



Editorial

Giving Voice to the Voiceless:

SMFEs find a Voice!

It has long been the tradition of the Government of Ghana to formulate laws and policies designed to govern key sectors of the economy without the inputs and participation of people at the grassroots who are most affected by these laws and policies.

Most often, these laws and policies come as a surprise to the common man on the street who does not understand the rationale behind them nor the need for their implementation. Consequently, the common man does not only feel alienated from such laws and policies but also regards them as an infringement on his inalienable human rights and hence flaunts them with impunity.

It is in this regard that efforts being made under FLEGT/VPA to educate intermediaries in the forestry sector; comprising association leaders of Small and Medium Scale Forest Enterprises (SMFEs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) on Ghana's Legality Assurance System (LAS) and also equip them with the skills for advocacy is very laudable.

Educating members of SMFEs and giving them a voice to make inputs into forestry laws is surely the way forward since they will feel part of the process, own it and partake in its implementation.

Plantation Module for eWTS Tested

The FLEGT/VPA Secretariat of the Forestry Commission (FC) has carried out two training programmes for 23 staff members during which they undertook the testing and implementation of the Plantation Module of the Electronic Wood Tracking System (eWTS).

The trainings took place at Akim Oda in the Eastern Region and Sunyani in the Brong-Ahafo Region and was attended by Range Supervisors, Assistant District Managers, District Managers and Foresters.

The training was carried out by the Timber Validation Department (TVD) in conjunction with Plantation Unit Personnel and Atta Marie Group of Companies (AMGC) Limited, developers of the software.

As part of the training, participants were taken through other wood tracking modules being utilised by the eWTS and also undertook field trials at the Oboyow Forest Reserve in the Eastern Region and an off-Reserve site in the Brong-Ahafo Region.

FLEGT/VPA and REDD+ Secretariats Discuss

Synergies

The FLEGT/VPA and REDD+ Secretariats of the Forestry Commission (FC) have been exploring ways in which the various activities being implemented under the two initiatives can be synergised to promote efficiency and avoid duplication and waste of resources and energy.

In a bid to concretise this move, the two secretariats have jointly organised two workshops during which officials from both sides deliberated on their activities and pointed out key areas in which they can collaborate.

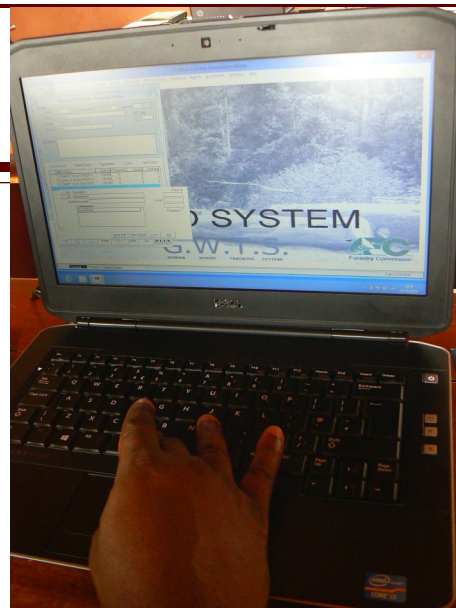
At the first workshop which was under the theme “Regularisation of the Domestic Timber Market in Ghana”, it was revealed that there are at least nine opportunities for collaboration by the two secretariats.

These ranged from the enforcement of the mandatory 20 percent supply of timber by timber companies on the local market to support a sustainable

supply to meet domestic demand to ensuring that timber companies comply with the sustainable level of timber harvest to safeguard the forests' capacity to serve as carbon sinks.

At the second workshop which was under the themes “Benefit Sharing Framework for Ghana's REDD+” and “Legality and Safeguards under FLEGT/VPA and Areas of Synergy with REDD+”, six areas of synergy were identified.

These ranged from collaboration in improving forest arrangements to reflect more transparency and accountability and the clarification of tenure rights which are essential for the implementation of both initiatives to establishing linkages in the implementation of safeguards established by both initiatives to manage negative impacts. More workshops would be jointly organised by the two initiatives to discover more areas for synergy.

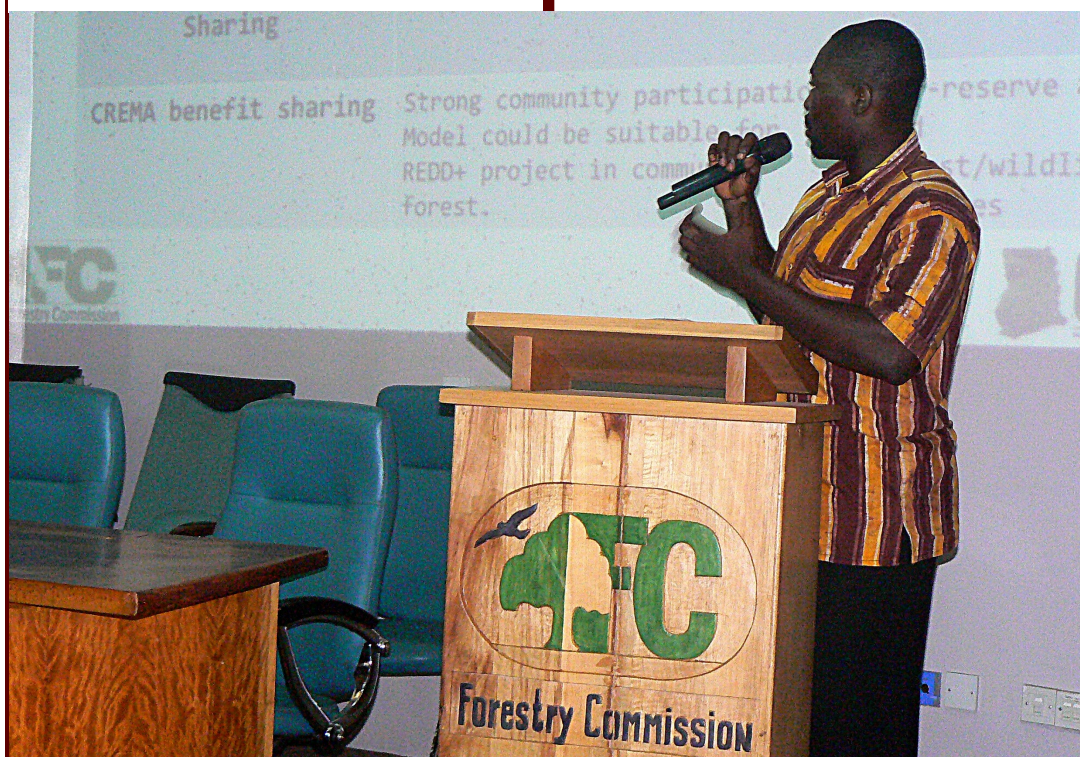


FC Undertakes Backlog Data Entry

National Service Personnel at the Timber Validation Department (TVD) have carried out Backlog Data Entry for important information that had not yet been captured on the Electronic Wood Tracking System (eWTS).

Over 25 stock data was loaded on the eWTS capturing 14 Tree Information Forms (TIFs) and Log Measurement and Conveyance Certificates (LMCCs).

The delay in the capture of the information was due to poor internet connectivity which has since been rectified by the FC. Bringing data up to date will enable the FLEGT/VPA Secretariat of the FC to catch up on field operations to ensure the smooth running of the eWTS.





Small and Medium Scale Forest Enterprises Receive Education on Ghana's TLAS

Association leaders and representatives of Small and Medium Scale Forest Enterprises (SMFEs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working in the forestry sector are being educated on Ghana's FLEGT/VPA processes and equipped with the necessary skills to enable them to make an input into ongoing forest policy reforms and to effectively advocate for their voices to be heard.

The process is being carried out by the "Supporting Intermediaries with Information and Guidance to Comply with the Legality Assurance System (LAS) and Engage in Policy Advocacy on the Domestic Market Reforms" Project which is being implemented by Tropenbos International (TBI) Ghana with funding from the European Union (EU).

The move is in line with FLEGT/VPA activities designed to ensure that all key players in the forestry sector are educated and brought abreast with current policy reforms under Ghana's Timber Legality Assurance System

(TLAS) to enable them to comply with the new requirements under the law.

It is aimed at ensuring that only legal timber would be processed by SMFEs and sold on the local market. This is in a bid to curtail the present influx of illegal wood on the domestic market which constitutes 84 percent of wood currently been sold.



More Districts to be Covered by eWTS

The Third phase of the Electronic Wood Tracking System (eWTS) scheduled for later this year will cover all forest districts nationwide that have not been captured under the first and second phases.

The envisaged areas to be covered include Walewale, Buipe, Yendi, Bole and Tamale in the Northern Region, Navrongo, Bolgatanga and Bawku in the Upper East Region, Tumu and Lawra in the Upper West Region and Atebubu, Kintampo, and Beechem in the Brong-Ahafo Region.

Others are Jasikan, Nkwanta, and Ho in the Volta Region, Cape Coast and Winneba, in the Central Region and Somanya and the Afram Plains in the Eastern Region.

Other areas are Enchi, Juaso, Begoro, Bibiani, Kade, Mpraeso, Mampong and Kumawu.

A Re-Survey of Timber Stocks in Ghana Needed, Say Timber Industry Associations

Representatives of Small and Medium Forest Enterprises (SMFEs) have called on the Forestry Commission (FC) to carry out a new survey on the volumes of timber available for domestic consumption since a large percentage of it is being exploited by overland timber exports which are largely unregulated.

Over the years, unregulated overland timber exports have squandered a greater part of the perceived timber volumes available on the domestic market.

This therefore calls for the implementation of more efficient regulatory systems with a special levy on timber permitted to be exported overland to fund capacity building programmes for the domestic timber industry.

The call was made at a workshop organised by the Timber Legality Compliance and Advocacy Project (TILCAP) with sponsorship from the European Union at Kumasi. The participants, stakeholders in the timber industry made up of representatives of industry associations of SMFEs, also urged the FC to develop the skills of members of timber industry associations.

This has become necessary because the present low skill level pervasive in the industry leads to huge volumes of wood waste which in turn fuels deforestation. Consequently, ensuring a more efficient technology transfer in the timber industry through technical and vocational education should be paramount to the FC.

To check the proliferation of illegal timber on the domestic market, the industry association leaders stressed the need for current domestic market policy to be backed by legislation to provide a more conducive framework for SMFEs and artisanal millers to function.

In addition, steps should be taken to ensure that saw millers channel 20 percent

of their products onto the domestic market as directed by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources (MLNR). To ensure that legal wood is readily available on the domestic market, it was proposed that a business entity should be selected through a competitive process, licensed and charged with the responsibility of acquiring this percentage of wood and making it available at outlets or wood depots countrywide.

Furthermore, the percentage of wood to be retained on the domestic market should be monitored to ensure that no further exports are carried out once the Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) has been reached while the ban on the exportation of round logs should be enforced.

The workshop was aimed at providing a platform for SMFEs to make an input into the current policy reforms in the forestry sector being undertaken by Ghana under the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) and the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) signed between Ghana and the European Union.



Upcoming Events

- Training of Foresters on Carbon Accounting scheduled for April 13th-20th

Synergy is published with funding from the FAO through the FC by Tropenbos International Ghana, P.O. Box UP 982, KNUST, Kumasi.

Tel: +233 03060310/ 03061361

Fax: +233 61376

Email: synergygh@yahoo.com

copyright@synergyghana

