A collaborative programme for sustainable trade in tropical timber

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ITTO and CITES work together to ensure survival of threatened species and sustainable incomes for people involved in timber trade.

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Mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*), shown here in Brazil, is one of the most valuable tropical timber species listed in CITES

Unsustainable harvesting, combined with habitat loss and the complex silviculture of many tropical tree species, has created threats to the long-term survival of a number of commercially important tropical timber species. It is essential that trade in these species be consistent with their sustainable management and conservation. For this reason, more than 30 tropical tree species are now listed in the appendices of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). CITES, which entered into force in 1975, was designed to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants that are listed under the convention is legal, sustainable and traceable.

A collaborative programme of the secretariats of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)[1] and CITES is helping countries implement the convention for tropical timber species. The programme (which began in 2006 and is supported by a European Union-led multi-donor grant to ITTO) assists participating countries to:

- improve management and regulation of trade in tropical timber species;
- improve forest management to ensure survival of threatened species and sustainable incomes for local communities and others involved in timber trade;
- increase regional cooperation in research, silviculture and CITES compliance;
- integrate knowledge on sustainable forest management and species conservation to provide a coherent policy framework.

The tropical timber species listed in the CITES appendices are subject to different degrees of regulation, based on a system of permits and certificates. Species listed in Appendix I are threatened with extinction, and international commercial trade in specimens of such species taken from the wild is generally prohibited. Species listed in Appendix II are not threatened with extinction, and international trade in these species can occur under certain conditions – i.e. when it is found that acquisition is legal and that the trade will not be detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild. Appendix III listings are made at the national level (without requiring the voting by Parties necessary to list a species in Appendix I or II) and basically enable countries

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[1] ITTO is an intergovernmental organization established in 1986 under the International Tropical Timber Agreement (1983) with a mandate to promote sustainable development through trade, conservation and best-practice management of tropical forests.

to indicate that a species is of conservation concern and to start monitoring the volume of specimens exported.

The activities of the ITTO-CITES programme – presented in the Table – focus on the tropical timber species currently listed in CITES Appendix II that are most traded internationally: *Pericopsis elata* (afromosia or assamela) in Africa, *Gonystylus* spp. (ramin) in Asia, and *Swietenia macrophylla* (bigleaf mahogany) in Latin America. The programme also includes a few activities concerning other species such us *Cedrela odorata* (Spanish cedar, also from Latin America and listed in CITES Appendix III), *Aquilaria malaccensis* (an agarwood-producing species from Southeast Asia listed in Appendix II) and *Intsia* spp. (merbau), a currently unlisted species that is of conservation concern in some Asian countries. In addition, the programme scope has recently been expanded to support implementation of CITES requirements for *Prunus africana* (African cherry, a species primarily used for its medicinal bark, listed in Appendix II). The range States do not at present allow export of specimens of this species; the programme will assist Cameroon (formerly the main exporter) to improve management so that trade can recommence.

In addition to the country-level activities shown in the Table, the programme also addresses information sharing and closer cooperation among agencies responsible for implementing and enforcing CITES-related legislation. Several national and regional workshops have been held to share experiences and strengthen communication among authorities and interested stakeholders, including the private sector.

Many of the programme's activities focus on strengthening countries' capacity to produce accurate and reliable non-detriment findings (NDFs). The NDF is a conclusion by the agency in charge of scientific aspects of CITES implementation in a country (the Scientific Authority) that the export of specimens of a particular species will not have a negative impact on the survival of that species in the wild. NDFs are an essential part of the requirements for trade in species listed under the convention, but many tropi-

Activities of the ITTO-CITES collaborative programme

Country	Species	Activity
Africa		
Cameroon	*Pericopsis elata*	Rehabilitation of plantations
		Sustainable management in forest concessions
	Prunus africana	Non-detriment findings
Congo	*P. elata*	Inventory in a production forest
Democratic Republic of the Congo	*P. elata*	Raising awareness of CITES and its implementation texts
		Training on the verification of CITES permits and the use of "CITES Wood-ID" software (designed to aid in wood recognition by customs authorities)
Asia		
Indonesia	*Gonystylus* spp.	Improving inventory design to estimate growing stock
		Assessing silvicultural systems – review of current practice and resumption of measurement of existing permanent sample plots
		Exploratory assessment of the population distribution and potential timber uses of *Gonystylus* species other than *G. bancanus*
		Review of harvest and trade – CITES compliance, Tri-National Task Force on Trade in Ramin, trade control and monitoring
Malaysia	*Gonystylus bancanus*	Non-detriment findings report – a quantitative assessment in two selected permanent forests of Sarawak
		Generation of spatial distribution maps using hyperspectral technology and determination of sustainable level of harvest in production forests of Peninsular Malaysia
		Developing a DNA database to facilitate identification of ramin origin, Sarawak, Malaysia
		Sawn timber and plywood recovery study in Peninsular Malaysia
	Gonystylus spp.	Development of a monitoring system using radio frequency identification (RFID) tags, an automated detection and notification mechanism for tracing timber, in Peninsular Malaysia
	Gonystylus spp., *Aquilaria* spp. and *Intsia* spp.	Quantification of dry and wet inland forests to improve management of species of conservation concern, based on the fourth National Forest Inventory in Peninsular Malaysia
Latin America		
Bolivia	*Swietenia macrophylla*	Studies on population density of mahogany and forest harvesting impacts on natural regeneration and diameter growth
Brazil	*S. macrophylla*	Long-term studies of population dynamics and regeneration ecology to support sustainable forest management in the Amazon
		Ecology and silviculture in the western Amazon
		Management of mahogany shoot borer (*Hypsipyla grandella*) in the states of Pará and São Paulo
Peru	*S. macrophylla* and *Cedrela odorata*	Evaluation of commercial stocks and strategy for sustainable management
		Design, validation and adjustment of methodology for monitoring and evaluation of stocks
Guatemala and Peru	*S. macrophylla*	Support compliance with CITES regulations – in-country technical assistance for the development of national timber yield tables for standing volume and export-grade sawnwood
Bolivia, Brazil and Peru	*C. odorata*	Market study to evaluate main export and domestic markets and end-uses

cal countries face problems in collecting and analysing the required information for timber species. In 2008, the ITTO-CITES programme co-sponsored the first International Expert Workshop on CITES Non-Detriment Findings, held in Mexico, to discuss the methodologies, tools, information and expertise needed to formulate NDFs for species in all CITES-listed taxonomic groups, with a special working group on timber species.

The joint ITTO-CITES programme has improved the capacity of authorities responsible for implementing the convention in both exporting and importing countries, the cooperation and involvement of the private sector with these authorities, and the CITES-related knowledge of local populations participating in projects implemented under the programme. CITES participating authorities in all countries have reported that they have seen changes in local people's awareness of the need to manage and conserve the listed species, and improvements in their approaches to doing so, since the project started. Requests for funding under the project are increasing and now greatly exceed the available resources. Both ITTO and CITES are committed to continuing this collaborative partnership to improve the management and conservation of listed tropical timber species.

Ramin* (Gonystylus *spp.*) *trees left standing in a cleared peat swamp landscape in Sumatra, Indonesia, as Indonesian law prohibits their removal

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