

The Royal Ministry of Agriculture and Food

Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
Nobel House
London SW1P 3JR
United Kingdom

Your ref

Our ref
200401912-/AIS

Date

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Norwegian Government notice with interest that the UK has taken steps to strengthen the Government's efforts to buy legally harvested timber from sustainably-managed forests. As we understand, the UK Government timber procurement policy implies that the Government will insist on all timber supply to central government is from legal sources, and that it will give preference to contractors providing assurance that forests are being managed in a way that meets the Government's contract definition of sustainable forest management. The Norwegian Government welcomes all efforts by the UK that would promote sustainable forest management and contribute to the elimination of illegal logging.

We have also noted that the UK procurement policy have caused some concern among the forestry sector in Norway, due to the announcement that certified timber from Norway is not regarded by the UK Government to be adequately documented to originate from sustainably-managed forests.

During the last decade, a diversity of measures has been employed with the aim to improve forest management in Norway. The authorities as well as a wide range of stakeholders including private sector organisations and NGOs have been actively involved in this field. Among the most significant activities in this regard has been the "Living Forest Project" (1995-1998). The forest owners and the forest industries initiated the project, and stakeholders representing economic, environmental, social and cultural interests as well as government representatives took active part. Capacity building was an important aspect of the project. The main result was the consensus on a set of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management (based on the MCPFE criteria and indicators) and a set of national forestry performance level standards (the Living Forest Standards). The Living Forest Standards, in combination with the ISO 14001 certification system, is applied to practically all commercial forestry in Norway.

Norwegian authorities have neither been involved in the certification process, nor influenced the forest owners in their choice of scheme. Nevertheless, our Government has welcomed forest certification as a significant private sector initiative as to promote and provide documentation on sustainable forest management in Norway.

Based on the assessment of certification schemes, the UK Government has raised some doubt whether the certification scheme applied in Norway provide adequate documentation that certified timber originate from sustainably-managed forests. Due to the significance of the forestry and forest industry sector to the Norwegian society and economy and the importance of this issue, the Norwegian Government is searching for more knowledge about the content, including the assessment criteria, of which the UK Government timber procurement policy is based upon. In particular we are interested in getting more information about the rationale behind the conclusion that the Norwegian certification scheme is not satisfactory. We would be grateful for any contribution from the UK Government that would improve our understanding on this.

Yours sincerely,

Ellen Hambro
Director General

Arne Ivar Sletnes
Adviser

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Ministry of the Environment
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
The Norwegian Forest Owners' Federation