

LOCAL AUTHORITY TIMBER PROCUREMENT POLICY

OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL

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INTRODUCTION

Forest management can be environmentally appropriate and socially beneficial, but it can also be environmentally and socially damaging. This policy recognises the responsibility of local authorities as a consumer/specifier of forest products to ensure that they have a neutral if not positive effect on the world's forests.

We will give preference to timber and timber products that have been independently certified by a credible, globally applicable forest certification scheme and can demonstrate that the products are derived from well managed sources.

Timber is to be preferred as the most environmentally or climate change-friendly construction material in comparison with alternatives such as concrete, stone, PVC etc and should be the material of choice in all major construction projects.

Having a timber purchasing policy is a valuable tool to help tackle the challenges of illegal logging, deforestation and climate change and helps in meeting sustainability objectives.

This commitment will be realised through a due diligence approach to responsible purchasing which utilises the best available techniques and information to progressively move away from unwanted and unknown sources, to those whose origins can be demonstrated through valid supporting documentation.

It is important to note that due diligence is not just a moral duty to care but a legal requirement for a proactive behaviour. It obliges operators to show prudence, judgment and positive action in ascertaining the legality of the timber and timber products that enter their supply chain in order to minimize the risk of placing illegally harvested timber and timber products on the Irish/EU Community market.

Ireland/EU has a particular responsibility for deforestation and illegal logging. Economic development and consumption in this country is very much dependent upon natural resources from other parts of the world, in particular some of the poorest countries of Africa, Latin America and S.E. Asia. This is particularly true for timber.

Legality is defined on the basis of the legislation of the country of harvest, applicable to forest management, timber harvesting and timber trade. This policy also implies that timber and timber products covered by a FLEGT license or a CITES permit are considered to have been legally harvested.

Given the major scale and urgency of the problem, it is necessary to actively support the fight against illegal logging and related trade, to complement and strengthen the EU Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPA's) initiative with timber producing countries and to improve synergies between policies aimed at the conservation of forests and the achievement of a high level of environmental protection, including combating climate change and biodiversity loss.

Policy Statement

Offaly County Council Timber Purchasing Policy

We are committed to the responsible purchasing of forest products and our long-term intention is to source all forest products that we purchase or specify from well-managed forests which have been certified to credible certification standards.

This commitment will be realised through a stepwise approach to responsible purchasing which utilises the best available techniques and information.

Offaly County Council] will not source forest products from:

- Forests or forest product suppliers that do not comply with all relevant national and international legislation relating to the trade in forest products.
- High Conservation Value Forests where these are recognised nationally or regionally, unless these forests are progressing towards credible forest certification in a time-bound, stepwise and transparent manner.
- Protected areas, Parks or similar areas where harvesting operations are not complimentary to responsible forest management.
- Forests which are currently being converted to other land uses, or forests that have been converted since 1994.
- Forests which are in areas of armed conflict or civil unrest where there is a direct relationship between the forest products trade and the funding of such conflicts.

To ensure that these goals are achieved this organisation will:

- Scrutinise all suppliers of forest products for all purchases of goods for resale, not-for resale and in all new construction activities.
- Seek information as to the source of all forest products
- Evaluate this information against our stated policy
- Continuously improve the level of compliance against these policies, with annual reviews, reports and actions agreed with our suppliers
- Work with and encourage suppliers and forest sources who are actively engaged in a process of time-bound, transparent, stepwise commitment to credible certification (such as WWF Producer Group members)
- Work with key stakeholders to ensure that best practice is followed.
- Set annual, publicly communicated targets regarding our performance.

To ensure that all timber and wood products come from proven, well-managed forests.

To ensure that the timber extraction associated with the timber and wood products we purchase does not harm forest conservation or the lives of people who live and work in the forests.

We are committed to sourcing timber only from proven, well-managed forests and we will continue to use our purchasing power to promote good forest management.

We will abide by all local, state and national laws and international conventions (including but not limited to) Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), World Heritage Convention (WHC), and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) as well as moratoria on logging, declarations of protected areas, forestry laws, environmental protection legislation, as well as labour and social laws.



We will never knowingly become involved in, collude with or purchase timber from illegal logging operations. We will work with our supply chain to ensure that all forest products originate from forests where there is full legal and verifiable title to the land, and the harvester has all relevant and current permits and approvals; ensuring products are extracted with full authorisation of those holding rights to the land or forest resources, and with the required authorisation, permits and approvals from all relevant government agencies.

Additional guidance and explanatory notes:

Offaly County Council's Timber Purchasing Policy is to;

- ensure that all the timber and wood products we use come from forests that are credibly certified as well-managed with full Chain of Custody (COC).
- ensure that all tropical hardwood we use is FSC certified with full Chain of Custody or comes from suppliers and supply chains that have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Tropical Forest Trust (TFT).
- ensure that all credibly certified timber and wood products that we use are appropriately recorded.

Offaly County Council's Timber Purchasing Standards

Certification must include the ability to trace the timber/wood from the forest to the final processor with certified Chain-of-Custody (COC) in place from the forest, through every step of the supply chain. All virgin wood bought by Offaly County Council will come from forests of known location. The supplier must provide us with sufficient reassurance that the forest is well-managed and independently certified or verified as such.

Timber and wood products certified and with Chain-of-Custody (COC) for both the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) will only be acceptable.

Our policy is based upon best known practice which aims to source timber and wood based products from proven, well-managed forests. We do recognise that occasionally there will be a need for a "stepwise" approach to meeting the requirements of the timber policy so we have the following procurement and monitoring rules:

What system is acceptable?

FSC Certified Sources will be accepted with FULL chain of custody.

PEFC Certified Sources of **non tropical species** will be accepted with FULL chain of custody under the following exceptions:

- PEFC certified sources of European wood are acceptable when supported with full chain of custody and confirmation from the vendor that all material used originated in Europe.
- In the case of Finnish PEFC certified wood, vendors must also demonstrate that they have management systems in place to assure that wood from forests areas in which high conservation values are threatened and/or forest areas where traditional or civil rights are violated is excluded from any products supplied to Offaly County Council.

- Other sources of PEFC certified wood will only be accepted when supported with full chain of custody AND evidence of independent assurance that the sources comply with the requirements of the FSC controlled wood standard (FSC-STD-40-005).
- Products which are made from pre- or post-consumer waste recycled must have third party independent verification to prove material is recycled waste.

The following conditions apply:

This following exception will only be operated with the express and specific permission of the Members of the Environment Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) or the Social/Corporate Responsibility Team at Offaly County Council on a project-by-project basis.

Products made from timber from sources that are progressing towards certification, but only when there is an independently verifiable action plan being implemented to drive continuous improvement and ultimately certification. To qualify, the sources and their supply chain must:

- Have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Tropical Forest Trust; or
- Have an approved **SmartWood SmartStep** action plan and written contract to progress to FSC; and
- Be a forest participant in the WWF GFTN. We will, as a minimum, expect suppliers to provide evidence that they are members of WWF GFTN, and have signed a time bound agreement to achieve FSC certification of the forest source, and must prove that an independently verified full chain of custody is in place.

Other considerations

Proposal for a
REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL laying down the obligations of operators who place timber and timber products on the market. (November 2008)

The main objective of this proposal is to complement and underpin the EU's current policy framework and support the international fight against illegal logging and its related trade.

The European Commission is proposing a Regulation to minimise the risk of illegally harvested timber and timber products being placed on the European market. The proposed Regulation will make it an obligation for operators to seek sufficient guarantees that the timber and timber products that are placed on the market for the first time have resulted from harvesting conducted according to the laws of the country of origin.

The Regulation applies to both timber and timber products produced within the Community and imported timber and timber products.

On 2nd January, 2009, Just Forests submitted comments on the above proposed timber regulation to the;

Forest Policy Section,
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food,
Johnstown Castle Estate, Co. Wexford

What is FLEGT?

FLEGT stands for Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade. It is the EU FLEGT Action Plan and sets out a programme of actions that forms the European Union's response to the problem of illegal logging and the trade in associated timber products. FLEGT addresses illegal logging and endeavours to link good governance in developing countries with the legal trade instruments and influence offered by the EU's internal market.

The Action Plan includes the following key components:

1. Support to Producer Countries
2. Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs)
3. Public Timber Procurement Policies
4. Private Sector Initiatives
5. Investment safeguards
6. Additional Options for legislation
7. Conflict timber

For further information please refer to the European Commission FLEGT [Briefing sheets](#) published at the www.illegal-logging.info website in Chatham House, London.

The following steps are recommended for the successful implementation of the Council's timber procurement policy:

- 1 **Who is responsible?** A nominated person and department will need to be given the specific task of implementing the new timber purchasing policy.

- 2 **Identify and inform key people on policy implementation.** Implementing this policy requires changes and adjustments in current procurement procedures within your Authority. The policy that we recommend has already been assessed to conform to international and national trade agreements, but we suggest that you take advice from your own legal department. Once you have been notified that the policy is legal, the nominated person will need to ensure that the following people are aware and understand the change in policy.
 - 1 Elected Councillors (voting members) and the County Manager/Chief Executive
 - 2 Director of Services – Environment Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)
 - 3 Director of Services – Housing Social & Cultural Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)
 - 4 The Chief Architect and Chief Engineer
 - 5 The Chief Purchasing Officer, Head of Property Services
 - 6 Local Agenda 21 (LA21) Officers and the Chief Environment Officer
 - 7 Outside contractors, sub-contractors and timber/wood product suppliers

- 3 **Demand legal Timber.** Clearly specify requirements for timber/wood products through contract clauses and purchase orders. (**Example of clause:** *All timber and timber products used should carry the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) trademark or other label from an equivalent internationally recognised, globally applicable, independent certification scheme for good forest management.*)

- 4 **Informing other buyers of new policy.** The easiest way of informing key personnel about the policy change is to hold a meeting. Key staff and outside contractors should be encouraged to attend. It is vital at this stage that everyone is informed about the reasons why particular accreditation schemes are being supported.

Lack of communication is one of the primary factors hindering the implementation of environmental policies.

- 5 **Monitoring.** Once the suggested timber purchasing policy has been cleared by the legal department and staff has been informed of the policy change, a monitoring procedure can be inaugurated.

For simplicity's sake, this might take the form of a pie chart which shows the following headings for timber and wood based products obtained by the Authority:

- 1) **Product from known well managed forest – certified**
- 2) **Product of unknown origin.**
- 3) **Product from forest areas where good management is probably the norm**
- 4) **Product from forest areas where good management is probably not the norm**
- 5) **Product from 'local sources'.**

If it is to have any meaning, this chart should be revised (annually), and the proportion of wood in categories 1, 3 and 5 should be required to increase steadily as understanding of wood purchase policy issues spreads through the Authority.

***Cost:** Certified timber may cost more (but often there is no additional charge). Each Authority must decide under Best Value, parameters for supporting genuine "sustainability" in their timber purchasing.

The Economics of Climate Change: The Stern Report acknowledges that deforestation accounts for about 20% of global greenhouse gas emissions. This is more than all the transport sector emissions and would be inexpensive to tackle. Indeed, the Stern report said "curbing deforestation is a highly cost-effective way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions".

Helpline: Just Forests would be available to help and advise in setting up the appropriate structures to ensure implementation of this timber policy. Telephone: 04697 37545

The following national and international organisations support this initiative:



**International
Institute for
Environment and
Development**

