



U.S. - MEXICO - CANADA AGREEMENT SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT AND COMBATTING ILLEGAL LOGGING



The United States, Mexico and Canada are significant timber trade partners. Mexico imports nearly 70% of its timber from the United States, and exports as much as 75% of its timber to the U.S. (1). Illegal logging and deforestation, however, can negatively impact trade as well as weaken rule of law, damage and degrade critical ecosystems, and harm local communities. In Mexico, it is estimated that between 5 and 14 million m³ of illegally harvested wood are sold each year, and that the trade in illegal wood represents a business of \$7,000 to \$20,000 million pesos or \$342 to \$978 million USD (2,3,4).

The partnership between USFS and USTR is working to address these challenges and promote sustainable timber management in Mexico. This in turn helps all three USMCA trade partners to strengthen the timber market by combating illegal logging, deforestation and forest degradation.

Timber trade routes to and from Mexico



Developed by the USFS with information from the Ports, Airports and Border Inspection Office of PROFEPA.

MAIN OBJECTIVES



The USFS will strengthen monitoring and enforcement relating to USMCA Articles 24.15 (Trade and Biodiversity), 24.22 (Conservation and Trade), and 24.23 (Sustainable Forest Management and Trade). These Articles commit the Parties to exchange information and experiences on issues related to illegal trade in wild flora and fauna; improve inspection capabilities; strengthen government capacity and institutional frameworks to promote sustainable forest management; and promote trade in legally harvested forest products. The USFS is addressing these objectives through a Three Goal Plan to Promote Sustainable Forest Management and Combat Illegal Logging.

GOAL 1

Strengthen Mexico's wood identification capacities, and integrate Mexico into regional and global wood identification efforts, including enhanced monitoring via Lacey Act declaration automation and analysis.

Outcomes from Year 1, 2 and 3

- **Wood assessment report:** Interviewed 114 relevant actors from the government, academia, and the private sector to report on the current resources, opportunities, and challenges related to wood identification and screening within Mexico.
- **Macro-scopic wood identification workshops:** Conducted seven webinars in years 1 and 2 on wood identification tools and technologies and best practices for combating illegal timber and associated trade for over 100 inspection agents, researchers, and other government personnel from Mexico; USG agencies such as the Department of Justice, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Customs and Border Protection presented at these webinars.
- **Reference database for timber samples:** Collecting timber samples within forest-dependent communities in southern Mexico in collaboration with the Mexican Ministry of the Environment (SEMARNAT), local communities, the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and NGO partners. The wood samples are part of a global wood reference database that facilitates timber species identification with the Direct Analysis in Real Time (DART) Time-of-Flight Mass Spectrometry (TOFMS) technology.
- **Results of field expeditions:** As of June 2023, 390 wood samples from 24 commercially important tropical tree species have been collected during 8 field expeditions. The samples are assisting with wood identification at both Mexican laboratories, such as the Institute of Biology at the Mexican Autonomous University (UNAM), and 78 samples have been sent to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory (USFWS) and the USFS Wood Identification and Screening Center (WISC) where scientists will use chemical analysis (DART-TOFMS) to aid with identification.



GOAL 2

Improve capacity of government agencies and communities to efficiently and effectively monitor their landscapes and enforce environmental regulations and policies.

Outcomes from Year 1, 2 and 3

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- **Diagnostic of park ranger and community groups:** Completed semi-structured interviews of 12 key partners and an assessment survey of 170 park guards, inspection agents and relevant actors in Chiapas to identify pathways to improve effective monitoring and enforcement of forests and natural protected areas that are under threat from deforestation and illegal logging, as well as other illicit activities.
- **Illegal Logging and Associated Trade training course:** Phase 2 of the project, launched in year 2-3, provides follow up training for park ranger and community groups. This includes developing a pilot course and training materials to support Mexico's Commission for Natural and Protected Areas (CONANP) to confront illegal logging and associated trade in Southeastern Mexico. The course includes 4 modules designed to train participants on the laws and regulations governing forest management, the tools for detecting land use change, specific actions to prevent deforestation and the role of human rights and ethics in illegal logging and associated trade.



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Table 1: Number of wood samples collected from 17 commercially important tree species in Mexico



LOOKING FORWARD



The USFS and USTR will continue to work together and complete the action points under the Three Goal Plan to Promote Sustainable Forest Management and Combat Illegal Logging. This includes supporting wood identification, building a training program for national park employees to enforce environmental regulations and policies, and implementing financial analysis tools in communities to support the promotion of sustainable forest management and trade.

References:

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Early warning system (EWS)

- **Early warning systems (EWS) for deforestation:** Facilitated EWS workshops for user-groups in Mexico and organized information exchanges with Peru. Started field verifications in five communities with the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve in the state of Chiapas and the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve in Campeche. Developing a mobile/online data capture system for detecting and reporting these alerts using CONAFOR's spatial data platform, IDEFOR.

The early alerts have already led to concrete action by the GOM to curb illegal logging and deforestation. Following a request from SEMARNAT, CONAFOR and the deforestation early-alert team successfully verified illegal land use change in municipalities around the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve. With these results, SEMARNAT and other GOM authorities have begun to take actions against those involved in this deforestation.

GOAL 3

Increase legal avenues for sustainable timber management and trade.



Outcomes from Year 1, 2 and 3

- **Identifying community partners:** Collaborating with NGO partners to train communities in financial analysis tools, allowing small and medium enterprises to monitor and evaluate costs and income, negotiate fair prices, improve financial management and transparency, and strengthen their long-term sustainability. Two NGO partners and four partnering communities (total 25 participants) in Chiapas completed a 6-week training on the Green Value Tool in year 2. In year 3, one of the GVT developers conducted an in-person course at a rural forestry technical college in the state of Campeche. The students and teachers who participated in the course are now conducting financial analyses of local community forest enterprises in the region.
- **Technical assistance:** Providing technical assistance to community forest enterprises (CFEs) in Oaxaca, Chiapas, and the Yucatán Peninsula on timber and non-timber forest management and financial analysis for CFE business plans.
- **Improving the Forestry Value Chain:** Coordinating with CONAFOR and local NGOs to increase legal opportunities for sustainable timber management and trade in forest-dependent communities in Mexico. Since July 2022, USFS completed 10 workshops on timber management that trained 347 individuals from forest dependent communities, of which a significant number were youth and women.
- **Best practices in community forestry management:** 5,000 hectares of land in Oaxaca and 15,000 in Campeche are currently being managed under a new community forestry management plan, which strengthens the technical capacity of communities and establishes best practices.



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