Representatives of farmers and landowners from across the country have suggested that 40% out of the 50% revenue allocated to the Forestry Commission (FC) as timber rights fees of timber harvested from farms should be given to them as compensation instead of the Commission. Knowing that they are selling the timber means it’s harvested,” he noted.

Tree tenure concerns the legal rights of people to trees and their products. These rights include the right to plant trees, the right to use the products, the right to exclude others, and the right to sell the products.

At a Contact Group Meeting organised by Civic Response at Larhe to solicit contributions and inputs of farmers and landowners into ongoing tree tenure reforms, the group noted that tree tenure reform is critical.

According to them, farmers and landowners labour in nurturing the trees on their farms right from nursery to harvesting and therefore must benefit accordingly.
Friends of the Earth-Ghana (FOE)-a civil society organisation in the forest sector, has raised concerns over the disbursement of benefits accrued from Social Responsibility Agreements (SRA) to forest fringe communities.

According to FOE-Ghana, most traditional leaders perceive SRA benefit as their own, denying communities of its direct benefits. This subsequently affects the morale of the people to assist with forest protection because of beliefs that the benefits accumulated would not be used for community welfare. FOE asserted that, it becomes more complicated when SRA benefits are made in cash donations particularly in communities where they have history of misappropriation or embezzlement of community funds.

It is also observed that most of the officers of the Forest Services Division who are suppose to be mediators for the SRA negotiation do not effectively play that role. Some also tend to be on the side of the Timber Right Holders, leading to improper negotiation. Another challenge has been the unwillingness on the part of the FSD to release adequate information on permits and volume of trees to be felled by the Timber Right Holders. This leads to a lack of transparency as communities mostly donot know the basis upon which the five per cent is calculated.

The organisation perceived that non-adherence to the provisions made under the SRA document such as the grounds on which negotiations are made, the determination of communities and the fulfillment of the agreements, result in small value of SRA which eventually cannot be used for significant projects that the entire community can benefit or directly relate to.

FOE-Ghana is however calling for the compliance of the Code of conduct portion of the SRA which stipulates among other things the employment of indigenes by logging companies; hence any threat to the forest resources will be seen as threat to their livelihoods.

Social Responsibility Agreements provide firms with a licence to conduct their operations in an area where there is no forest and as such they conduct their operations in the interest of the community.

Fiscal obligations of SRA are often pegged at not more than 5% of the value of timber which in turn is not much incentive to really protect the forest or the timber right holder.

The concept of sustainable forest management, the support of logging companies actively get into it, also as recognized by the community. It is a win-win situation as there is no reward to communities for their participation.

Moving forward, FOE-Ghana is calling on the logging companies to understand the rationale behind the initiative and recommend also, the need to address the shortcomings to enable it to serve its right purpose.

Source: Friends of the Earth-Ghana

Real Time Monitoring; the Journey so far

The bid to tap into the positives of technology and aid forest fringe stakeholders in the fight against illegal forest activities in Ghana necessitated a partnership between Friends of the Earth Ghana and Rain Forest Foundation, UK in the implementation of a project titled "Community Based Real-Time forest monitoring".

After almost two years of piloting this project in Ghana, we take a look at the implementation process so far.

FC Staff be Ghana Rights - Farmers

Continued from page 1

Although off-reserve millionaires benefit from off-reserve millionaires' farms.

Again, there was...
Women’s Roles in Forestry Activities Gain Recognition

In a bid to address the needs of women who engage in economic activities bordering on the production of timber as well as the processing and sale of timber products, Tropenbos Ghana has launched a new project aimed at researching into the peculiar problems that confront them and finding solutions to them.

The project, entitled, “An analysis of women’s engagement along Ghana’s timber value chain” seeks to generate and share empirical data on women’s roles, resource implications, and potential implementation strategies.

The project, which brought together the Ministry of Forestry and the Water Resources Commission, as well as the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and the Forestry Commission, is one of the first to be funded by the Forestry Commission’s Special Development Fund.

It is being implemented by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the National Commission for UNESCO.

The one year project, which began in January 2011, aims to improve women’s participation in the timber industry and to identify sustainable and empowering value-chain strategies that can be used to increase women’s involvement in the timber trade.

New Regulation to stop Illegal Deforestation and Promote Legal Timber Trade Passes

Ghana has passed a new regulation that aims to stop illegal deforestation and reduce the sale of illegal timber.

The legislative instrument passed by parliament on Friday (3rd November) is part of reforms to ensure that all of Ghana’s timber is legal and to promote better management of the country’s forests.

With illegal deforestation threatening the country’s forest resources, the new law seeks to stop the illegal trade of timber.

When the law was passed by the EU, it was welcomed by the industry, as well as government officials, as a step towards sustainable forest management.

Taylor's Wood has welcomed the new legislation, saying it will help to maintain the quality of Ghana's timber.

Source: The Guardian

©CF Participants at the Legal Working Group Meeting
Timber companies have been urged to welcome capacity building exercises on FLEGT compliance. According to Mr. Agyemang Prempeh, Communication officer of the Forestry Commission, the FC is earnestly working to make FLEGT licensing a reality in Ghana and thus, companies who fail to comply would be found wanting.

Mr. Agyemang Prempeh made the remark at a project mid-term review meeting organized by the Nature and Development Foundation (NDF) in Accra.

He said, from the onset of FLEGT-VPA discussions and implementations, industry has been sitting on the fence with the assumption that, FLEGT licensing would never be a possibility in Ghana. "I can say for a fact that, FLEGT is a pursuing goal for the FC; so industries, gird yourselves."

The meeting reviewed the FAO, EU, Sweden Sverige and UKaid funded project, "Innovation for improved forest governance in west Africa: Demand and supply side solutions in a changing landscape."

Source: Nature and Development Foundation

Capacity of Community Forest Monitors

Twenty-five community representatives have been trained to undertake community level forest monitoring. The training was aimed at building the capacity of representatives to use a mobile application to collect data on forest infringements.

Civil Society in Ghana believes that a well-organised and structured Civil Society-led Independent Forest Monitoring (CSIFM) can improve transparency in the short term while contributing to the development of a sound legislative and regulatory framework for responsible forest management.

The challenge had been how to operationalize this system without alienating communities who are the main intermediaries between what happens on the field and national level Civil Society actors who want to co-ordinate these processes.

Civic Response through extensive market, transparent supply of and procurement in increasing community engagement in forest management.

A representative from the Western Region provided pictorial evidence of illegal logging that took place a few days ago, after a tree was destroyed.
Real Time Monitoring; the Journey

Continued from page 2

forest resource which amongst other things led to the signing of twenty SRAs. Fifteen of the SRAs have been fully implemented and the other five are in various stages of implementation.

The project has also succeeded in fostering a better collaboration between the resource managers, that is the Forestry Commission and other stakeholders like the communities, law enforcement agencies, traditional authority and the judiciary in the beneficiary districts through the several stakeholder fora that were held as part of implementation activities.

Finally, Nkawie and Goaso Forest Services Divisions have attested to being aided by the project to arrest several trucks of illegal lumber and logs as well as prosecution of some offenders which have yielded a reduction in illegal activities in these districts.

The five basic stages of real time forest monitoring which are; collection of data, transmission of data, storage of data, verification of data and enforcement have been tested and implemented and proven to be not only doable but also very beneficial and crucial to the fight against illegal logging and ensuring sustainable forest management.

The project also highlighted the numerous benefits that will accrue to fringe communities if they go full out in their involvement in forest management.

It is envisaged that the Real Time Monitoring systems could be adopted nationally by the Forestry Commission (national level) and at the Forest Services Division level to contribute to law enforcement through prompt reporting and follow up on infractions, improve transparency in terms.

Source: FoE

Forest Fringe Communities Call For Change Over the Centralisation of Tree Planting

"Strengthening the Capacity of Non-State Actors to Improve FLEGT-VPA and REDD+ Processes in Western Africa" also known as the Non-State Actors (NSA) Project being implemented by Tropenbos Ghana.

It was aimed at enhancing their skills in monitoring initiatives in the forestry sector designed to promote forest governance and advocating for better laws and policies in the forestry sector. The two initiatives are:

- Developing capacities for forest governance
- Community Management of Forest Resources (CMFR)

There are also some concerns that decentralisation is not the solution but rather the problem in terms of access to resources for the community, as the programme aims to decentralise during the implementation phase.

Other concerns include the sustainability of the project and the empowerment of the community.
SAVANNAH DEFORESTATION

Two national development activities led to the issuance of SALVAGE PERMITS by the Forestry Commission for wood companies to collect lying logs within the Savannah Zone of Ghana:

1. The first Salvage Permits were issued in 2008 during the Bui Hydro Power Plant construction.

2. More permits were issued during the Fufulso-Sawla 147.5km road construction in 2012.

Factors driving Rosewood harvesting & trade in Ghana despite bans in 2014 & 2017 include:

1. High Demand from China
2. Poor Compliance of Laws & Regulations

NEED FOR ACTION

Since 2008, illegal logging of ROSEWOOD & other HARDWOODS have expanded within the savannah zone, with more SALVAGE PERMITS being issued.

Over 29 companies are currently engaged in the Rosewood trade.

Logging activities within the landscape affect water resources, livelihoods, and impacts of climate change.

Rosewood is listed on the IUCN Red List as Endangered Species. This classification indicates that sustainable management areas need to be found.
Lombok, first UK Company for breaching EU timber regulations

Furniture seller Lombok has become the first UK Company to be fined for breaking the law that stops illegal timber accessing the UK market.

Lombok has been fined £5,000 by a criminal court for failing to check the risk of illegal timber in its supply chain (due diligence). The company had placed a sideboard on the market which was imported from India without carrying out the required due diligence assessment, breaking UK and EU law.

ClientEarth forest lawyer, Diana de Rouvre said, “this decision sets an important precedent for the UK timber industry and shows the UK remains committed to the principles in the EU Timber Regulation. This effort needs to be replicated across the EU to stop illegal timber products being placed on the market.

She said “it’s possible we will see more companies breaching the law and companies not complying with the law.”

The EU law is designed to prevent illegal timber products from entering the market, and to reduce the risk of illegal timber chains.

This is not Lombok’s first warning as it was fined £1,000 in 2015.

Over the past year, stronger EU policies have been introduced in some countries like Sweden and Portugal, which imposed fines on companies like Lombok, for not being able to trace timber they imported from the EUTR. Spanish companies were also fined £1m for breaking the law.

Source: ClientEarth

Belgium facing legal action for breaking illegal logging

The European Commission has launched legal action against Belgium because it is breaking the EU’s law against illegal logging. This is the first time the Commission has taken action against an EU Member State for not enforcing the EU Timber Regulation (EUTR) properly.

“Belgium is an important entry point for tropical timber into the EU. The lack of proper enforcement in Belgium jeopardises efforts made by other countries. It also undermines timber producing countries which have signed trade agreements with the EU to ensure their timber exports are carrying out the required due diligence assessment, breaking UK and EU law.

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Timber Industry Players Call For Free Zones

Timber industry players from Ghana, La Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia were taken round industries in the Western and Ashanti regions to network and seek areas of common interest in the business.

The group of about forty visited the Mondial Veneer Company Ltd, John Bitin and Company Ltd in the Western Region, Woodlow and Payap Ltd and Sir Charles Wood Processing Ltd at New Edubiase in the Ashanti region. In Kumasi, the group was at the Logs and Lumber Ltd. (LLL), where they went round the plant to see the processes through which timber from the forests is processed into veneer and other wood products for export and the local market.

He explained that proven to use, thus the need for the incidence of the Free Zones Act.

"I think government should address this as well as the stakeholders. The Free Zones Act on lumber companies will be premised on the local market. This has resulted in the neglect of the administrative supply and price of the products."

According Mr. Mustapha Seidu, Director of NDF, the resort to purchasing illegal wood could be eliminated if timber merchants were given the opportunity to buy from companies under the Free Zones Board (FZB).

According to the stakeholders, the imposition of some 40% tax and levies on wood products from such companies is contributory factor to the patronage of illegal wood in the country.

The stakeholders who spoke during a tour of some wood processing companies in the country organized by the Nature and Development Foundation (NDF), were unanimous in the belief that, the elimination of such taxes would encourage them to buy quality timber from those companies.

About NDF

The Nature & Development Foundation (NDF) was legally established in November 2013 in Ghana. It was born out of the long presence of WWF in Ghana and across the West African region as a non-profit organization, limited by guarantee.

The foundation has a mission to help build a society in which human development and nature conservation complement each other. It also believes that, ways exist to balance the needs of development with sustainable land uses that do not threaten forest biodiversity and forest dependent livelihoods of the region.

About ClientEarth

ClientEarth is a public interest environmental law organisation, founded in 2007. Their work combines scientific and policy analysis to create practical solutions to the most pressing environmental problems (www.clientearth.org).

ClientEarth’s Climate & Forests programme works to influence the development, implementation and enforcement of legal frameworks and policies. They seek to improve the operation and effectiveness of law in the EU and in non-EU focus countries with a view to minimising the impacts of agriculture, extractive industries and illegal logging on forests. They focus both on the substance and procedure of laws so that they become effective and equitable mechanisms to protect forests. Improved use and management of forests can contribute to a reduction in deforestation and to

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