

Proposed inclusion of social criteria in the application of the UK Government's Timber Procurement Policy.

Central government departments, their executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies are required to procure timber and wood-derived products originating from either legal and sustainable or FLEGT-licensed or equivalent sources.

In the application of its timber procurement policy, through its definition of legal and sustainable¹, the Government has previously interpreted the EU public procurement directives as not permitting Contracting Authorities to include the social criteria that are integral to some internationally agreed definitions of sustainable forest management.

However, exclusion of social criteria could be seen as inconsistent with relevant international conventions and is out of step with all other EU members states that have timber procurement policies.

It is now proposed that social criteria based on the following aspects are suitable for inclusion in public sector contract requirements:

- (1) clarification, recognition and respect of legal, customary and traditional rights related to the forest;**
- (2) mechanisms for dispute resolution between timber production operators logging in the forest and local people;**
- (3) freedom of workers to organise and negotiate.**

The Definition of legal and sustainable for timber procurement is going to be reviewed and amended in the second half of 2009. This will subsequently provide the basis for associated amendments to the related criteria for evaluating certification schemes² and category B evidence³.

Comments and views on the above proposed social criteria to be included in the application of the UK Government's Timber Procurement Policy are now sought.

¹ *UK Government Timber Procurement policy: Definition of legal and sustainable for timber procurement*. Third Edition, April 2009.

² *UK Government Timber Procurement Policy: Criteria for Evaluating Certification Schemes (Category A Evidence)*. Second Edition, May 2006.

³ *UK Government Timber Procurement Policy: Framework for Evaluating Category B Evidence*. Updated December May 2006