

# Report

## **FLEG II: Progress under of the Country Workplan for the Russian Federation**

### **Area 1: Improving the FLEG planning and monitoring at the national, local, and interagency levels**

#### **Activity 1.2.: Improving forest law enforcement and governance mechanisms**

##### ***Objective 1.2.2: To improve the system of combating illegal forest uses***

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Illegal forest uses continue to pose a serious threat to the Russian forest sector. Studies conducted at the first stage of the FLEG process (2011–2012) indicated that illegal logging distorted the market, reduced the level of investment in the forest sector, led to the bankruptcy of honest forest companies and impoverishment of those who live in forest areas and work in logging and wood processing enterprises, and caused social conflicts. The environmental impact of illegal forest uses results in the degradation of forest and aquatic ecosystems, loss of biodiversity, a higher number and intensity of wildfires, and climate change.

A new phase of the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) East Countries Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) II Program aimed at developing a system to combat illegal forest uses includes a number of actions to monitor implementation of proposed recommendations, assess the dynamics of the processes and adjust the approaches.

Data on the volume and nature of illegal cuts that have taken place since FLEG I completion have been collected and analyzed. Analysis of the changes in these indicators allows a conclusion that the response actions were efficient. The new participating regions shall use this information as primary and baseline data to start combating illegal forest uses. Unlike the Russian regions located in Siberia, Far East and North-West which implemented FLEG I and specialize in commercial logging, the new participants have forests that perform predominantly recreational and protective functions, which implies a specific nature of illegal forest uses.

Pursuant to official statistics, the share of illegally logged timber remained quite insignificant in the FLEG II regions in 2008–2013: 0.2–0.6 percent of the total volume. However, official statistics fail to identify all illegal cuts and do not take into account a large number of violations in logging or reflect the level and variations of illegal forest use drivers. Such situation not only precludes a realistic assessment of the scale of illegal logging in Russian regions and across the country but also makes it difficult to evaluate the efficiency of response actions.

Major violations of the forest legislation identified by in situ verification of remote monitoring outcomes included discrepancies between actual harvesting areas and other logging parameters, on the one hand, and allowed forest use data, on the other (a mismatch between actual and planned cutting).

Sparsely forested and densely populated regions in the European part of Russia have their specific issues related to illegal forest uses. A high value of suburban forests, a high cost of land, and the

lack of cadastral registration of forest parcels conduce to numerous violations related to the recreational use of forest lands and often provoke their illegal seizure and expropriation.

We surveyed 335 respondents in the Khabarovsk, Primorsky and Krasnoyarsk Krai as well as Arkhangelsk and Voronezh Oblasts. They represented 4 stakeholder categories: staff of executive authorities and forest administrations, forest industry employees, representatives of nongovernmental environmental organizations, and others (specialists from education and research institutions, staff of budget institutions without a status of public servants, etc.)

Most respondents noted a reduction of illegal logging over the last 3 years. The independent survey demonstrated that the share of illegally logged timber averaged at 14 percent for conifers, 25 percent for hardwood species, and about 6 percent for low value broadleaf species.

The highest share (about 30 percent) of illegal logging of coniferous trees was reported by the respondents from the Krasnoyarsk Krai, and the lowest share (8 percent) by those from the Arkhangelsk Oblast. The absolute majority of the respondents from the Khabarovsk and Primorsky Krai reported a share of illegally logged hardwood species in the range of 30-40 percent. Average figures given by the respondent groups are much (more than 10 times) higher than the official statistical data.

Analysis of actions taken to combat illegal forest uses pursuant to the Guidelines on Prevention and Reduction of Illegal Logging and Illegal Timber Trade in Russia indicated some positive changes in a number of areas. The positive shifts included, among other things, newly adopted legislation reestablishing the forest protection service; development of a regulatory legal framework for cut timber registration, scaling and control; stiffening of administrative and criminal penalties for illegal logging; public supervision of forest product traffic, etc.

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