

## Best practices addressing illegal chainsaw milling

The forestry sector in Ghana is plagued with illegal chainsaw milling (CSM) activities which the government of Ghana has tried to combat with policies and legislation, but to no avail. This is because CSM although illegal, is important; it is responsible for about 84 % of the domestic market supply (2.5 million m<sup>3</sup>) and provides economic opportunities for people in both rural and urban areas.

An international workshop on CSM for the West Africa region was successfully held within the framework of the EU CSM project: *'Developing alternatives for illegal CSM through multi-stakeholder dialogue in Ghana and Guyana'* at Erata, Hotel, Accra, Ghana in May 2009. The general aim of the workshop was to learn from country experiences on how CSM issues have been addressed and establish best practices for addressing the illegal CSM problem.

The workshop was attended by 65 participants made up of decision makers, scientists, forest resources managers, forest concession holders, chainsaw operators, traditional authorities, civil society and the media from ten countries. Eight country case studies from Ghana, Guyana, Nigeria, Liberia, Cameroon, DR Congo, Kenya and Uganda presented the causes and consequences of CSM and the ways in which the practice has been managed in these countries. Participants identified best practices and discussed options by which governments could balance the positive and negative aspects of CSM.

### CSM on the African Continent

CSM is widespread in countries with all levels of timber resource availability, socio-economic conditions and forest development. The trend of CSM appears to be increasing in all countries in terms of volumes of harvested trees and number of people involved. Furthermore chainsawn lumber is now entering newly discovered external markets, e.g. from DR Congo to Kenya, Ghana to Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, and from Cameroon to Chad and Nigeria. Countries such as Ghana and Uganda are even serving as transit for chainsawn lumber from Ivory Coast and DR Congo respectively.

The main factor driving CSM is the strong local demand for cheap timber, which is rarely adequately addressed in national forest policies: the formal timber industry is mostly targeting the export market. The livelihood opportunity provided by CSM is very important in poor rural areas with high unemployment. The low capital investment requirements of CSM make it an easily accessible and lucrative business. Limited access to forest resources for small operators - coupled with the low enforcement capacity in most countries - invites illegal practices. In some countries (e.g. Nigeria), forests have decreased to such a level that large investments in logging have become impractical and CSM is the best alternative for processing trees.



## Policy responses

The cases presented at the meeting showed that effective policy responses are rare. In a lot of countries (e.g. Liberia, DR Congo, some states in Nigeria), the law is not clear on the status of CSM. Where CSM is legalised (e.g. in Kenya, Uganda and Guyana), CSM is very often associated with widespread abuse and illegalities. Where it is banned (Ghana, most states of Nigeria), enforcement is difficult and compromised; enforcement is better in cases where CSM has been legalised.

Best practices addressing CSM effectively are few and include; log tagging system (Guyana), license from state (Guyana), payment of stumpage and taxes (Guyana, some states in Nigeria, and Uganda), access and benefit sharing with tree owners (Kenya), formation of associations and self regulation (Guyana and some states in Nigeria), and the promotion of the use of improved technology (Guyana and Uganda). In countries where CSM is banned but flourishing, a multi-stakeholder dialogue could serve as the mechanism to develop viable policy options for addressing CSM (Ghana).

## Future outlook

Freehand CSM was generally viewed as being wasteful compared to CSM with attachments or mobile/regular saw milling. The use of a chainsaw with attachment for processing a tree (artisanal milling) produces good quality lumber, similar to sawmilled lumber with comparatively little waste. Chainsaw operators should be organised into associations and trained in the use of improved technology.

For the future outlook, artisanal milling could contribute to a sustainable forest sector, provided that the right policies are designed and implemented. Opportunity should be created for a legalised, but controlled environment for improved CSM (artisanal milling) rather than a total ban. The implications of dwindling forest resources give this artisanal milling a better future outlook than conventional logging. As timber resources dwindle, tree plantations, fragmented forests, farm and solitary trees will become important sources of timber, making conventional logging less attractive.

Policy interventions should be based on an appropriate Annual Allowable Cut (AAC), fair access and benefit sharing mechanisms, empowerment of communities in the management and monitoring of timber resources and the controlling of overland exports of chainsawn lumber.

Proceedings of this workshop are published on the project's website:  
[www.chainsawmilling.org](http://www.chainsawmilling.org)



This infosheet is produced within the framework of the EU chainsaw milling project "Developing alternatives for illegal chainsaw milling in Ghana and Guyana through multi-stakeholder dialogue". It aims to find sustainable solutions to the problems associated with the production of lumber for local timber markets by involving all stakeholders in dialogue, information gathering and the development of alternatives to unsustainable chainsaw milling practices. The project's overall objectives are to reduce poverty and promote viable livelihoods in forest-dependent communities; reduce illegal logging; and promote the conservation and sustainable management of tropical forests in Ghana and Guyana.

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