

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA

First meeting of the Mahogany Working Group
Santa Cruz de la Sierra (Bolivia), 3-5 October 2001

National reports

HONDURAS

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NATIONAL REPORT ON THE BIGLEAF MAHOGANY (*SWIETENIA MACROPHYLLA*) IN HONDURAS: 2001

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INTRODUCTION

The AFE COHDEFOR is the body responsible for the management of Honduran forests. It is also part of the Administrative Authority for CITES, which renders a decision before certificates of origin for exporting bigleaf mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) are granted.

To resolve present concerns, the *Departamento de Areas Protegidas y Vida Silvestre* (DAPVS, *Department of Protected Areas and Wildlife*) of the AFE COHDEFOR has begun implementing a new strategy to better regulate the decisions for granting export permits for this species of mahogany.

Consequently, the DAPVS welcomed the CITES Secretariat's timely invitation to participate in the meeting of the Mahogany Working Group, to be held on 3-5 October 2001 in Bolivia.

Although Mendieta (1999) has stated that Honduras has an estimated commercial volume of 0.19-31 cubic meters per hectare, he nevertheless adds that data vary and that the average is estimated to be less than 5 cubic meters per hectare.

The export companies constantly complain of the lack of raw materials they require to continue their work; however, due to the durability of the species, timber has been stockpiled for 5 to 10 years.

Of the two species of mahogany in Honduras, *S. humilis*, or Pacific mahogany, is in grave danger of becoming extinct and is listed in Appendix II of CITES while *S. macrophylla*, or bigleaf mahogany, is in Appendix III only for Costa Rica, Bolivia and Mexico.

1- NATIONAL REGULATIONS FOR CONTROL

Protective laws:

a) Environmental law and its regulations

This law is referred to in Articles 45-47 on forest resources in general. Here, the AFE COHDEFOR is instructed to grant authorization for forest use provided that such use is based on management plans.

b) Protective laws governing protected areas within the range zone

There are several laws granting absolute protection, covering protected areas of the slopes of the country facing the Atlantic where *S. macrophylla* survives. The largest protected areas are in the Honduran Mosquitia, the location of the biosphere reserves of the Plátano River, Tawhaka and the Patuca National Park.

The use of timber is prohibited in the core zones and those mahoganies are under management in the cultural and buffer zones.

Usage laws:

The legal context for forest usage in Honduras begins with two primary laws concerning the administration and management of forest resources. By means of this last law, CITES:

1. **The Forests Act**, created by Decree 85 of 1971, which is the first law containing the principle of sustained forest yield.
2. **Corporación Hondureña de Desarrollo Forestal Act (Honduran Forestry Development Corporation Act)**, established by Executive Order 103 of 1974. This law created the AFE-COHDEFOR and its key elements are the creation of the Social Forest System and the nationalization of the forests.
3. **CITES**: For mahogany exports, the government of Honduras requires that a CITES certificate of origin be granted to prove that the timber does not come from Bolivia, Costa Rica or Mexico and can freely enter Europe and the United States. This certificate is issued by the *Secretaría de Agricultura y Ganadería (Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock)* following technical consultation with the Honduran forest authority (the AFE COHDEFOR), which issues a decision.

Other regulations:

1. **RESOLUTION N° GG-057-95**, governing the preparation of management plans for broad-leaved forests, covering forest harvesting and use. In addition to the aforementioned laws, there is a supplementary legal framework consisting, primarily, of six laws and regulations, including the regulation.
2. **DECREE No. 323-98**: refers to the *Programa Nacional de Reforestación, Forestación y Ambiente para el Desarrollo Sostenible (National Programme for Reforestation, Afforestation and Environment for Sustainable Development)*, Article 7 of which refers to the ban on the export of timber from broad-leaved forests not forming part of finished goods, furniture or parts prepared for furniture. Furthermore, this decree supports the use of timber felled by Hurricane Mitch, to be used by the municipalities, primarily for projects to restore and rebuild the national infrastructure.
3. **AGREEMENT 1189-00**: refers to the regulations of Decree 323-98 governing the use of timber felled by Hurricane Mitch. This agreement on forest harvesting and usage further establishes rules on the transportation of mahogany timber, forest-related crimes and the respective penalties for them as well as administrative and legal procedures. The law states that, for timber from broad-leaved forests (including mahogany), only furniture and finished products and processed parts may be exported to international markets.

2- VOLUMEN OF TRADE

LOCAL SALES: For domestic trade, the amount of MAHOGANY is sold through LOCAL SALES, with application made to COHDEFOR by private concerns.

MANAGEMENT PLANS: Cutting of mahogany over large areas of national forests is permitted only once exploitation rights in accordance with Management Plans have been granted.

Summary of *Swietenia macrophylla* exports for 2000.

COMPANY	AMOUNT EXPORTED (board feet)
Wellington Hall	2,959.3
Caoba de Honduras	163,873.01
Madera Nacional	14,775.0
Internacional Mahogany	90,256
EXMAPRO	45,312
Muebles de Honduras	1871
MADEX	10,356
IMAPRO	2,070
DRACOSA	16,890
Maderas Subirana	25,907
Total (board feet)	372,393.84 p.t.

Source: *Departamento de Areas Protegidas y Vida Silvestre*
(*Department of Protected Areas and Wildlife*)

3- PROBLEMS RELATING TO THE ISSUE OF PERMITS

Currently, the *Departamento de Areas Protegidas y Vida Silvestre* (*Department of Protected Areas and Wildlife*) is responsible for issuing decisions for each mahogany export before CITES permits are granted.

So far this year (2001), this department has begun analysing the procedure to find flaws and solutions for improving control and avoiding fraud. Some of the concerns or errors in the procedure are:

1. **USAGE DOCUMENTATION:** Unstamped and unsigned AFE COHDEFOR usage invoices and transit certificates are sometimes used. It is not clear whether this happens because of administrative flaws or whether it is a question of institutional negligence. Furthermore, some of the invoices or certificates do not contain complete information or do not follow a Management Plan. The DAPVS does not have the records for this to be checked. Regional offices are not instructed to send copies of the invoices to the DAPVS.
2. **LANGUAGE:** The pro forma invoices used are in English, which is not the official language of Honduras.
3. **LOCAL SALES:** Local sales refer to individual, low-volume sales or to timber felled by meteors. These sales are not part of any management plan and no plan to improve the species has been identified.
4. **DATABASE:** There has been no database to quantify invoices, and consequently there has been no quantitative follow-up for the remaining mahogany that has been stored and unused for years. The DAPVS is testing a database.
5. **CONTROL:** There is no strict control on the sale of mahogany abroad. Since mahogany is in Appendix III for some countries, some companies do not register their exports with COHDEFOR, staying within the Free Zones promoted by the Government.

4- ILLEGAL TRADE

According to Mendieta *et. al.* (1999), the ratio of illegal trade to harvested volume is 1 to 2 per legally harvested meter. This timber is intended for the domestic market and, in some cases, it is diverted abroad. Evidence of this has been obtained when timber is confiscated on the border with Nicaragua.

Mahogany wood is associated with peasant communities living in the areas near the broad-leaved forests, who are normally hired to harvest the partially-processed resource, which is then transported by mule and/or by boat and later taken to stockpiling centres.

There is evidence that timber is moved between Nicaragua and El Salvador.

Currently, traffic routes for mahogany timber have been identified in the departments of Gracias a Dios, Colón, Yoro and Olancho, which are the areas of the densest populations of this resource. To deal with this activity, control and monitoring huts have been built by the AFE-COHDEFOR.

The routes and amounts illegally leaving the country's forest zones are not known precisely. Some points are known in which operations have been carried out, and colourful timber (other than pine, including mahogany) has been confiscated.

Regions detected include:

Patuca
Sico Paulaya
Southern zone of the Plátano Reserve
Passes through the Nombre de Dios range
El Paraíso forests

There are suspicions that the quantities of finished goods are being boosted, with raw wood being mingled in with finished wood (the evidence is the sawdust).

Forms of illegal cutting:

1. LAUNDERING OF ROUND WOOD: There are cooperatives holding permits to operate in a specific zone according to a management plan for using broad-leaved timber. However, owing to the lack of audits and effective monitoring, it is suspected that one of the easiest routes to remove timber illegally is through the laundering of round wood, meaning the introduction of illegal timber through a cooperative that has legal permission, then stockpiling it in forest areas and taking it to cities with legal permits.
2. NOCTURNAL TRANSPORTATION OF SAWN TIMBER: Sawn timber is removed at night, taking advantage of the scant vigilance at that time. Normally this timber is taken from distant points to other locations, normally 4 or 5 hours away.
3. ILLEGAL TIMBER EXPORTS: It is suspected that some companies that export furniture are removing articles of mahogany, taking advantage of inadequate supervision and processing errors that have been detected in the AFE COHDEFOR.

5- NATIONAL REGULATORY PLANS AND RECOVERY PROGRAMMES

Recovery plans

Year	Responsible	Location	Area
1954-1955	United Fruit Co	San Alejo, Tela Atlántida	1,780 ha. of <i>S. macrophylla</i> and 28 ha of <i>S. humilis</i>
1927, 1944 y 1945	Lancetilla	Lancetilla	100 ha.
1987 – 1989	COHDEFOR- ACNUR	Warunta	3,000 ha.
1995 -1997	CORPORACIÓN CRESSIDA	Farallones, Limón Colón	100 ha.
1998 –1999	CORPORACIÓN CRESSIDA	Zacate Grande, Amapala, Valle	ND
1998	PROCUENCA	Deptos. de Comayagua, Yoro Cortes	ND
	CONSEFORH	Comayagua, Choluteca	ND

ND: No data available to date.

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