



FEBO NEWSLETTER 3/2007

FEBO rejects boycott of timber and wooden products from Burma

At the FEBO Board Meeting on 17th October in Strasbourg Le Commerce du Bois (LCB) reported on a demand from the NGO Friends of the Earth to the French timber trade to encourage their members to take part in the ban on Burmese timber imports. The members of the Board present at the meeting were unanimous in their rejection of such a boycott.

Germany protests against EU trade sanctions against Burma

As reported, the EU foreign ministers agreed at their recent meeting in Luxembourg on trade restrictions with Burma. The aim of these sanctions is to force the Burmese military government to stop their violent activities towards the demonstrators.

One element of the planned sanction package is a prohibition of the import of teak wood to Europe. The German Timber Trade Federation (GD Holz) has lodged an appeal against the import ban with the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the EU in Brussels and has pointed out that that a trading ban on teak will mean the closure of a number of German importing firms. GD Holz has therefore urged that the decision be reconsidered.

FSC products without valid certificates from China?

There were some reports of a possible increase in FSC products from China without valid certification at the FEBO Board Meeting on October 17th in Strasbourg. FEBO is concerned about this development and will be initiating talks with FSC Europe in the next weeks in order to discuss the unfavourable situation. Members are requested to report any such cases to the FEBO Secretariat (febo@gdholz.de).

EU Commission assigns survey on the effects of FLEGT

During the last few weeks the international and national timber trade associations have been asked to issue statements on the effects of the FLEGT measures. The associations were also requested to include their members in this survey.

We are of the opinion that it would be too difficult to fill out the questionnaire as both trade associations and companies have not enough information on the concrete state of the talks with the VPA countries to be able to judge the actual effects. For this reason we feel that is vital to form a panel of experts from the timber trade who are able through practical experience to advise the EU Commission on these questions.

Switzerland: Obligatory declaration for timber and timber products

Following the lead of the National Council of Switzerland the Swiss Council of States has now adopted the motion that timber and timber products are to be declared in the future. This obligatory declaration involves the stating of the timber species and its provenance. The government has now received the commission to write the law. This has far-reaching consequences for timber importers in Switzerland. It is problematic to declare the provenance and the origin of the species correctly. This is only possible with the good will of overseas suppliers.



What happens when these suppliers cannot or will not declare the exact provenance? What would be the consequences of such a case? An import ban? Switzerland's single-handed action among the Europeans creates a serious trade barrier with far-reaching consequences.

International Forest Protection Organisation PEFC has an offensive in the planning

The 11th General Assembly of PEFC (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes) on 5th October resulted in ambitious targets for climate and the environment. The proportion of ecologically produced timber in the processing chain is to increase from 25 to 45 percent. With this requirement the delegates are hoping to ensure sustainable forestry management worldwide. This proposal takes the programme into its second phase. Since its foundation in 1999 the largest global forestry certification organisation has certified more than 200 million hectares of forest throughout the world applying strict ecological criteria.

Ben Gunneberg, Secretary General of PEFC International, explained that "the new strategy marks a significant switch in the strategic direction from production to market access orientation. Only when demand is right, can the idea of ecological forestry management with its positive effects on the climate establish itself." In future more emphasis will be laid on stronger communications. "We have to win more consumers over to using timber and paper products from certified close-to-nature forestry management," continued Gunneberg. This is of particular significance in connection with the protection of the critically threatened tropical forests. For this reason the applications for the certification systems from Cameroon and Uruguay were accepted at the General Assembly. These systems will now be checked by the PEFC Council. Certification is a vital instrument for retaining the long-term health and effectivity of the ecological forest system and ensures its ability to bind the gas carbon dioxide.

2nd Hardwood Conference in Stuttgart

The Association of the German Sawmill Industry (VDS) is hosting the 2nd Hardwood Conference in Stuttgart on 8th and 9th November. International speakers will be delivering first-hand marketing news and trend perspectives to the participants from all over Europe at the beginning of the hardwood season 2007/2008. Entrepreneurs and decision-makers from the sawmill industry as well as executives from the forestry sector and its related economic sectors will receive a specially-commissioned study on the potential of the hardwood sawmilling industry in Europe as well as valuable facts and figures on European and global markets which can form the basis of commercial planning.

Further information to the programme and registration forms are available at <http://www.hardwood07.eu/>.

Important dates:

13th March 2008
27th, 28th May 2008
28th – 30th May 2008
5th – 8th November 2008

Board Meeting London
General Assembly, Nantes
Carrefour de Nantes
Bobat Paris

Lutgart Behets-Oschmann
1st November 2007