



Submission by the
Forest Industries Association of Tasmania
to the

**Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry**

On

**Bringing Down the Axe on
Illegal Logging
- A Practical Approach**





OVERVIEW

The Forest Industries Association of Tasmania (FIAT) welcome the opportunity to provide input on proposed domestic and international measures and actions provided in the Australian Government Discussion Paper titled "Bringing Down the Axe on Illegal Logging - A Practical Approach."

ABOUT FIAT

The Forest Industries Association of Tasmania (FIAT) is an industry association formed in 1983 to represent the interests of processors of Tasmanian forest products. FIAT was formed out of a predecessor Association, the Tasmanian Timber Association. FIAT and TTA collectively have provided representational services to the Tasmanian timber industry for in excess of 60 years. Our members' activities are diverse and include:

- the production of veneers, hardwood and softwood timber, pulp and paper
- woodchip production and export
- plantation and native forest management.

FIAT's 18 member businesses include all of the State's larger processors of forest products. They utilise a significant proportion of the crown sawlog output as well as all of the veneer produced in the State. FIAT Members' activities account for more than 75% of the gross value of production in the forest and wood products industry in Tasmania.

Included within the FIAT membership are the State's largest industrial forestry Companies that account for the vast bulk of plantation development and management enterprises on private land in Tasmania and the largest native forest management enterprises in the private sector in this State and as a consequence we have a significant interest in the creation and application of a climate change strategy.





FIAT's role is described in our Annual Report as follows: -

“Role

In addressing its first objective, FIAT's role is characterised by helping to create the right external environment within which industry has to operate. This has two main dimensions - the policy environment and the public image of the industry in the eyes of the community.

The policy environment centres on government legislation and regulations which determine the limits to what industry can do. The policy environment must be tackled at both the Federal and State Level.

Industry's public image rests on public opinion and the various factors which influence that opinion. This is important because public opinion has a strong bearing on the development of Government policy.

In addressing its second objective, FIAT's role is to facilitate discussion and joint action among its membership, and to project membership position in wider forums as appropriate.





MEASURE 1 - Raise market and consumer awareness about illegal logging and the Australian Government's policy response.

FIAT are supportive of this measure and consider it to be of vital importance to combating the issue of illegal logging. FIAT agree that greater awareness and understanding of the issues by industry and consumers is needed to bring about a change in purchasing preferences. FIAT believe that education programs will be important for importers, wholesalers and consumers as reported in the discussion paper, but also believe that there are other participants in the supply chain that will be critical to target in any campaign that raises the awareness of illegal logging and, more importantly the use of sustainably produced forest products.

Australia has a large forest estate that has been certified as being sustainably managed through internationally recognised certification schemes. It is crucial that this message is promulgated throughout the Australian supply chain.

A critical component of any communication campaign is the funding. If the Australian Government is going to work with industry to develop education programs funding arrangements will need to be determined. The forest industry in Tasmania has already started to raise awareness of illegal logging in the community through the production of information posters and brochures that have been provided to schools and the local community. Also, a large proportion of Tasmania's production forests are certified as sustainably managed through the Australian Forestry Standard, and have commenced work on a communications program to raise awareness of this. Much of the communications work that is currently being undertaken for the AFS is being undertaken in a cooperative manner on a national scale.





MEASURE 2 - Foster and develop the domestic industry, particularly in areas such as high value timbers and value added products.

FIAT are supportive of this measure and believe that fostering and developing the domestic industry will reduce the reliance on imported timber. By expanding Australia's forest industry, we will be able to produce more timber to meet our own needs and thus

The WWF's Asia Pacific 2005 report *The Ecological Footprint and Natural Wealth* has demonstrated that Australia's forests are being grown at a rate 4 ½ times more than they are being consumed. In other words, we are consuming forestry resources at 4½ times less than the sustainable rate."

As recorded in the report, Australia is one of the only Asia Pacific countries with an 'ecological surplus', meaning Australia is using much less of its natural resources than its 'biocapacity' overall.

The Jaakko Poyry report indicates that "Australia can replace some of these imports from its own resources but not all and further reservations of Australian forests from production could exacerbate the imports of illegal or suspect products."





MEASURE 3 - Work with industry to develop voluntary measures that help to gauge the legality of imported forest products.





MEASURE 4 - Develop voluntary certification and product chain-of-custody schemes for Australian forest products.





MEASURE 5 - Develop purchasing guidelines for the public and private sectors.





MEASURE 6 - Work with other countries to improve forest management practices and increase the supply of legally sourced and certified forest products.

The majority of the problems in illegal logging appear to emanate from countries with developing economies or economies in transition. A report prepared for the American Forest and Paper Association reports that ‘ illegal logging is primarily a symptom of unclear and poorly enforced forest tenure, weak political institutions, corruption, inadequate natural resources planning and monitoring and lax enforcement of sovereign laws and regulations. The problem appears to be most acute in countries without private forest ownership or clearly controlled tenure. Ambiguous forest tenure is a major impediment to legality as there is less incentive to protect assets from theft and destruction.’”

The report also notes that “some groups have advocated measures to restrict the international trade of wood and paper products from countries with timber of suspicious or unknown origin. Policy advocates differ on whether an emphasis should be placed on capacity building efforts or on influencing trade or consumption of suspicious products in the importing countries.”

JP note that “trade restrictions or bans on imports are unlikely to be successful; as Australia’s impact on global and Asian demand is so small that illegal products would be directed to other markets. These bans would adversely impact on the many traders who have been operating legitimately in this market and may inadvertently remove many products that do originate from plantations, sustainably managed native forest or even recycled timbers (which are common in furniture).”





MEASURE 7 - Increase collaboration with countries in our region to help combat illegal logging.





MEASURE 8 - Promote policies and strategies at international forums that encourage greater use of legal and sustainable forest management practices, certification and product chain-of-custody schemes.





CONCLUSION

Once again FIAT would like to thank the Australian Government for this opportunity to provide feedback and comment on the discussion paper regarding illegal logging.

FIAT are interested in being a part of any further consultation process that is undertaken by the government. Please contact FIAT should you require clarification regarding any part of this submission.





REFERENCES

Australian Government.(2006) *"Bringing Down the Axe on Illegal Logging – A Practical Approach. An Australian Government Discussion Paper."* November 2006.

Jaakko Poyry Consulting (Asia Pacific) Pty Ltd. (2005) *"Overview of Illegal Logging."*

Seneca Creek Associates, LLC and Wood Resources International, LLC (2004) *"Illegal Logging and Global Wood Markets: The Competitive Impacts on the US Wood Products Industry."* Report prepared for the American Forest & Paper Association. October, 2004.

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