



Responsible Asia Forestry and Trade

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Photo: TNC/Moray McLeish

A forest concession worker in Indonesia attaches a barcode for timber tracking.

BACKGROUND

The tropical forests in Asia are among the most biologically rich in the world. In Borneo, for example, a mere 1.5 forested acres can be home to more tree species than all of North America. However, due to illegal logging, expansion of oil palm plantations and increasing development, forests are being lost at an alarming rate.

This forest exploitation comes at a high environmental and economic cost at both local and national levels. Deforestation and changes in land use are estimated to produce 20% or more of total annual global carbon emissions, contributing significantly to global warming. It also undermines good governance and the social fabric of communities.

The Asia-Pacific region is home to half the world's population, with growing demands for timber, wildlife products and other forest resources. As the world's largest producer and consumer of tropical timber, this region shapes the market worldwide.

TRANSFORMING THE TROPICAL TIMBER TRADE

Recognizing the importance of sustainable management of Asia's forest resources, USAID supports the Responsible Asia Forestry and Trade (RAFT) program. RAFT was developed to promote responsible timber trade and the sustainable management of forest resources and biodiversity in Asia. The program brings together nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), governments and private businesses to transform the tropical timber trade.

RAFT builds on the success of the USAID-sponsored Global Development Alliance in Indonesia—which helped develop national standards for the legal timber trade—and applies lessons learned on a regional scale. RAFT works with forest producers in Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Papua New Guinea. RAFT also works in China, Japan, Singapore, Thailand, the European Union and the US to address policies that promote the legal timber trade.

APPROACH

The RAFT program works to transform the tropical timber market through a partnership with NGOs, foundations, international organizations, and businesses.

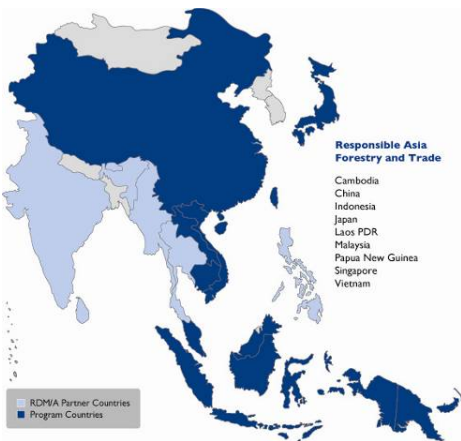




Photo: USAID/RDMA

Preventing forest degradation, shown here, through sustainable forest management and reduced impact logging practices can help reduce carbon emissions from the forestry sector.

The initiative aims to increase regional timber trade from legal sources, improve the sustainability of local forest management, strengthen regional cooperation on forest management and trade, and reduce carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from forest loss and degradation.

Increasing regional timber trade from legal sources. Currently, the timber trade has no widely accepted legal standards. RAFT promotes the regional acceptance and use of credible legal standards, allowing businesses to ensure that the wood they purchase comes from well-managed, legally logged forests. RAFT also assists governments and private enterprises to develop and apply practices that favor legally verified forest products and exclude illegal ones.

Improve sustainability of local forest management. RAFT provides training workshops for partners in the areas of conflict management and participatory planning to encourage greater involvement by local communities. The workshops also focus on the identification, management, and protection of forest areas with high conservation value and high levels of biodiversity.

Strengthen regional cooperation on forest management and trade. RAFT works collaboratively with a wide range of partners from private industry, governments and NGOs to inter-governmental agencies such as The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the International Tropical Timber Organization. The program is developing demonstration sites and model enterprises for sustainable and well-managed production forests. It is working to develop procedures for responsible investment screening and systems for tracking manufactured goods from raw material to finished product. RAFT's partners bring vital expertise to national and regional policy discussions.

Slowing climate change. RAFT contributes towards slowing climate change through the emerging international framework called Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD). RAFT develops a set of tools and methods for reducing (or off-setting) forest-based greenhouse gas emissions, a significant factor in global warming. It incorporates efforts to slow climate change into forest management and conservation strategies and works with private timber enterprises to include monitoring of carbon emissions.

PARTNERS

The Nature Conservancy, World Conservation Union (IUCN), Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), Tropical Forest Trust (TFT), Tropical Forest Foundation (TFF), Regional Community Forestry Training Center (RECOFTC), the Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network (TRAFFIC), US Forest Service, and US Department of State. Other supporting partners include ASEAN, International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), ScanCom, DLH, The Home Depot, Lowe's, and Xerox.

Contact: Barry Flaming
US Agency for International Development
Regional Development Mission for Asia
Athenee Tower, 63 Wireless Road
Bangkok 10330 Thailand
Office: +662-257 3000
Fax: +662- 257 3099
E-mail: bflaming@usaid.gov
Web: <http://asia.usaid.gov>