



WWF

EU

2015

# Illegal timber in the EU

## Why the EU Timber Regulation should be improved

# THE PROBLEM OF ILLEGAL LOGGING

**Illegal logging** is a major threat to the world's forests, and to the biodiversity and people they support. It destroys wildlife habitats, increases greenhouse-gas emissions and depletes the natural resources that more than a billion of the world's poorest people depend on.

It also undermines development and legitimate businesses. In developing countries, illegal logging causes an estimated loss of more than US\$10 billion per year from public lands alone. Another US\$5 billion is lost annually by governments due to evaded taxes, fees and other income that legal forestry would bring. Illegal timber supplies also distort markets.

Illegal logging accounts for 15-30% of global forest production, with a turnover valued at US\$30-100 billion. In key tropical countries the rate is higher still, with an estimated 50-90% of forest products by volume sourced illegally. Illegal logging is one of the main drivers of forest loss in several regions most at risk of large-scale deforestation, including the Amazon, Borneo, the Congo Basin, the Greater Mekong, New Guinea and Sumatra. But it's also a threat within the EU itself, including some of Europe's last remaining old-growth forests.

## IMPACTS OF ILLEGAL LOGGING



Loss of habitats and biodiversity



Greenhouse-gas emissions



Threatens livelihoods and resources



Undermines rule of law



Loss of revenue to governments

**SIMPLY PUT, ILLEGAL LOGGING IS A MASSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEM. AND IT HASN'T GONE AWAY.**

# ILLEGAL WOOD: STILL LEGAL?

The EU is one of the world's largest consumers of wood, importing timber and wood-based products worth €54 billion in 2013. And it's been a leader in tackling the problem of illegal logging. The EU Timber Regulation (EUTR), which came into force in 2013, was a great step forward. For the first time, legislation was put in place to prevent wood from illegal origins being sold on the EU market.

Unfortunately, the way the legislation is implemented, applied and enforced varies greatly across Europe. For the EUTR to be effective, authorities need to devote resources to engaging businesses and carrying out checks. There should be a coherent approach to applying and enforcing the EUTR across the EU, and national legislation needs to include strict penalties to deter illegal behaviour.

In addition, many products that contain wood are not covered by the EUTR. Research by WWF has found potentially illegal timber in a wide range of products, from furniture to greetings cards. The majority of "out of scope" products are imported from China, where large-scale imports of illegal timber are well documented.

**This year, the EUTR is being reviewed. This presents an opportunity for the European Commission to fix these loopholes and ensure once and for all that governments, consumers and businesses in the EU are not contributing to illegal logging.**

## LOOPHOLES

More than half of all wood imports by value are not covered by the EUTR

## WEAKNESSES

Countries aren't interpreting and enforcing the legislation consistently

# WHAT WE'RE ASKING

By strengthening the EU Timber Regulation, the EU can use its influence to help stamp out illegal logging, and to fulfil a number of its internal and international commitments.

As a signatory party to the UN Declaration on Forests, the EU has pledged to “at least halve the rate of loss of natural forests globally by 2020 and strive to end natural forest loss by 2030”. The Sustainable Development Goals, which apply to all EU countries, include a commitment to sustainably manage forests. And the EU’s 7th Environmental Action Programme highlights the importance that the EU uses its leverage to reduce the pressure on the global natural resource base.

## **WWF IS CALLING ON THE EU TO:**

- **ENSURE THE EUTR IS EFFECTIVELY AND CONSISTENTLY IMPLEMENTED, APPLIED AND ENFORCED ACROSS ALL 28 MEMBER STATES.**
- **EXPAND ITS SCOPE SO THAT ALL WOOD-BASED PRODUCTS ARE COVERED.**

For more information visit [wwf.eu/forest](http://wwf.eu/forest)

# ILLEGAL LOGGING HOTSPOTS

## TROPICAL FORESTS

Tropical forests cover less than 7% of the Earth's surface, yet they are home to well over half of all living things on land. Despite their importance, they continue to decline. A recent WWF study warns that up to 170 million hectares of forest could be lost in 11 key regions between 2010 and 2030 – equivalent to the disappearance of a forest stretching across Germany, France, Spain and Portugal. Illegal logging is a key driver of poverty, biodiversity loss and deforestation in regions including Indonesia, the Congo Basin and the Greater Mekong.

## RUSSIAN FAR EAST

The Russian Far East has the world's last large tracts of temperate forests. Large-scale logging of ancient oak, ash, linden and elm forests in Russia threatens the livelihoods of indigenous communities and important habitats, including of the last remaining 500 Amur (Siberian) tigers. Between 50% and 80% of timber from the Russian Far East is believed to be logged illegally. Almost all of this timber crosses the border into China to be manufactured into flooring and furniture, some of which is re-exported to Europe.

## WITHIN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Illegal logging affects the EU directly too, particularly in the ancient forests of central and south east Europe. In Bulgaria, illegal operations made up around a quarter of all logging in 2006-2013, generating hidden revenue of over €50 million per year. In Romania, significant progress has been made in recent years to address illegal logging practices, but the issue remains a challenge for the coming period. Romania holds around 60% of Europe's remaining old-growth forests, which are home to more large mammals, including brown bear, wolves and lynx, than are found in the rest of the EU combined.

## SPECIES THREATENED BY ILLEGAL LOGGING



Amur tiger –  
Russian Far East



Orang-utan –  
Borneo, Sumatra



Forest elephant –  
Congo Basin

# 73%

of Europeans didn't know it was still possible to buy products made of illegally logged timber in the EU.

# 85%

of Europeans want stronger measures in place to make sure they can't unwittingly buy products made from illegally logged timber.

# 77%

of Europeans think the European Commission should take action to ensure the regulation is extended to cover all wood-based products.

# 82%

of Europeans think the European Commission should take action to ensure that the regulation is applied fully and consistently across all EU countries.

Data from a YouGov survey of over 10,000 people in 9 EU countries, August 2015

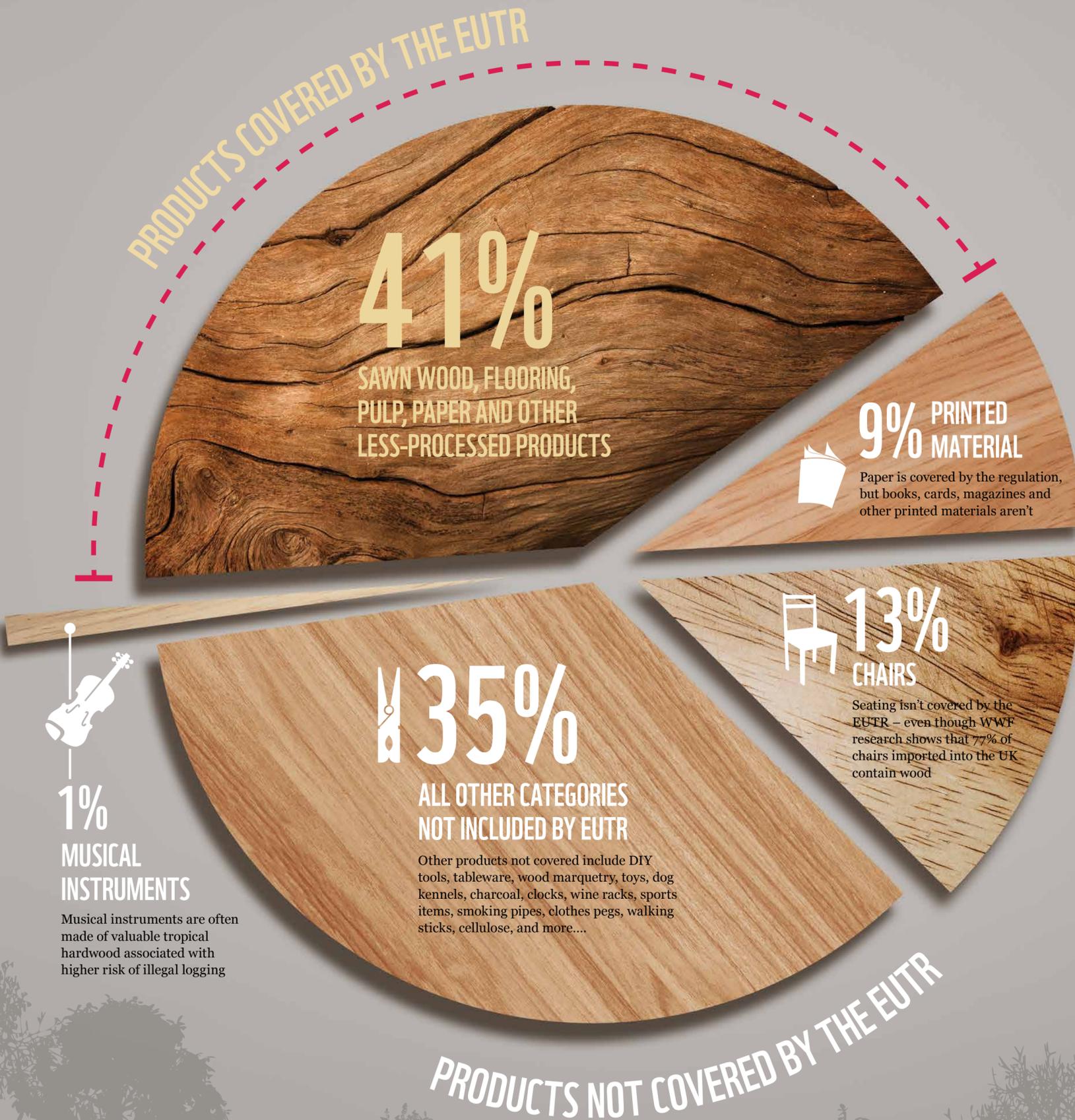


**Why we are here**

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

[wwf.eu](http://wwf.eu)

# WOOD-BASED PRODUCTS IMPORTED INTO THE EU BY VALUE<sup>1</sup>



## ILLEGAL TIMBER ON SALE IN THE EU?

Illegal wood is likely to still be on sale in the EU, according to tests carried out by WWF on products that fall outside the scope of the EUTR:

-  An analysis by WWF-Belgium of 10 children's books printed in China found 1 book containing mixed tropical hardwood (MTH) – which means it contained material from a natural tropical forest which can carry a risk of being illegally logged (2013/14).
-  Testing of garden furniture and other wood products on sale in Germany found high-risk tropical wood and wrongly declared wood types in 8 out of 13 randomly selected products. This included endangered tropical timber from Africa and South-East Asia (2014).
-  In the UK, 7 out of 17 companies tested sold products made of high-risk species. There was a discrepancy between what the company stated the product was made of and what the laboratory results found in 8 of the 26 products tested. No company provided documentary evidence that they had carried out due diligence to check whether the wood in question was from a legal source (2015).
-  WWF-UK found MTH in 3 out of 20 greetings cards tested from UK high-street retailers (2015).
-  WWF-NL tested 42 timber products and found that in 18% of cases, the timber species declared by the operator was different to that found in the research (2015).

## THE VOICE OF INDUSTRY

*“The EUTR needs to be strengthened so it will be implemented and enforced effectively in all EU member states. At present, competent authorities often lack resources, training and coordination at EU level to ensure a coherent approach to the way the EUTR is implemented. And it remains unclear how many operators have comprehensive due diligence in place. It's essential that competent authorities take a coherent and firm approach towards the interpretation of the legislation, as well as applying harmonized penalties and sanctions, and ensuring there is sufficient capacity for enforcement across the EU member states.*”

*Unfair competition, caused by widely varying enforcement practices among EU member states and the lack of coverage of a number of timber products in the EUTR, harms European companies that behave responsibly and attempt to play by the rules.*

*We urge the European Commission to seize the opportunity of the upcoming review to deliver a strong EUTR that can halt the trade in illegal timber. Our dependencies on global forest resources are at risk if the European market does not support a vision for comprehensively legal, responsible forest trade.”*

From the 2015 Industry Statement for the Review of the EU Timber Regulation, signed by producers, purchasers and retailers of timber and timber products – see [wwf.eu/forest/industrystatement](http://wwf.eu/forest/industrystatement)