

ILLEGAL LOGGING AND TRADE OF ILLEGALLY-DERIVED FOREST PRODUCTS (Czech Republic National Report)

Abstract

Types of illegal logging regarding to kinds of violation of the Forestry Law provisions are designed. The estimate is based on records conducted by local state forest administration authorities in the several past years. Data and results available indicate no significance of the illegal logging in the Czech Republic. The extent of the illegal logging represents less than 1 % of total harvesting mentioned in the Czech official statistics survey. An obligatory denotation and marking of forest products related to the location of their origin is not ordered by any law except reproduction material. No administrative or financial restrictions are placed on the trade of forest products. The monitoring of illegally derived forest products does not provide perfect results.

Introduction

Long-term traditions of forestry management are experienced, profound knowledge on forestry is available, qualified forestry professionals are at work and contemporary forestry legislature is in effect. Illegal logging devastating forests and environment are not expected in a large scale. Illegal activities in forestry sector including illegal logging, however, occur at comparatively low level every year regardless the geographic allotment and period of time.

Defining the Illegal logging

Generally, illegal logging may be perceived in different ways depending on the domestic justice and legislature. Considering the format required in the country report the definition covers all of timber harvesting activities that fail to respect national laws and norms that regulate such harvesting operations. Thus definition should reflect wide range of all possible cases that may occur. From the viewpoint of the Czech national forestry law application several specific provisions regulate harvesting operations. Any violation of the provisions is considered as illegal.

Principal forestry law provisions regulating harvesting operation are as follow:

- The size of clear cutting area at the planned main felling is allowed to execute up to 1 ha of the area and must not exceed the width of two (or in non stable site one) average height of mature forest stand.

- A stand density must not be reduced under 0,7 of full dense forest stands unless the planned felling promotes a new growing stands on the site.
- In small forest holdings that is not covered by forest management plan mature felling may be executed only up to 3 m³ per ha yearly. The larger felling must be announced to a district forestry state administration board.
- Planned main felling in forest stand younger than 80 years of age is prohibited. The exception may be permitted upon the request by eligible forestry state administration board.

In addition, subsequently, the other law obligations are in effect requiring regeneration of the area within the set up period of time. The infringement of the law obligation is frequently associated with illegal logging practice but it is not a subject of the report.

Illegal logging review

Commonly, there is lack of relevant studies and resources providing us with reliable data on the illegal logging.

In 1999 – 2001 Ministry of Agriculture conducted the survey in 78 forest state administration boards to acquire available figures on illegal logging. The other supplementary figures on the same subjects were obtained from the records of the Czech Environmental Inspection. The results are evaluated for each year within the period of time (Table 1). Data are based on judicial investigation involving only completed cases.

Table 1

Provision of the Forest Act		1999		2000		2001	
		Number of cases	Timber volume (1.000 m ³)	Number of cases	Timber volume (1.000 m ³)	Number of cases	Timber volume (1.000 m ³)
Breaking of the clear-cutting area (1 ha) at planned main fellings	SSL	104	46,9	97	34,6	61	24,8
	ČIŽP	76	22,1	14	8,4	15	10,5
Reduction of stand density under 0,7	SSL	38	4,1	40	7,5	25	3,4
	ČIŽP	33	0,5	13	10,9	7	2,8
Unauthorized fellings	SSL	222	46,9	316	48,5	318	50,8
	ČIŽP	41	4,6	23	12,3	8	3,2
Planned main fellings in stand younger than 80 years of age	SSL	116	15	119	16,7	121	14,7
	ČIŽP	65	6,8	13	4,8	9	2,1
Other	SSL	21	4,2	26	4,3	16	0,2
	ČIŽP	4	1,3	8	0,1	5	0,4
Total	SSL	501	117,1	598	111,6	541	93,9
	ČIŽP	219	35,3	71	36,5	44	19
Grand total		720	152,4	669	148,1	585	112,9

SSL - Forest state administration board

CIŽP - Czech Environmental Inspection

In 1996 – 2002 the Ministry of Environment conducted another study on illegal logging on the similar information source. The relevant data were provided by the County Czech Environmental Inspection boards and the district forestry state administration boards. The total figures resulted in summary conclusion given below:

Roughly 1 500 ha of forested area were illegally harvested which represents almost 550 000 m³ of commercial wood. The forest area of 53 000 ha were reduced under the limit of the minimum forest stand density.

Trade in products of illegal logging

Monitoring of trade in products of illegal logging easily fail owing to lack of certain instrument. In designing and conducting any monitoring system of trade in illegally logging products legislative and also technical obstacles may arise. An obligatory denotation and marking of wood related to the location of their origin is not ordered by any law. No

administrative or financial restrictions are placed on the trade of forest products. Even the quite criminal cases that are subjects of police and justice investigation often suffer from poor proving material.

Concluding remarks

The figures resulting from the survey indicated some conclusions:

- From the type of ownership point of view most of the cases recorded have been discovered in private and municipal forest holdings particularly in small-scale ones.
- Illegal logging in protected areas and prohibited areas has not been observed.
- The extent of the illegal logging represents less than 1 % of total harvesting mentioned in the Czech official statistics survey.

Illegal logging does not seem to be a crucial issue in Czech forestry. Data and results available indicate no significance of the illegal logging in the Czech Republic. The illegal logging review, however, may address the problem of forestry justice enforcement, institutional background of state forestry administration system and public awareness of forestry issues.

Enhancing the policies preventing illegal logging practice

Legislative scope

The objective in the scope of legislature work sustains to ensure better enforcement of the forestry law.

In 1999 the illegal logging reportedly culminated so the proposal of forestry act amendment was prepared to improve and clarify the application of sanction provisions. The amendment number 67/2000 Sb. was adopted and came to in effect.

Professional scope

According to the available records most of illegal logging cases occur in small-scale forest holdings whose owners have sometime little concern about them. The objective is to improve providing the professional assistance for the forest owners at expense of the government.

Public relation scope

Public awareness of all environmental issues including the forest management is increasing. Despite the comparatively minor extent of illegal logging some of the cases were publicly announced in regional and national media.

Public concern about forestry and forest as indispensable part of the human environment may contribute to prevent all kinds of illegal activities and certainly help to enforce the law in different cases.

The certification processes in the forest industry which have been established may also favourably affect potential chance for illegal logging practice.

Frantisek Pasek
Deputy Director of Forestry Department
Ministry of Agriculture of Czech Republic
Tesnov 17, 117 05 Prague, Czech Republic
e-mail: pasek@mze.cz
phone: +420 221 812 991