

# Wood producers told to seek forest certification

By **BusinessMirror**  
JANUARY 23, 2017

The Philippine Wood Producers Association (PWPA) is being enjoined to engage further in government programs designed to improve the forestry industry's standards and competitiveness through certification and an industry road map.

At a recent policy forum on sustainable forest management through forest certification, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) invited wood producers and forestry stakeholders to participate actively in consultations and help formulate and draft a national forest certification system.

Environment Undersecretary Marlo Mendoza said at the business gathering that forest certification is one of the top priorities of the DENR. He stated that the certification system will be putting emphasis on policy predictability, social justice and ecosystem integrity.

Mendoza also recommended that legality of source, chain of custody, and different criteria for controlled wood should be taken as important considerations in crafting the certification system.

He, likewise, asked the PWPA, non-governmental organizations, civil society and other stakeholders to support the program, as he emphasized the need for transition policies and the promotion of entrepreneurship to ensure sustainability of the industry.

Meanwhile, Gualberto Tortoza and Diosdado Paler, consultants for the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), met with officials of the PWPA to discuss the association's role in the renewed Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) program of the Philippines.

Tortoza and Paler noted that the European Union's recent FLEGT action plan highlighted the need for private-sector involvement in different sectoral strategies for achieving legality and sustainability in forest production.

The FLEGT program aims to reduce illegal logging by strengthening sustainable and legal forest management, improving governance and promoting trade in legally produced timber.

In the Philippines Tortoza and Palar proposed that the country's FLEGT program also develop a strategy to engage the private sector, particularly the local small and medium forest enterprises.

Tortoza said the new engagement program will be done in three phases, with situational analysis as the first phase, followed by a two-day multi-stakeholder dialogue or workshop, and to be concluded with a country road map that will identify priority areas for support.

PWPA Executive Director Maila Vasquez reiterated the association's support for such projects that seek to improve the plight of the wood industry.

Vasquez added that there are currently many efforts being done to help the forestry sector, but they would be more effective if consolidated, so actions can be aligned and issues and concerns tackled collectively.

"This will also ensure that overlaps and conflicts will be minimized, if not totally avoided," she added.

(Article retrieved from: <http://www.businessmirror.com.ph/wood-producers-told-to-see-forest-certification/>)