

## **1. Background**

From April 2009 UK Government timber procurement policy will change to only accept timber that has been verified as sustainable, or licensed under FLEGT agreements. From April 2015 only sustainable timber will be accepted.

In order to identify challenges to the practical implementation of the policy, and develop potential solutions to these, a consultation period was launched. This began on 5 July and will end on September the 27<sup>th</sup> 2007. CPET is coordinating the consultation and will develop and provide recommendations for practical implementation to Defra based on the comments received.

As a part of the consultation on the new policy a meeting was held with stakeholders from the UK timber trade. CPET facilitated the meeting which was hosted by the Timber Trade Federation.

### **Summary of the meeting**

Ruth Nussbaum from CPET provided a brief background for the meeting followed by a presentation on “FLEGT and why it matters to CPET” by Andy Roby from the Timber Trade Federation. After a brief update on CPET’s Construction Sector Pilot study by Sofie Tind Nielsen, Rachel Butler (CPET) presented the issues raised to date about the implementation of the policy to date as background for the discussion; these included the concern about exclusion of small forest owners, non-VPA countries and suppliers who are progressing towards sustainable. It was emphasised that CPET does not have the mandate to change the policy.

Following the presentations stakeholders were given an opportunity to raise further points, which were recorded and are outlined below.

## **2. Key issues raised by stakeholders**

### **Small Forest owners**

1. The certification of small forest management by e.g. FSC or PEFC was mentioned as way to prove sustainability. However the incentive for the UK small forest owner to be willing to ‘have someone checking he is doing a good job’ was questioned and there was a concern that the lack of a market would leave a lot of forests in the UK unmanaged.
2. Several participants raised the potential for the new policy to exclude small forest owners who are unable or reluctant to follow the certification route for commercial or operational reasons. Stakeholders were encouraged to provide evidence of this.
3. There were several suggestions on how it might be possible to assess and prove the sustainability of small forest management:
  - a. It was suggested that an assessment of national legislation related to forest management be carried out against the UK Governments sustainability criteria. Due to the issue of sovereignty there could be difficulties with this, but it would be considered. This option would probably require omitting the criterion for the development process where it is required that a balanced representation of stakeholder groups develops the definition of ‘sustainable’.

- b. It was suggested that an evaluation of national practices for small forests management be undertaken using international criteria for sustainability or the Forest Certification Assessment Guide developed by WWF and the World Bank to assess forest certification.
- c. An international scientific committee/body to assess risk for all countries was suggested to overcome the issue of one government judging another's national legislation.
- d. Assessment on the basis of country risk by using an independent mechanism such as Transparency International's Corruption Index was mentioned.
- e. For the UK it was suggested to use the 'overall' UKWAS criteria to assess the forests management using the felling licence as evidence
- f. It was also suggested that national reports (such as the USDA report) to prove or disprove sustainability. However, some felt that the reports may politically influenced and therefore unreliable.
- g. It was suggested that the lack of proof of sustainability for small forest owners has already proven to have had a commercial impact particularly on UK forests. Some government buyers have already switched supply away from domestic to imported timber.

### **Transition schemes**

- 4. Serious concern was expressed about the confusion generated by UK support (NGO's, DFID) for legality and transition schemes vs. policy.
- 5. It was suggested to re-instigate the "moving towards sustainable" category to include step-wise programmes such as GFTN, TFT etc

### **FLEGT**

- 6. It was highlighted by CPET that there is no equivalent initiative to the EU FLEGT licenses.
- 7. This 'FLEGT only' policy was criticised for not being in line with the rest of the European government procurement policies; therefore making harmonisation objectives difficult. It was suggested that CPET consult more formally with other EU countries implementing procurement policies.
- 8. The likelihood that the lack of FLEGT licensed timber by April 2009 could prohibit many from supplying the market was raised. At present it is estimated that Ghana and possibly Malaysia could be available and active, however Indonesia and Cameroon are not expected to be ready.
- 9. Trade representatives questioned the legality of accepting FLEGT only and to not allowing other proof of legality.
- 10. It was suggested that even if a country wants to start VPA negotiations the EU may not have the resources to take this forward immediately; effectively excluding that country from the UK market.
- 11. Concern was raised on the traceability of the FLEGT licensed timber once it has entered the EU. It was deemed likely that it would follow a normal audited chain of custody process.

### **General comments and concerns**

- 12. Trade expressed concern that there had been almost no consultation prior to the publication of the new policy and requested that an impact assessment of the new policy should be carried out by Defra.
- 13. The lack of data on Government timber consumption was also expressed as a concern and it was highlighted that it would be difficult to carry out an impact assessment with out it.

**Stakeholders are encouraged to submit written submissions to CPET (details available <http://www.proforest.net/cpet/review-comments-1/current-reviews-and-consultations/>).**