

Forestry Commission, CSO move to prevent illegal logging

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A two-year forestry project to stamp out illegal logging of timber in the country has been launched in Accra. Funded by the European Union, British and Swedish governments, the project aims at developing a web-interface for Ghana Wood Tracking System (GWTS) to monitor activities of timber operators and processes for exporting the resource abroad.

It is being implemented by Civic Response, a civil society organisation (CSO), in collaboration with the Forestry Commission (FC) on the theme “working towards a transparent, credible and acceptable FLEGT license.” When fully implemented, it will ensure timely and easy access to information towards the enforcement of forestry law and the issuance of transparent and credible Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) license. Speaking at the launch of the project, which is titled “Civil Society-Led Independent Forest Monitoring in Ghana (CSIFM-Ghana) project,” the Director of Timber Validation Department, FC, Mr. Chris Beeko, was optimistic that the project would help bridge the gap between state policies on logging and their implementation.

He said that the country had signed an international agreement in 2009, that bound it to adopt best practices, but more needed to be done to realise such objective.

Mr. Beeko said “To support industry to address non-compliance, coordinate the completion of the comprehensive connectivity challenges, and also coordinate the resolution of outstanding policy and legislation matters that will enable FLEGT license issuance, stakeholders’ involvement is highly required”.

According to him, the WTS introduced under the pact signed in 2009, was helping to track illegal lumbering activities and ensuring that legal timbers were exported abroad.

Mr. Beeko said the WTS exercised the requisite robustness to identify wood flow inconsistencies that could affect the fortunes of the country in the timber business.

He explained that the system would help collect all transaction data along the supply chain with the use of the handheld data logging devices and computers to detect any discrepancies that might manifest in the process. “Species naming is also necessary in the process from the beginning of the process to the end, likewise, volume recording is consistent along the process chain. The WTS is the standard system that support these processes”, Mr. Beeko added.

The technical officer of the project, Mr. Obed Owusu-Addai, explained that the overall objective of the project was to ensure that civil society groups were actively monitoring the issuing of credible and transparent FLEGT licence. He was optimistic that by the end of the project, there would be a broad access to information on timbers logged in the country and exported abroad.

By Charles Amankwa

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