

# A brief overview of Timber trade between Viet Nam, Cameroon and Laos



Timber trade between Viet Nam and Lao People Democratic Republic (Laos) and Cameroon (CMR) has been strong. Currently, CMR and Laos are Viet Nam's major suppliers of logs and sawn timber. Timber from these sources is mainly used for domestic use such as indoor furniture, door frame, flooring and stairs. This overview presents a short description of Viet Nam's timber imports from these countries. Before doing this, it will contextualize these imports in Viet Nam's broader timber trade relations.

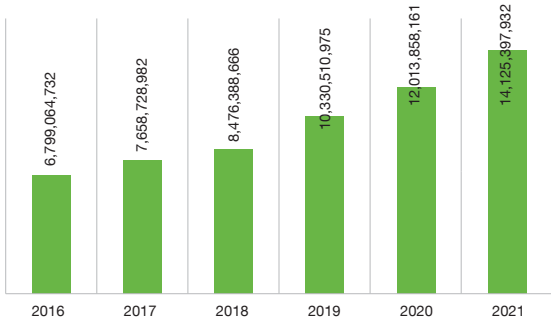


## 1 Vietnam's exports of timber and timber products

Viet Nam's timber sector is export-driven. The sector has been dynamics and expanding. Figure 1 illustrates the expansion of export value in 2016 – 2021 period. At present, Viet Nam is the second largest country in Asia (after China) and the fifth largest in the world in terms of timber export value.

### Export value

Figure 1. Viet Nam's timber export value, 2016 – 2021 (USD)

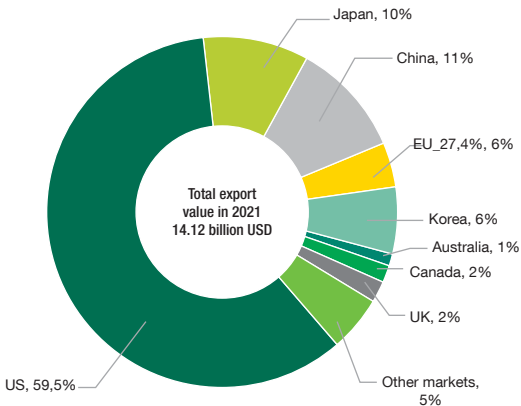


Source: VIFOREST, FPA Binh Dinh, HAWA, BIFA and Forest Trends based on Viet Nam's Customs data

### Export markets

The US, Japan, China, Korea and the EU are the most important market for Viet Nam. In 2021 Vietnam's timber value derived from these five markets together accounted for over 90% of the country's total export value (Figure 2). Exports have been growing at 15-20% per annum.

Figure 2. Viet Nam's major export markets of timber products in 2021



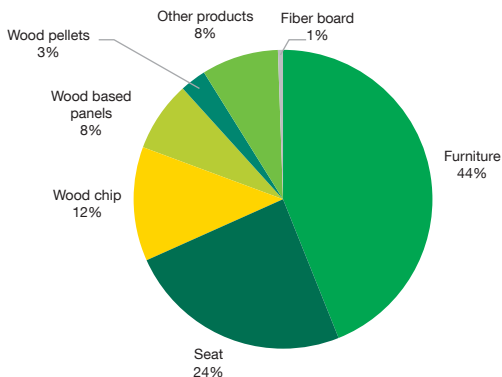
Source: VIFOREST, FPA Binh Dinh, HAWA, BIFA and Forest Trends based on Viet Nam's Customs data



## Major products

Furniture, seats, wood chip and wood-based panels are Viet Nam's major export products. In 2021 among these products, furniture stands out, accounting for 44% of Vietnam's total export value, followed by seat (24%), wood chip (12%) and wood-based panels (8%) (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Proportion of major timber products exported from Viet Nam to all markets in 2021



Source: VIFOREST, FPA Binh Dinh, HAWA, BIFA and Forest Trends based on Vietnam's Customs data

Table 1 presents export volume and value of Viet Nam timber products in 2020- 2021 period. In general, all products experienced a rapid expansion, with veneer, wood-based panels and seats grew the fastest.

Table 1. Viet Nam's exports of major timber products, 2020-2021

Product	Unit	2020	2021	2021/2020 (%)
Wood chip	Ton	11.607.583	13.609.338	17.2%
	USD	1.487.925.901	1.737.118.384	16.7%
Wood pellets	Ton	3.207.472	3.503.698	9.2%
	USD	352.037.059	412.982.398	17.3%
Veneer	Ton	744.433	2.031.482	172.9%
	USD	88.715.429	217.561.664	145.2%
Particle board	Ton	39.769	48.830	22.8%
	USD	9.500.938	10.400.535	9.5%
Fiber board	Ton	111.122	131.216	18.1%
	USD	45.748.652	71.768.791	56.9%
Plywood	Ton	2.096.006	2.888.015	37.8%
	USD	719.411.147	1.082.693.142	50.5%
Seat	USD	2.670.866.667	3.473.919.678	30.1%
Furniture	USD	5.879.158.325	6.239.814.114	6.1%
Other products	USD	767.517.100	879.139.228	15.6%
<b>Total</b>		<b>12.013.858.161</b>	<b>14.125.397.932</b>	<b>17.6%</b>

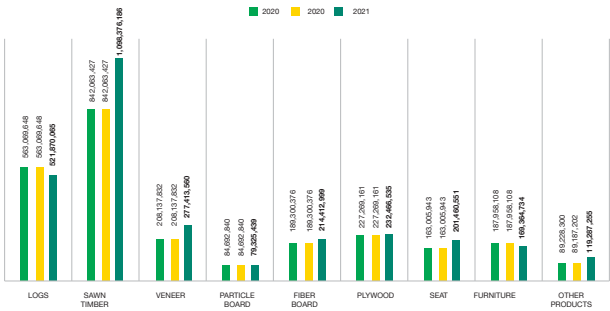
Source: VIFOREST, FPA Binh Dinh, HAWA, BIFA and Forest Trends based on Viet Nam's Customs data



## 2 Viet Nam's imports of timber and timber products

Viet Nam has an active logging ban on natural forest. While Viet Nam's domestic plantation is large and increasing, timber from this source, mounting to over 21.5 million m<sup>3</sup> in 2021 according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) is small and mainly used for wood chips and wood pellets destined for export markets. Though rubberwood and scattered trees (totaling 9 million m<sup>3</sup> in 2021 according to MARD) are important, timber from this sources, alongside domestic plantation timber, does not suffice to feed the expanding industry. Consequently, Viet Nam has to rely on timber imports with logs and sawn timber are major imported products, amounting for 5-6 million m<sup>3</sup> Round Wood Equivalent (RWE) each year. Imports of logs and sawn timber have been vital for the industry development. Figure 4 shows the value of Viet Nam's imports of timber and timber products in 2020 – 2021 period.

Figure 4. Viet Nam's imports of timber and timber products, 2020 – 2021 (USD)



Source: VIFOREST, FPA Binh Dinh, HAWA, BIFA and Forest Trends based on Viet Nam's Customs data

Logs and sawn timber are the most important products imported, together accounted for 56% of the Vietnam's total timber imports in 2021. In 2021, Viet Nam spent almost 522 million USD for logs and 1.1 billion USD for sawn timber imports. Import of logs have been relatively unchanged, imports of sawn timber have been expanding vigorously (Table 2).

Table 2. Viet Nam's imports of major timber products, 2019-2021 (m<sup>3</sup>)

Product	2019	2020	2020	2021
Logs (m <sup>3</sup> )	2,322,167	2,019,902	2,019,902	1,930,398
Sawn timber (m <sup>3</sup> )	2,576,963	2,541,569	2,541,569	2,782,007
Veneer (m <sup>3</sup> )	216,825	275,979	275,979	306,159
Particle board (m <sup>3</sup> )	376,040	434,719	434,719	361,784
Fiber board (m <sup>3</sup> )	690,850	744,665	744,665	823,305
Plywood (m <sup>3</sup> )	518,756	604,283	604,283	548,680

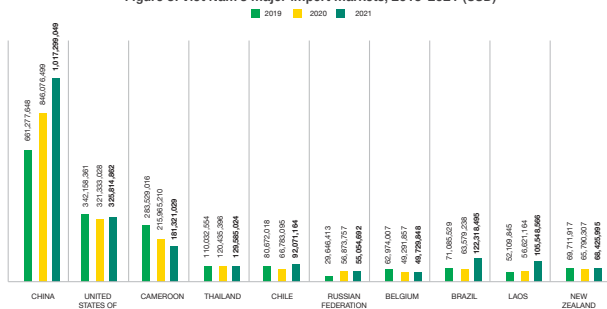
Source: VIFOREST, FPA Binh Dinh, HAWA, BIFA and Forest Trends based on Viet Nam's Customs data



Figure 5 illustrates Viet Nam's import value from major markets. Annex 1 provides details of Viet Nam's major export value from all markets in 2019-2021 period. Figure 5 shows that:

- China is Viet Nam's most important market, accounting for over one third of the Vietnam's total import value. Imports from China into Viet Nam have been surging
- Imports from Brazil, Thailand, Russia and Laos have been expanding.
- Imports from the US are large and consistent, and so as imports from New Zealand.
- Imports from Cameroon has been reducing.

Figure 5. Viet Nam's major import markets, 2019-2021 (USD)



Source: VIFOREST, FPA Binh Dinh, HAWA, BIFA and Forest Trends based on Viet Nam's Customs data



### 3 Viet Nam's timber imports from Cameroon

#### Log imports

Cameroon is one of Viet Nam's most important log supply sources. Annually, Cameroon supplies approximately 300,000 – 400,000 m<sup>3</sup> of logs, valuing 150-200 million USD to Viet Nam. Table 3 presents volume and value of Viet Nam's log imports from Cameroon from 2018 to February 2022. Log imports from Cameroon have been reducing.

Table 3. Viet Nam's imports of logs from Cameroon, 2018-Feb 2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	Jan – Feb 2022
M3	513,861	495,526	393,667	282,797	66,003
USD	215,854,338	181,160,739	146,963,927	115,138,227	25,069,141

Source: VIFOREST, FPA Binh Dinh, HAWA, BIFA and Forest Trends based on Viet Nam's Customs data

Logs imported from Cameroon into Viet Nam are precious species. Table 4 presents major species imported in 2021. Lim, Go, Xoan and Sen are the most important species by import volume.

Table 4. Major log species imported into Viet Nam from Cameroon in 2021

Trade name	Scientific name	M3
Tali	Erythrophleum ivorense	210,864
Sapele	Entandrophrag spp.	47,379
Doussie	Afzelia spp.	49,217
Mukulungu	Madhuca pasquieri	38,948
Padouk	Pterocarpus spp	14,003
Eyeck	NA*	10,790
Movingui	Manglietia fordiana	6,174
Mahogany	Sindora tonkinensis	4,277
Rosewood	Delbergia spp.	1,165

Source: VIFOREST, FPA Binh Dinh, HAWA, BIFA and Forest Trends based on Viet Nam's Customs data

\*: Scientific name unidentified

## Sawn timber imports

CMR is also Viet Nam's important sawn timber source. In 2018 – 2021 period, imports from CMR were 100,000 – 200,000 m<sup>3</sup> annually (Table 5). Similar to log imports, sawn timber imports have been decreasing.

Table 5. Viet Nam's sawn timber imports from Cameroon, 2018 – Feb 2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	Jan – Feb 2022
M3	117,379	227,391	153,634	145,156	45,650
USD	53,591,100	102,368,276	69,001,283	66,182,802	20,334,312

Source: VIFOREST, FPA Binh Dinh, HAWA, BIFA and Forest Trends based on Vietnam's Customs data

All imported species are precious. Table 6 illustrates major species imported into Viet Nam in 2021.

Table 6. Major species of sawn timber imported into Viet Nam from Cameroon in 2021 (m<sup>3</sup>)

Trade name	Scientific name	M3
Tali	Erythrophleum ivorense	88,740
Doussie	Azelia spp.	43,084
Padouk	Pterocarpus spp	12,816
Movingui	Manglietia fordiana	4,390
Iroko	Baccaurea sapida	2,093

Source: VIFOREST, FPA Binh Dinh, HAWA, BIFA and Forest Trends based on Vietnam's Customs data



## 4 Vietnam's timber imports from Laos

Laos used to be Viet Nam's most important timber source. At its peak (2014-2015) the import reached one million m<sup>3</sup> round wood equivalent (RWE) per year. In 2016 the Lao government introduced an export ban on unprocessed timber. Since then imports from this source have been dropped significantly.

### Log imports

Table 7 shows the volume and value of Viet Nam's log imports from Laos in 2014 – 2021 period. By 2021 the import was minimal.

Table 7. Vietnam's log imports from Laos, 2014 - 2021

Year	M3	USD
2014	308,647	149,455,547
2015	321,718	109,285,534
2016	36,194	9,590,679
2017	7,106	1,197,461
2018	2,444	457,665
2019	5,679	394,586
2020	12,817	2,139,723
2021	17,708	3,482,610

Source: VIFOREST, FPA Binh Dinh, HAWA, BIFA and Forest Trends based on Vietnam's Customs data

Most of the log species imported into Viet Nam were plantation timber (Table 8). Among those species, teak was the most important, accounting for over 90% of the total volume of log imports from this source in 2021.

Table 8. Some log species imported into Viet Nam from Laos, 2019 – 2021 (m<sup>3</sup>)

Species	2019	2020	2021
Acacia	4,424	1,918	404
Padauk (Pterocarpus spp.)	50	19	188
Pine	27	0	336
Pyinkado (Xylocarpus xylocarpa)	0	13	89
Teak	0	10,767	16,078

Source: VIFOREST, FPA Binh Dinh, HAWA, BIFA and Forest Trends based on Vietnam's Customs data

## Sawn timber imports

Imports of sawn timber from Laos are larger than that of logs and have been expanding since 2019 (Table 9). The imports in 2021 were substantial (Table 9)

Table 9. Viet Nam's sawn timber imports from Laos, 2014 - 2021

Year	M3	USD
2014	495,126	410,003,936
2015	383,149	239,169,839
2016	97,138	63,677,885
2017	43,697	36,425,115
2018	40,150	29,423,543
2019	63,339	49,019,258
2020	81,290	53,430,435
2021	142,081	100,732,413

Source: VIFOREST, FPA Binh Dinh, HAWA, BIFA and Forest Trends based on Vietnam's Customs data

Majority of sawn timber imports were natural species. Table 10 shows the major species imported in 2021.

Table 10. Major sawn timber species imported into Vietnam from Laos in 2021 (m3)

Vietnamese name	Scientific name	2019	2020	2021
Padauk	Padauk (Pterocarpus spp.)	21,807	16,524	35,714
Pachyloba	Pachyloba (Afzelia spp)	17,641	29,978	35,908
Teak	Tectona Grandis	4,711	4,383	4,485
Movingui	Manglietia fordiana	2,262	4,959	7,998
Pyinkado	Pyinkado (Xylia xylocarpa)	3,931	7,815	18,414
Lagerstroemia	Lagerstroemia speciosa	2,036	5,873	10,910
Chinese fir	Cunninghamia lanceolata	261	240	496
Doussie	Afzelia spp.	1,263	390	3,905
Tali	Erythrophleum fordii	3,406	990	5,999
Fujian cypress	Fokienia hodginsii	112	298	2,536
Ebony	Diospyros spp.	392	128	1,356

Source: VIFOREST, FPA Binh Dinh, HAWA, BIFA and Forest Trends based on Vietnam's Customs data



## 5 Conclusions

Viet Nam's timber imports have been playing an important role in the development of the country's timber sector. Likely, this role is maintained in the future. Cameroon and Laos have been Viet Nam's important timber sources, mainly supplying natural species of logs and sawn timber to Viet Nam. Imports from these sources are largely used for Viet Nam's domestic market.

The Vietnamese government has been implementing the Viet Nam Timber Legality Assurance System (VNTLAS). Controlling the legality of the imports lies at the core of the VNTLAS. Under the VNTLAS timber imports from Cameroon and Laos are considered as high-risk and subject to high level of control. Given the large scale of the imports from Laos and particularly from Cameroon, it is important for the Vietnamese government to collaborate with their Cameroonian and Laos counterparts to ensure the legality of timber imports and exports. This collaboration should prioritize, but not exclusively, the following areas:



a. Legality frameworks governing the entire supply chains in the production countries (e.g. timber concession, harvesting, and trade). The collaboration will inform the Vietnamese government including competent authorities concerning the legality requirements concerning each stage of the chains from the source countries.

b. Viet Nam's legality frameworks particularly the mechanisms for controlling the legality of timber imports from the countries including Cameroon and Laos considered as high-risk according to the VNTLAS. The collaboration will provide an opportunity for Cameroon and Laos to understand Viet Nam's legality requirements concerning imported timber and encourage the compliance.

c. Practices by private sector in Cameroon and Laos. The collaboration will facilitate the understanding of Vietnamese competent authorities concerning practices exercised by private sector in these countries and compliance or non-compliance of this sector to legality requirements

d. The use of imported timber from Cameroon and Laos in Viet Nam. The collaboration will help the governments in Cameroon and Laos understand how the imported timber from their countries are used for what purposes. This will help encourage the Cameroonian and Lao governments to think about the products that serve Viet Nam market better

e. Regular information exchange. The information includes timber trade data between Viet Nam and Cameroon and between Viet Nam and Laos. The collaboration is also useful for the two sides to discuss and deploy joint activities to ensure the legality of the trade.

In addition, business-to-business exchanges also have the potentials in generating insights from local level practices by private sector from both supply and demand sides. These insights are important for policymaking processes. In summary, what strong political will from the governments and concerted efforts multi-stakeholders including the government, private sector, non-governmental organizations and development agencies are needed for achieving legal and sustainable timber trade among these countries.

Annex 1. Viet Nam's import values from major markets, 2019 – 2021 (USD)

Country	2019	2020	2020	2021
China	661,277,648	846,076,499	846,076,499	1,017,299,049
United States of America	342,158,361	321,333,028	321,333,028	325,814,862
Cameroon	283,529,016	215,965,210	215,965,210	181,321,029
Thailand	110,032,554	120,435,396	120,435,396	129,585,024
Chile	80,672,018	66,783,095	66,783,095	92,071,164
Russian Federation	29,646,413	56,873,757	56,873,757	55,054,692
Belgium	62,974,007	49,291,857	49,291,857	49,729,848
Brazil	71,085,529	63,579,238	63,579,238	122,318,495
Laos	52,109,845	56,621,164	56,621,164	105,548,566
New Zealand	69,711,917	65,790,307	65,790,307	68,425,995
Malaysia	71,108,390	52,466,925	52,466,925	64,385,934
Germany	46,983,715	35,036,975	35,036,975	41,542,372
Papua New Guinea	43,138,692	39,496,291	39,496,291	26,703,156
Netherlands	31,804,110	25,698,928	25,698,928	18,672,111
Nigeria	33,684,656	30,402,259	30,402,259	30,615,492
Gabon	39,844,088	22,476,979	22,476,979	23,044,264
Cambodia	32,589,297	8,126,569	8,126,569	10,825,004
Other	487,128,181	478,271,157	478,271,157	551,020,266
<b>Total import</b>	<b>2,549,478,435</b>	<b>2,554,725,635</b>	<b>2,554,725,635</b>	<b>2,913,977,324</b>