

Guidance on effective ways to work with Chinese officials and suppliers

INTRODUCTION

This briefing paper seeks to provide guidance to European government officials and private companies on effective ways to work with Chinese officials and suppliers on issues related to illegal logging and responsible sourcing.

It was produced as an output of a training attachment programme to the UK by two Chinese government officials from the State Forestry Administration (SFA). The attachment programme, which took place between September and November 2008 was funded by the Department for International Development (DFID) of the UK Government, and hosted by ProForest, a UK based organisation which supports sustainable natural resource management. The principal objective of this attachment was for the Chinese officials to further develop their knowledge of forest governance and trade and, in particular, of EU programmes to combat illegal logging.

This paper was produced by ProForest, incorporating suggestions from the Chinese officials.

KEY ELEMENTS

There are 3 main elements that public and private sectors in Europe need to consider when working with

Chinese officials and suppliers on issues concerning illegal logging and responsible sourcing.

1. UNDERSTAND THE LOCAL CONTEXT

It is very important to understand the local situation, and the context in which discussions around timber sourcing, and certification are taking place.

Despite being the world's third largest economy¹, China is going through a development phase and is using its natural resources to develop its economy. Even though many NGOs (both international and local) are active in the region, they receive relatively little attention from the media and the general public. Chinese companies feel less pressure from media and NGOs in relation to their environmental performance, than their counterparts in Europe. The general public are more concerned with health and safety aspects of products, rather than environmental issues. For example, the Chinese government has 'green procurement guidelines' which cover different types of products including timber. However, they are principally related to health and safety issues such as chemical use in MDF, and do not

include any requirements to guarantee the purchase of timber from legal or sustainable sources.

Nevertheless, in recent years, the Chinese government and private sector have become more aware of illegal logging, forest certification and responsible timber purchasing and have made efforts in these areas. The Chinese government has worked extensively on the definition of illegal logging and is exploring ways to demonstrate legality. China cooperation with the EU on FLEG has been formalised since end of January 2009. The Chinese government also actively promotes forest certification; a draft government national certification standard was produced and some pilot testing carried out. However, as yet there is no accreditation mechanism to permit certification bodies to begin carrying out audits. Both FSC and PEFC have established national offices in China. The FSC National Initiative was launched in March 2006, and is currently developing an FSC national forest management standard – in fact there are already 1 million hectares of FSC certified forests in China and more than 650 Chain of Custody (CoC) certificate holders².

Companies have started paying attention to responsible timber sourcing, but there is little experience of how to implement it in practice.

Ms Wang and Mr Chen from the Chinese State Forest Administration on a visit to Finland during the training attachment programme.



Therefore, when working with Chinese government officials and private sector, it is essential to explain ideas and concepts such as definition of illegal logging and responsible sourcing in precise language. Explain to them why it is important to both China and the EU, and also explain that they can play an important role in making changes. At the same time also try to develop mutual understanding and try to understand their concerns and interests.



ProForest staff on a supplier audit in China.

illegal logging and forest certification. They have contacts with Chinese companies who have started to implement responsible timber sourcing.

NGOs operating in China may be able to put you in touch with companies which source timber responsibly.

Industry associations are relatively new in China. However, they are now actively working with their members to promote responsible timber sourcing.

Chinese Forest Industry associations can help disseminate your message to hundreds or thousands of companies effectively.

2. SPEAK THE LANGUAGE

Language can be a barrier to communications. If you want to communicate and work with Chinese companies it is recommendable to find someone who can speak Chinese. Some European companies when asking their suppliers about forest sources fail to obtain relevant information because the Chinese companies do not fully understand what they want. In an effort to respond the suppliers may send other documents and certificates which do not relate to forest sources. When communicating with Chinese suppliers use Chinese where possible and, make sure to use clear language to explain ideas and concepts such as the definition of illegal logging, forest certification and timber tracking, and state clearly your requirements such as types of documents required.

In general, government officials and company representatives feel more comfortable speaking Chinese than English as they can express their ideas freely. Meetings and discussions conducted in Chinese will enhance mutual understanding and generate more fruitful discussions.

3. GET THE RIGHT CONTACTS

The State Forestry Administration (SFA) is the main government body dealing with forestry issues including illegal logging and forest certification. There are 11 departments within the SFA, and several affiliate organisations (e.g. the Chinese Academy of Forestry - CAF). The Department of Development Planning and Finance Management, and the Department of International Cooperation are working on illegal logging issues.

Use the Chinese officials who took part in the UK visit to access the right contacts in SFA.

In addition, there are several NGOs that are actively working in China on

KEY CONTACT PERSONS³

Organization	Contact persons and details	Areas of interest
Government		
State Forest Administration	Mr CHEN Jaiwen ⁴ , Department of Development Planning and Finance Management email: cjw299@163.com Ms WANG Hua ⁴ , Department of International Cooperation email: wanghuasfa@163.com	Illegal logging
Chinese Academy of Forestry	Professor LI Zhiyong email: zyli@caf.forestry.ac.cn tel: +86 10 6288 8311	Trade and forest certification
NGOs		
WWF China	Mr JIN Zhonghao email: zhjin@wwfchina.org tel: +86 10 6522 7100 ext 3284	Forest certification, illegal logging, responsible sourcing
TNC China	Ms CHEN Xiaoqian email: china@tnc.org tel: +86 10 8532 4710	Forest certification, illegal logging, responsible sourcing
TFT China	Mr DU Lewis email: lewis.du@tropicalforesttrust.com tel: +86 10 8446 7353	Forest certification, illegal logging, responsible sourcing
IUCN China	Ms DONG Ke email: dongke@iucn.org.cn	Illegal logging
Forest Trends	Ms SUN Xiufang email: xsun@forest-trends.org	Illegal Logging
Industry associations		
China Forestry Industry	Mr SHI Feng email: zyb-shifeng@263.net tel: +86 10 8423 8373	Forest certification
China Timber Distribution Association	Ms LING Xiaping email: xiaping_lin@sina.com tel: +86 10 6839 2603	Illegal logging, responsible sourcing
China National Forest Products Industry Association	Mr ZHANG Sen Lin email: zsl306@vip.sina.com tel: +86 10 8423 9215	Illegal logging, responsible sourcing
China National Furniture Association	Mr ZHU Changling email: wszcl@263.net tel: +86 10 8776 6823	Illegal logging, responsible sourcing
Forest certification schemes		
FSC	Ms YANG Xiangjun email: x.yang@fsc.org tel: +86 10 8446 7717 Mr Alistair MONUMENT, technical director email: china@fsc.org tel: +86 13 6089 67508	Forest certification
PEFC	Mr YU Benson email: beson.yu@pefcasia.org tel: +86 10 6515 6182	Forest certification

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1. Financial Times, 14th January 2009. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/8d9337be-e245-11dd-b1dd-0000779fd2ac.html>
2. January 2009 www.fsc.org; February 2009 www.fsc-info.org
3. Please note that the list of contacts is for reference only, it is not an exhaustive list.
4. Mr Chen and Ms Wang participated in the training attachment programme.