



Environmental Cooperation – Asia (ECO-Asia) Responsible Asia Forestry and Trade



Moray McLeish/TNC

Forest concession worker is placing a barcode for timber tracking.

BACKGROUND The tropical forests in Asia are among the biologically richest in the world. In Borneo, for example, a mere 1.5 forested acres frequently have more tree species than does all of North America. However, forests are lost or degraded at an alarming rate.

Illegal logging, poorly planned conversion of natural forests and oil palm are the main drivers of deforestation in the region. This forest exploitation comes with high environmental and economic costs for both the rural poor and national economies, and undermines good governance and the social fabric of communities. Additionally, deforestation and land use change are a significant contributor to global warming, estimated to represent 20% or more of total annual global carbon emissions.

The Asia-Pacific region is home to half the world's population, with growing demands for timber, wildlife products and other forest resources. The region is the world's largest producer and consumer of tropical timber. What happens in Asia-Pacific tropical timber markets shapes the rest of the global market.

TRANSFORMING THE TROPICAL TIMBER TRADE Recognizing the importance of sustainable management of Asia's forest resources, The Nature Conservancy developed the Responsible Asia Forestry and Trade (RAFT) program which is funded by USAID Regional Development Mission for Asia (RDMA) Bangkok, Thailand to promote responsible timber trade and sustainable management of forest resources and biodiversity in Asia. The RAFT program brings together a catalytic group of NGOs, governments and the private sector to transform the tropical timber trade.

RAFT builds on the successes of the Global Development Alliance, a USAID-sponsored program in Indonesia, and applies lessons learned on a regional scale. RAFT works with forest producers in Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Papua New Guinea. Additionally, RAFT works in other countries such as China, Japan, and Singapore, members of the European Union, and the U.S. to address procurement and investment policies that promote the legal timber trade.

APPROACH Through the RAFT initiative, The Nature Conservancy protects forests in Asia by transforming the market for tropical timber to achieve sustainability. RAFT focuses on promoting responsible timber



trade and the sustainable management of forest resources and biodiversity. The initiative aims to increase regional timber trade from legal sources, improve the sustainability of forest management on the ground, strengthen regional cooperation on forest management and trade and contribute towards climate change abatement by reducing CO₂ emissions from forest loss and degradation and enhancing regional capacity for sustainable forest management through the emerging international Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) framework.

Increase regional timber trade from legal sources.

Currently, there are no widely accepted legal standards when it comes to the timber trade. RAFT works to mainstream the use and acceptance of credible legal standards regionally, allowing businesses to ensure that the wood they purchase comes from well-managed, legally logged forests. Additionally, RAFT assists government and private enterprises to develop and apply responsible timber purchasing policies and investment screening procedures to favor legally verified forest products and exclude illegal forest products.

Improve sustainability of forest management on the ground. RAFT provides training workshops for partners in the areas of participatory planning, conflict management and identification and management of High Conservation Value Forest areas. The program also works with forest managers to identify and set aside areas of high biodiversity.

Strengthen regional cooperation on forest management and trade. RAFT shares lessons learned on a regional scale by working collaboratively with a wide range of partners from private industry, governments and NGOs to inter-governmental agencies such as ASEAN and the International Tropical Timber Organization. The program is developing demonstration sites and model enterprises for sustainable and well-managed production forests, for supply-chain management systems, and for responsible investment screening procedures. RAFT's partners play a key role in informing national and regional policy discussions, as well as facilitation learning networks that will help share knowledge and have a significant impact on the conservation community.

Contribute towards climate change abatement.

Contribute towards climate change abatement by reducing CO₂ emissions from forest loss and degradation and enhancing regional capacity for sustainable forest management through the emerging international REDD frame-work. RAFT develops a set of tools, methods and activities for mitigating forest-based Green House Gas (GHG) emissions and incorporating climate change mitigation into forest management and conservation strategies. The initiative expands current field activities with private sector timber enterprises to incorporate monitoring of carbon emissions. The program includes the development of a regional REDD Learning Network and builds on past experience in establishing a pilot forest conservation and conflict management learning network for Southeast Asia. This new initiative recognizes the international consensus on the need to reduce GHG emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the lack of experience and knowledge in this new area for forest conservation and management. The REDD Learning Network will document and share emerging best practices and on-the-ground experiences as well as stimulate research and exploration into key gaps and new opportunities to achieve equitable and sustainable reductions in emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in the region.

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS The RAFT program addresses the shared problems of illegal logging, forest conversion and the erosion of Asia's biodiversity. In implementing the program, The Nature Conservancy leads a consortium of private sector companies, local communities, NGOs and inter-governmental agencies including: 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), ASEAN, International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), ScanCom, DLH, The Home Depot, Lowe's, and Xerox.

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