

Timber Legality Risk Dashboard: Bolivia

Drafted as of: August 2021

SUMMARY OF LEGALITY RISKS

Risk Score: 82.8 (Higher-Risk^a)¹

Conflict State: NO

Log Export Restriction in Effect: YES²
Import Regulation in Effect: NO

- Illegal logging is widespread and there are reports of illegally harvested Bolivian timber being trafficked across the borders and exported from Peru and Brazil.
- Corruption is a significant challenge with reports of false or fraudulent documents issued by government officials for Bolivian harvested timber.
- Loopholes in transport laws are being exploited which facilitates timber being sold without documentation.
- There is a risk that Bolivian harvested high value species are exported in contravention of export restrictions and tied to the wider illegal drugs trade.
- Enforcement and penalties remain weak and insufficient to deter illegal logging and illegal export.

TRADE PROFILE OF FOREST PRODUCTS^{b,c,3,4}

Total Imports (2019): \$172.24 million

Total Exports (2019): \$64.91 million. \$34.84 million (53.7%) declared as exported to "regulated markets"

SUMMARY OF HIGHEST PRODUCT-LEVEL RISKS

Exports - Top Products Exported to the US by 2019 Value⁵

- Joinery Products (HS4418)
- Sawnwood (HS4407)
- Wood Furniture Seating (HS940161 & HS940169)
- Wood Furniture Other (HS940360)
- Flooring, Molding & Strips (HS4409)
- Other Articles of Wood (HS4421)
- Wood Furniture Kitchen (HS940340)
- Veneer (HS4408)
- Paper (HS48)
- Marquetry (HS4420)

Bolivia has restricted the export of logs since 1996, and fully banned log exports since 2001. ^{6,7,8,9} Bolivia's 1996 legislation further restricted the trade and export of all timber from natural forests, mandating that timber products must be sourced from managed forests or duly authorized clearings and comply with appropriate forestry management plans. ^{10,11} These restrictions are presumed to remain in force.

SUMMARY OF HIGHEST SPECIES-LEVEL RISKS

Illegal logging and trade affect many timber species, but highly valuable - often rare and endangered - species that are protected under harvest and/or trade regulations are a key target and at an elevated risk for illegality. The following species are either currently, or have recently, been protected in Bolivia.

CITES-Listed Species:

Appendix I:

• Parlatore or Pino del Cerro (Plectrocarpa sarmientoi)¹²

Appendix II:

- Verawood or Palo Santo (Bulnesia sarmientoi)¹³
- Big-Leaf Mahogany or Mara (Swietenia macrophylla)14
- Cedrela spp. 15
 - Argentina Cedar or Cedro Batata (Cedrela fissilis)
 - Cedro del Cerro (Cedrela angustifolia, synonym Cedrela lilloi)
 - Spanish Cedar (Cedrela odorata)
 - o Cedrela montana
 - Cedrela balansae
- Rosewood (Dalbergia spp.)16

Bolivia prohibits the harvest or commercialization of protected species^{e,17,18} and publishes an extensive list of threatened or endangered species in the Red Book of Bolivia ("Libro Rojo de Plantas Amenazadas"). The Red Book was last updated in 2018 for the Andean region, ¹⁹ and in 2020 for the lowlands region. ²⁰ Thus, any species listed in these Red Books sourced from Bolivia should be considered high-risk.

Species with reports of illegal logging:21

- Ochoó (Hura crepitans)
- **Ipé or Tajibo** (Handroanthus spp.; Tabebuia spp.)²²
- South American Oak or Roble (Amburana cearensis)
- Morado or Caviuna (Machaerium scleroxylon)²³
- Spanish Cedar (Cedrela odorata)²⁴
- Tarara (Centrolobium microchaete)
- Cumaru (Dipteryx spp.)
- Paquió (Hymenaea courbaril)
- Hoja de Yuca, Kapok, or Mapajo (Ceiba pentandra)
- Big-Leaf Mahogany or Mara (Swietenia macrophylla)^{25,26}
- **Tipa** (Tipuana tipu)²⁷

Plantation Species (Lower-Risk):28

- Eucalyptus (Eucalyptus spp.)
- **Pine** (Pinus spp.)

Bolivian legislation mandates that all timber must be sourced from managed forests or duly authorized clearings.²⁹ For that reason, all natural forest species should be considered high-risk.

FORESTRY SECTOR

Forested Area: 50.83 million ha³⁰ (24% protected)³¹

Deforestation Rate: 0.43% annually³²

Forest Ownership (as of 2015):³³

• 57 thousand ha privately-owned (0.1%)

• 51.97 million ha publicly-owned (99.9%)

Certified Forests:

• FSC Certification: 724 thousand ha (2019)³⁴

Domestic Production:35

• Wood Fuel: 2.48 million m³ (2019)

• Logs: 953 thousand m³ (2019)

• Sawnwood: 466 thousand m³ (2019)

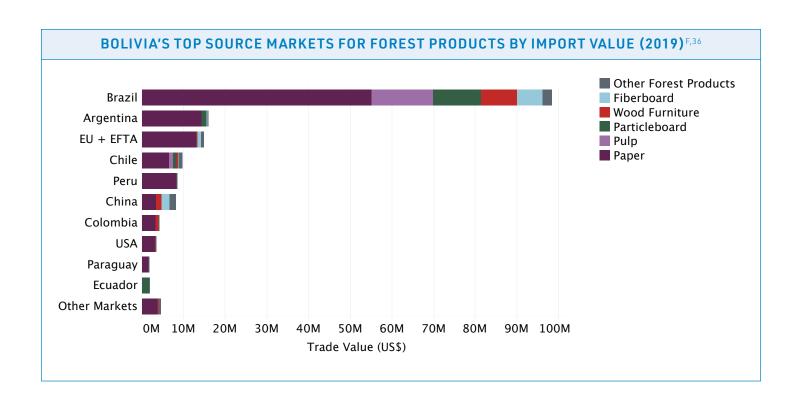
• Wood Chips: 402 thousand m³ (2019)

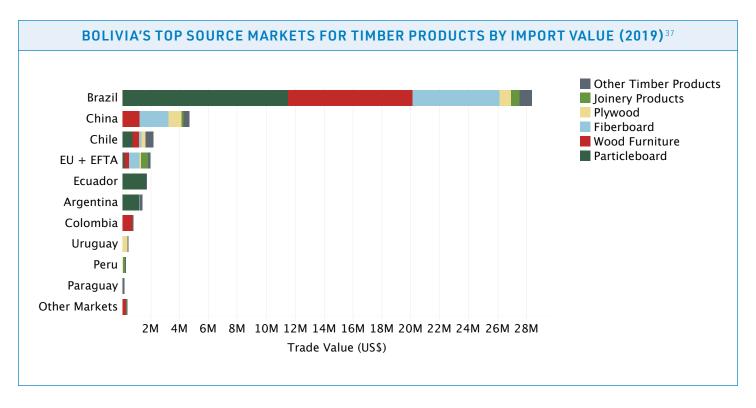
• Fiberboard: 21 thousand m³ (2019)

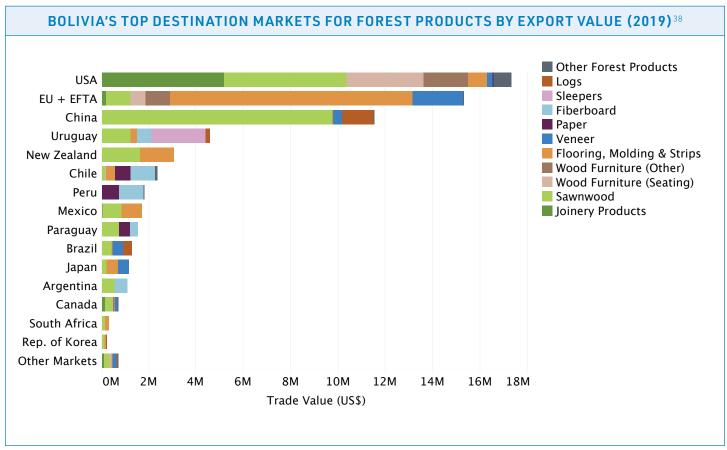
• Plywood: 15 thousand m³ (2019)

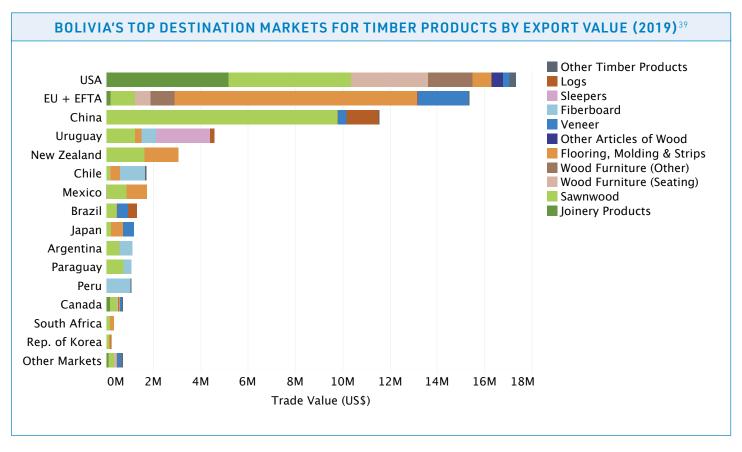
• Veneer: 8 thousand m³ (2019)

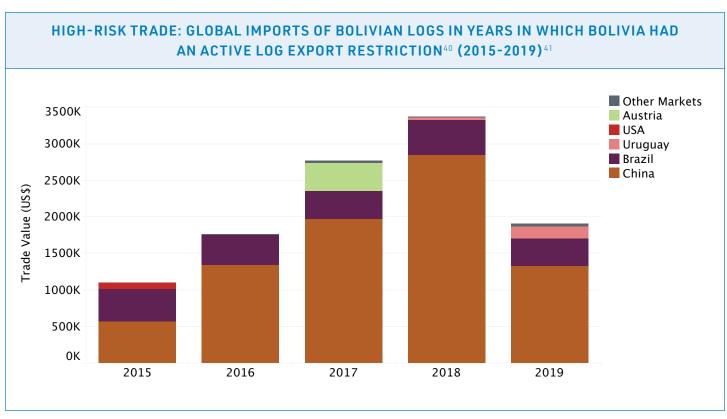
• Charcoal: 36 thousand tonnes (2019)











TIMBER LEGALITY

Bolivia's forest area is estimated at 50.8 million hectares (40 percent of its territory) mainly located in the east and north of the country. Bolivia has seen a 9.5 percent decrease in forest cover since 2000, with soaring rates of forest destruction widely reported in 2019 and 2020. Bolivia became the third highest country globally for total area of forest destruction in 2020 losing 277,000 hectares, only surpassed by Brazil and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. 44

Around two-thirds of the deforestation in Bolivia is reportedly for conversion for industrial agriculture, with hotspots in southeast Bolivia where fires have raged through the drier Chiquitano and Chaco forests. ⁴⁵ Government efforts to diversify country exports contributed to the soaring rates of forest loss, such as a supreme decree in July 2019, which authorized the expansion of the agricultural frontier in Beni and Santa Cruz departments and allowed for new burning for agricultural purposes. ⁴⁶

Bolivia's timber industry contribution to the country's GDP and export earnings is relatively small, particularly compared with other countries in the region. Timber product exports started to decline in 2011 and dropped 50 percent relative to 2011 by 2016, but since then both volume and value of exports have increased again, with new markets emerging in 2019 and 2020. The number of productive forest units dropped around 2016, as did the area of certified forest.⁴⁷

99.9 percent of the forest area is categorized as natural forest (50.77 million hectares). 48 Bolivia reports that ochóo (*Hura crepitans*) is the most widely growing species in the country, followed by castaña (*Bertholletia excelsa*) and bibosi (*Ficus* spp). 49

Plantations cover only an estimated 62,600 hectares. There is limited to no data on species composition.⁵⁰

• Illegal logging is widespread and there are reports of illegally harvested Bolivian timber being trafficked across the borders and exported from Peru and Brazil.

As much as 80 percent of the wood harvested in Bolivia in the early 2000s has been estimated to be illegal.⁵¹ More recent estimates of the extent and nature of illegal logging and trade are limited.

The Forest and Land Authority (Autoridad de Bosques y Tierra – ABT) reported seizing 110,344 cubic meters of illegal timber between 2012 and 2018.⁵² Illegal logging and the illegal timber trade has reportedly increased since. In just six months between January and June 2019, ABT reported seizing more than 6,020 cubic meters and a value of more than \$550,000.⁵³

The ABT also confirmed that illegal logging encroaches into the country's national parks. ⁵⁴ The National Protected Areas Service (SERNAP) identified the following national parks of particular concern: Amboró (Santa Cruz), Madidi (La Paz), Pilón Lajas (Beni), Tipnis (Cochabamba-Beni), Aguaragüe, and Tariguía (Tarija). ⁵⁵

ABT has confirmed that the five regions hardest hit by illegal timber trafficking are the departments of Santa Cruz, Tarija, La Paz, Beni, and Cochabamba. Over half (57 per cent) of the illegal timber leaves the municipalities of San Ignacio and Santa Rosa in Beni as well as Pailón, Charagua, San José, El Puente, Cuatro Cañadas, and San Julián in Santa Cruz department.

There are risks that illegal timber is trafficked across the borders into Peru and Brazil, especially near Pando and Beni where both Bolivian and Peruvian citizens have been detected illegally cutting and transporting timber logged from national parks. The best wood is selected and transported by train across the border to Corumba, Brazil, and then shipped on to China and the U.S. 56 Wood traffickers in the San Fermin area have been reported to log mara (mahogany) trees in Madidi National Park and then transport them by river to Peru, where the wood is sold for 8 soles (\$2.40) per board foot. 57

 Corruption is a significant challenge with reports of false or fraudulent documents issued by government officials for Bolivian harvested timber.

Some companies are laundering illegal timber into supply chains by either fraudulently obtaining the necessary paperwork, falsifying the Forestry Origin Certificate (CFO) or selling timber without a CFO at all. Due to the prevalence of fraudulently obtained documents, official documentation cannot be considered, in and of itself, sufficient to guarantee the legal origin of timber sourced from Bolivia. 58

Most illegal timber that has been fraudulently laundered into a supply chain has been harvested from protected areas, indigenous territories or natural forests. Illegal timber is reportedly laundered out of Bolivia by loggers based on initial fraudulent declarations of greater numbers of trees than exist in reality, which artificially inflates the number of trees

Timber Timber Legality (continued)

contained in the authorized forest management area or in the logging plans. This allows them to top up their timber consignment with illegally extracted timber from other forest areas such as protected areas, while using official documents. ⁵⁹ Other risks reportedly include logging without management plans and cutting trees smaller than the legally permitted diameter. ⁶⁰

There are widespread reports of corruption within the government agencies tasked with managing the forest sector in Bolivia. For example, René Noel Sivila Céspedes, then an ABT authority, reportedly signed 2,096 documents that authorized clearing of protected areas between 2015 to 2018. Céspedes' unit oversaw a reserve of 80,000 hectares in San Ignacio de Velasco, located within Santa Cruz department near Bolivia's border with Brazil. Records were altered, artificially inflating the number of trees in the area to hide the illegal harvests. The officials involved charged \$300 per certificate and helped illegal loggers and traffickers avoid inspections and checkpoints. A 2018 report published by ABT itself found that the agency had authorized the cutting of at least two protected species at far higher rates than were permitted under the law. Permits for tipa (*Tipuana tipu*) had been issued 32,950 percent above the legally permissible rate while permits for morado (internationally traded as "caviuna", *Machaerium scleroxylon*) had been authorized at 128.5 percent above the permitted rate. ABT admitted that some agents were collaborating with criminals.

Illegal harvests of high commercial value species such as morado, tipa, guaya and mara (mahogany) are most likely to be accompanied by fraudulent or falsified documents.⁶⁴

• Loopholes in transport laws are being exploited which facilitates timber being sold without documentation.

Exemptions designed to support small producers or users of forest products are being exploited. In La Paz department, for example, up to 2,000 board feet of timber can be transported by motorcycle without requiring a CFO. The Forest Police chief has reported that this is being abused with "large-scale trafficking" occurring when multiple motorcycles transport thousands of feet of timber without CFOs. 65

• There is a risk that Bolivian harvested high value species are exported in contravention of export restrictions and tied to the wider illegal drugs trade.

The export of mara (mahogany) wood from Bolivia has been prohibited since 2011. 6 That decision was made by the Biodiversity and Protected Areas Authority, part of the Bolivian Ministry of Environment. Mara is currently listed in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), so cross-border trade in the wood is strictly regulated. The species is also classified as vulnerable on the Red List of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). 7 There have been reports of illegal logging and export of mara from Bolivia as well as links to the illegal drugs trade. Reports suggest that the people involved in illegal logging of valuable tree species like mara in San Fermin also grow coca and produce cocaine. 8

Enforcement and penalties remain weak and insufficient to deter illegal logging and illegal export.

SERNAP is responsible for managing and enforcing the law in Bolivia's 22 national parks while ABT is responsible for enforcement outside national parks but also supports the work of park rangers within protected areas. Both agencies report dealing with ever more organized and sophisticated groups of illegal loggers.⁶⁹

Enforcement remains limited as a result of natural forests being remote, often requiring officials to hike for several days into the forest to reach the sites where the traffickers set up their camps. Madidi National Park's 1.8 million ha (4.4 million acres) is patrolled by just 26 rangers.

Limited enforcement capacity is further constrained by a weak penalty system. Even when the authorities detect illegal logging and trade, they can only issue administrative rather than criminal penalties. ⁷² Even in the Céspedes case, where the ABT official had been found to be facilitating and profiting from illegal logging in protected areas, he remained in his position and was only docked 20 percent of his salary, according to Pagina Siete. ⁷³

In the first 6 months of 2019, ABT reported issuing 568 administrative penalties, including 143 violations in transport regulations, 122 for harvest violations, 120 related to illegal storage, 117 to dismount.⁷⁴

SERNAP and ABT have both reported that the agencies are in the process of being restructured following the resignation of long serving President Evo Morales who had led Bolivia from 2006 to November 2019. This While ABT announced that the logging permit granting process and the agency's capacity to monitor forest areas would be improved in 2020, there remains limited information regarding the extent to which these reforms have been operationalized.

REPORTS & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A list of relevant reports and additional online tools to complement this country report are also available at the IDAT Risk website: https://www.forest-trends.org/fptf-idat-home/

Key Reading:

1. Preferred by Nature. 2017. "Timber Legality Risk Assessment, Bolivia, Version 1.2 – November 2017." Preferred by Nature. Accessed December 31, 2020. https://preferredbynature.org/sites/default/files/library/2017-11/NEPCon-TIMBER-Bolivia-Risk-Assessment-EN-V1.2.pdf.

METHODOLOGY & TERMINOLOGY NOTES

- a Risk scores reflect Preferred by Nature's Timber Risk Assessment which measures the risk of illegality occurring in 21 areas of law relevant to timber legality, as well as Forest Trends' national governance scores which provides an average relative governance and corruption risk score for 211 countries globally. Preferred by Nature's scores have been flipped to ensure compatibility with Forest Trends' national governance scores, where higher scores are associated with greater governance and corruption challenges. An average of both the Preferred by Nature and Forest Trends scores has been calculated for 66 countries where both are available as of 2021. For all other countries, the risk score reflects Forest Trends' national governance scores. Countries scoring less than 25 are considered "Lower Risk," countries scoring between 25 and 50 are "Medium Risk" and countries scoring above 50 are "Higher Risk." It is important to note that it is possible to source illegal wood from a well-governed, "Lower Risk" state and it is also possible to source legal wood from a "Higher Risk" country. As such, the risk scores can only give an indication of the likely level of illegal logging in a country and ultimately speaks to the risk that corruption and poor governance undermines rule of law in the forest sector.
- ^b The term "forest products" is used to refer to timber products (including furniture) plus pulp and paper. It covers products classified in the Combined Nomenclature under Chapters 44, 47, 48 and furniture products under Chapter 94. While the term "forest products" is often used more broadly to cover non-timber and non-wood products such as mushrooms, botanicals, and wildlife, "forest products" is used to refer to timber products plus pulp and paper in this dashboard.
- ^c Except where otherwise specified, all trade statistics and chart data is sourced from Bolivian data reported to UN Comtrade, compiled and analyzed by Forest Trends.
- ^d Regulated markets reflect countries and jurisdictions that have developed operational measures to restrict the import of illegal timber. As of 2021, this included the U.S., Member States of the European Union (as well as the United Kingdom, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland), Australia, Canada, Colombia, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, South Korea and Vietnam. Some measures are more comprehensive in scope, implementation, and enforcement than others.
- ^e Article 111 of Bolivia's 1997 legislation specifically prohibits the commercialization "[of flora species] without authorization or of those that are declared prohibited or reserved, putting said species at risk of extinction" [emphasis added]. It is unclear, due to the ambiguous phrasing of this article, if all protected species are prohibited from harvest and trade, or if trade in these species is possible with prior authorization from the competent authority. For the text of the original legislation, see Government of Bolivia, 1992.
- f All references to "EU + EFTA" signify the 27 Member States of the European Union (as of 2021), as well as the United Kingdom, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

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