information about our Legality Verification Services, please contact:*

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