



PRESS RELEASE

EC Regulation misses opportunity to tackle roots of illegal logging and trade problem

The European Federation of Parquet Importers welcomes the EC efforts to address the challenge of illegal logging and regrets that the proposed Regulation fails to effectively deal with it.

Brussels, 17 October 2008 - The European Federation of Parquet Importers (EFPI) expressed its concerns about the effectiveness and feasibility of the proposal for a Regulation laying down obligations for operators placing timber and timber products on the Community market, which was adopted today by the European Commission.

As the leading industry group of wood flooring importers into Europe, EFPI is deeply concerned about the problem of illegal logging and trade and fully supports the efforts of the EU to promote sustainable forest management and the EU action plan for forest law enforcement, governance and trade (FLEGT). However, EFPI regrets that the proposed Regulation, which includes mandatory due diligence to deal with the legality of wood products placed on the EU market, does not provide for an effective solution to the problem and is not feasible.

Firstly, EFPI believes that the lack of an internationally agreed definition of legality in the context of timber trade would cause difficulties in implementing this legislative measure and, therefore, lead to obstacles to enforcement and legal asymmetries. Secondly, timber products such as engineered parquet, which is made of different layers of wood coming from different places, along with the limited scope of certification systems pose substantial challenges of traceability for importers and public authorities, and certification systems have still a very limited scope of application, therefore requiring further reflection about possible solutions.

Furthermore, the due diligence system proposed in the draft Regulation does not prohibit the placing on the market of illegally harvested timber and derived products but instead requires operators to prove that they take sufficient care in controlling that they do not place illegally harvested timber in the community market. With such a system, EFPI considers that market players would have to take the role of public authorities in policing products and trade. The burden of proof would be at the wrong end of the supply chain and the objective of the proposal would, therefore, not be attained.

Finally, EFPI regrets that the public consultation opened by the Commission on additional measures did not include the option contained in the proposed Regulation, that it did not consult wood flooring importers on this initiative and did not take into consideration the comments spontaneously submitted by EFPI to its services.

Mr Michavila García, EFPI President, commented: *"The pressing problems of illegally logged and traded timber and sustainable forestry are at the heart of EFPI's concern. The EU has a responsibility to contribute to the solution of illegal logging as a global environmental and economic challenge. EFPI urges the European institutions to thoroughly examine the situation and consider the above concerns before adopting legislation". "Private sector voluntary schemes can play an important role. European importers are willing to actively contribute to the on-going discussions at European level to advance the creation of an effective, non-bureaucratic and proportionate system which addresses the causes rather than just the symptoms of illegally logged wood or wooden products entering the European market",* concluded Michavila García.

The European Federation of Parquet Importers (EFPI) is a Brussels-based association of leading European importers of engineered and solid wood floorings. EFPI was founded in June 2005 and aims to facilitate discussion of ideas among importers regarding the promotion of wood flooring in Europe and to share information about EU legislation, standardisation and issues concerning international trade for the parquet industry.

For more information please contact Valeria Fagone, EFPI Secretary General.

Tel: 32-2-777.05.18. Fax: 32-2-777.05.27. E-mail: vf@efpi-europe.org – www.efpi-europe.org