



Status of FLEGT VPA Implementation in Ghana

Ghana has made significant progress in developing systems to issue FLEGT licences. This was evidenced during a joint field visit by the EU Head of Delegation and the Ghanaian Honourable Sector Minister when the parties announced Ghana's readiness to commence the final joint assessment of Ghana Legality Assurance Scheme (GhLAS).

The Joint Assessment of the GhLAS commenced in February 2019. The final field mission assessment is now complete, and issues considered 'material to licensing' have been identified, including:

- The conversion of timber leases to timber utilisation contracts
- The updating of management plans for all areas under production
- The need to have an independent monitor in place

These must be resolved by Ghana before a decision on readiness for licensing can be made.

The joint assessment considered that significant progress had been made since 2014 and it is hoped that Ghana can report on its corrective measures and thereby close the assessment by the end of November 2019.

Photo caption
Photo author



Highlights and key milestones

- 1. Conversions of existing leases into Timber Utilisation Contracts (TUC).** Ghana has made significant progress in converting extant leases and permits into TUCs. Over 100 applications for conversion have been received at the Forestry Commission (FC). These will be submitted to the Sector Minister when the FC has finished processing. The final stage of the process is for the Hon. Sector Minister to append his signature and refer it to Parliament for ratification.
- 2. Forest Management Plans.** By the end of 2018, 63 forest reserve management plans had been completed and published. Management plans for 19 forest reserves where logging was taking place are in the process of being updated and should be concluded in time for the commencement of licencing.
- 3. Social Responsibility Agreements (SRAs):** Thanks to the new regime for managing SRAs, companies are now more likely to deliver on their obligations. This is largely due to a 2017 provision requiring companies to make upfront payments prior to harvesting operations. Between 2017 and 2019, a total of US\$ 140,440 was received by 299 communities from 11 Districts in four regions.
- 4. Rosewood.** Illegal export of Rosewood is a significant concern. Although legality of rosewood harvesting is not controlled by the FC, stakeholders have recommended using the Ghana Wood Tracking System to control the Rosewood trade when the ban is lifted. The Hon. Sector Minister has reiterated his resolve to keep the ban on rosewood harvesting and exports in place. A committee has been put in place to investigate and address weaknesses.
- 5. The Multi-Stakeholder Deliberative processes** initiated by the VPA has become a permanent feature of decision making in the forest sector. It is being replicated in the Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) and Cocoa Forest Initiative processes.
- 6. Civil Society led Independent Forest Monitoring (CSIFM).** As part of CSO initiatives to promote transparency and integrity in FLEGT licences, CSOs are participating in Timber Validation Department (TVD) audits as observers. In conjunction with the FC, CSOs have set up an independent forest monitoring mechanism in which communities use mobile phones to report infractions. These infractions are verified at



Photo caption
Photo author

three levels, the third being a joint verification with FSD staff who then enforce corrective actions. CSIFM is meant to compliment FC's law enforcement by bringing to light wrong doings. Infractions reported by communities are based on the elements in the VPA legality definition.

7. Use of the Electronic Wood Tracking System:

Timber transaction data is now routinely collected by handheld devices and synchronised into the central database. This new system of collecting transaction data has not only greatly improved the efficiency of data collection but has also enabled the detection of discrepancies in real time. Misreporting is therefore becoming increasingly rare.

Expectations of the EU

In the EU, most consumers are aware of certified timber and include such considerations in their purchasing decisions. Ghana hopes that the EU will create similar public awareness of FLEGT licensed timber in EU Member States to enhance reception of Ghana's FLEGT licensed timber when it arrives in the EU.

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the UK Department for International Development and the Life Programme of the European Union.



The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Fern and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the UK government or the EU Life Programme.