



FLEGT licensed products meet the due diligence requirements of EU Timber Regulation

The EU Timber Regulation (EUTR) requires operators, defined as any natural or legal person that places timber or timber products on the EU market, to exercise due diligence when placing timber or timber products on the market. To exercise due diligence means to undertake a risk management exercise so as to minimise the risk of placing illegally harvested timber, or timber products containing illegally harvested timber, on the EU market.

FLEGT-licensed timber and timber products are considered to comply with the requirements of the EUTR. Therefore, if you are an operator you can place FLEGT licensed products on the market without the obligation of exercising due diligence, thus saving relevant time and work, and making your business more efficient.

FLEGT-licensed timber is verified as legal

A FLEGT licence is a document that confirms that a shipment of timber or timber products has been legally produced, in accordance with the relevant laws of the country of export. FLEGT licences can only be issued by countries that have ratified a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the EU. An annex in each VPA lists the products the country's FLEGT licensing scheme covers.

About this factsheet

FLEGT-licensed timber

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FLEGT-licensed timber is coming to the EU

So far six timber producing countries have ratified a VPA, while nine more are negotiating VPAs with the EU. The first country to begin FLEGT licensing is Indonesia, from 15 November 2016. Ghana is at an advanced stage of preparation for FLEGT licensing. The remaining four countries that have ratified VPAs are developing the systems needed to control, verify and license legally harvested timber.

Once a VPA country begins FLEGT licensing, only shipments covered by a valid FLEGT-licence from that country can enter the EU market

FLEGT licences are a legal requirement for all imports into the EU of shipments of timber products listed in the VPA of a partner country that has started FLEGT licensing. Import of shipments without a valid FLEGT licence will be prohibited.

A robust and credible ‘timber legality assurance system’ stands behind FLEGT licences

In order to begin issuing FLEGT licences, a partner country must implement a Timber Legality Assurance System and other measures outlined in its VPA. FLEGT licensing can only begin when a joint assessment by the EU and the partner country confirms that the timber legality assurance system fully meets the requirements described in the VPA. When fully operational, a timber legality assurance system is both robust and credible, as it includes effective supply chain controls, mechanisms for verifying compliance and is subject to independent audits that follow ISO standards.

A timber legality assurance system is built around a practical definition of legality that has been agreed by stakeholders through participatory processes. FLEGT licences therefore show compliance with a broad range of laws and regulations relating to forest management, labour rights, community benefits and payments of fees and taxes. The EU and the partner country also establish a joint body, usually called the Joint Implementation Committee (JIC), which reviews and monitors the progress in implementing the VPA, including the functioning of the timber legality assurance system, addresses concerns as they arise and guides continual improvement of the timber legality assurance system.

FLEGT-licensed timber and certification

A FLEGT licence demonstrates legality and meets all the requirements of the EU Timber Regulation (EUTR). FLEGT licences are required across whole countries. Certification, on the other hand, is a voluntary private initiative that individual companies can choose to implement. While certification helps companies exercise due diligence, it is not proof of legality.

When exercising due diligence under the EUTR, operators may use in their risk assessment procedure certification or other third party verified schemes that include verification of compliance with applicable legislation. However, certification is not a proof of legally harvested timber. On the other hand, a valid FLEGT licence is a proof of legality. FLEGT licensed timber and timber products from VPA partner countries thus comply with the requirements of the EUTR.

FLEGT-licensed timber is good for people and planet

The multistakeholder nature of VPA processes means that, as well as promoting legal trade, the FLEGT-licensing scheme contributes to social and environmental goals. FLEGT-licensed timber is the culmination of years of effort and commitment to sustainable forest management from producer countries that have ratified VPAs with the EU. Before a country begins FLEGT licensing it undertakes significant changes to forest governance identified through a comprehensive multistakeholder process. It implements a robust, independently audited system for tracking timber and verifying its legality throughout the supply chain. And it commits to making information about its forest sector publicly available — an unprecedented level of transparency.

FLEGT stands for forest law enforcement, governance and trade

In 2003, the EU adopted the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan to address illegal logging and associated trade through demand- and supply-side measures. Demand-side measures include the EU Timber Regulation, while supply-side measures include Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) with timber-producing countries outside the EU. FLEGT licences link these demand-side and supply-side measures.

More information

- European Commission: Voluntary Partnership Agreements
<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/forests/flegt.htm>
- Competent authorities in EU Member States responsible for verifying FLEGT licences
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/forests/pdf/list_competent_authorities_flegt.pdf
- European Commission: EU Timber Regulation
<http://euflegt.efi.int/web/flegt-licence/home>
- Competent authorities in EU Member States responsible for the EU Timber Regulation
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/forests/pdf/list_competent_authorities_eutr.pdf
- FLEGT licensed timber – essential information
<http://euflegt.efi.int/web/flegt-licence/home>
- FLEGT.org <http://www.flegt.org/>
- VPA Unpacked <http://www.euflegt.efi.int/web/vpaunpacked>

About the EU FLEGT Facility

The EU FLEGT Facility supports the implementation of the EU FLEGT Action Plan with a focus on Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs). The EU FLEGT Action Plan sets out a programme of actions that forms the EU's response to the problem of illegal logging and the trade in associated timber products. The Facility is hosted by the European Forest Institute (EFI), and was established in 2007.



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