SUMMARY OF LEGALITY RISKS

Risk Score: 66.3 (Higher-Risk)<sup>1</sup>
Conflict State: NO<sup>2</sup>,b
Log and Sawnwood Export Restriction in Effect: YES<sup>3</sup>
Import Regulation in Effect: YES

- Illegal logging is widespread with illegal timber from the Amazon region primarily supplying the domestic market. Most timber sold to international markets is sourced from the Pacific region of Colombia. Governance remains weak in both the Amazon and Pacific regions.
- For all regions, fraud and corruption are common and there is a risk that illegal timber is laundered into supply chains for both the domestic and international markets.
- Despite several high-profile operations, enforcement is limited in capacity and Regional Environmental Authorities (REAs) do not monitor industry compliance with forest laws with enough regularity.
- Smuggled Peruvian and Ecuadorian timber is reportedly laundered into Colombian supply chains.
- Colombia imports and exports timber of unknown legal origin in violation of Colombian law.
- Colombia has a timber import regulation, but it appears rarely enforced.

TRADE PROFILE<sup>C, D, 4</sup>

Total Imports (2019): $1.05 billion
Total Exports (2019): $368.5 million.
$48.83 million (13.2%) exported to “regulated markets”<sup>e</sup>

SUMMARY OF HIGHEST PRODUCT-LEVEL RISKS

Exports - Top Products Exported to the US by 2019 Value<sup>1</sup>
- Paper (HS48)
- Wood Furniture – Other (HS940360)
- Wood Furniture – Office (HS940330)
- Wood Furniture – Kitchen (HS940340)
- Joinery Products (HS4418)
- Wood Furniture – Bedroom (HS940350)
- Charcoal (HS4402)
- Packing Cases & Pallets (HS4415)
- Flooring, Molding & Strips (HS4409)
- Marquetry (HS4420)

Colombia has reportedly banned the export of primary wood products (including logs, sawnwood, blocks, benches, planks, tables, sheets and chips) since 1966, although the exact coverage of such restrictions remains unclear.<sup>17, 8</sup> Logs reportedly continue to be exported despite likely restrictions on log exports from natural forests. <sup>9, 10, 11</sup>
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 Colombia.

CITES-Listed Species (Appendix II):

- **Aji** (*Caryocar costaricense*)\(^{12,13}\)
- **Brazilian Rosewood** (*Aniba rosaeodora*)\(^{14}\)
- **Mahogany** (*Swietenia macrophylla, Swietenia mahagoni*)\(^{15,16}\)
- **Roughbark** (*Guaiacum officinale*)\(^{17,18}\)
- **Rosewood** (*Dalbergia spp.*)\(^{19}\)
- **Cedrela** spp.
  - Argentina Cedar or Cedro Batata (*Cedrela fissilis*)\(^{20}\)
  - **Cedrela montana**
  - Spanish Cedar (*Cedrela odorata*)\(^{21,22}\)
  - **Cedrela balansae**

All natural forest species in Colombia are high-risk. These include:

- **Abarco** (*Cariniana pyriformis*)\(^{23}\)
- **Achapo** or **Tornillo** (*Cedrelinga cateniformis*)\(^{24}\)
- **Amarillo** (*Nectandra spp.*)\(^{25}\)
- **Arenillo** (*Qualea accuminata, Erisma uncinatum*)\(^{26}\)
- **Caimo** (*Pouteria spp.*)\(^{27}\)
- **Carra** (*Huberodendron patinoi*)\(^{28}\)
- **Cativo** (*Prioria copaifera*)\(^{29}\)
- **Chano** (*Humiriastrum procerum*)\(^{30}\)
- **Comino Crespo** (*Aniba perutilis*)\(^{31}\)
- **Ébano** (*Libidibia ebano*)
- **Fromager** (*Ceiba samauma*)
- **Ishpingo** (*Ocotea quixos*)
- **Magnolia** (*Magnolia caricifragans, M. hernandezii, M. lenticellata, M. mahechae, M. polyhypsophylla, M. urraoensis, M. yarumalensis*)
- **Mahogany** (*Swietenia macrophylla*)
- **Marfil** (*Isidodendron tripterocarpum*)
- **Mora or Yellowheart** (*Mora oleifera*)
- **Nazareno or Purpleheart** (*Peltogyne purpurea*)
- **Peroba Rosa** (*Aspidosperma polyeurum*)
- **Pochote** (*Pachira quinata*)
- **Roughbark** (*Guaiacum officinale*)
- **Saucecillo** (*Podocarpus oleifolius*)
- **Spanish Cedar** (*Cedrela odorata*)
- **Tiratete** (*Orphanodendron bernalii*)
- **Tropical Walnut** (*Juglans neotropica*)
- **Verawood** (*Plectrocarpa arborea, synonym Bulnesia arborea*)
- **Yumbé** (*Caryodaphnopsis cogolloi*)

The following species are categorized as Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable on Colombia's Red List of Forest Species:\(^{h,39}\)

- **Abarco** (*Cariniana pyriformis*)
- **Almendro** (*Dipteryx oleifera*)
- **Brazilian Rosewood** (*Aniba rosaeodora*)
- **Cativo** (*Prioria copaifera*)
- **Chano** (*Humiriastrum procerum*)
- **Clathrotropis Brunnea** (*Clathrotropis brunnea*)
- **Colombian Black Oak** (*Colombobalanus excelsa*)
- **Colombian Oak** (*Quercus humboldtii*)
- **Comino Crespo** (*Aniba perutilis*)
- **Ébano** (*Libidibia ebano*)
- **Fromager** (*Ceiba samauma*)
- **Ishpingo** (*Ocotea quixos*)
- **Magnolia** (*Magnolia caricifragans, M. hernandezii, M. lenticellata, M. mahechae, M. polyhypsophylla, M. urraoensis, M. yarumalensis*)
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- **Yumbé** (*Caryodaphnopsis cogolloi*)
Summary of Highest Species-Level Risks (continued)

The following species are primarily plantation species and are considered lower-risk:

- **Acacia** (*Acacia mangium*)
- **Caribbean Pine** (*Pinus caribea*)
- **Cypress Pine** (*Cupressus lusitanica*)
- **Eucalyptus** (*Eucalyptus spp.*)
- **Kapok** (*Bombacopsis quinata*)
- **Melina** (*Gmelina arborea*)
- **Oocarpa Pine** (*Pinus oocarpa*)
- **Patula Pine** (*Pinus patula*)
- **Savannah Oak** (*Tabebuia rosea*)
- **Spanish Elm** (*Cordia alliodora*)
- **Teak** (*Tectona grandis*)
- **Tecunumanii Pine** (*Pinus tecunumanii*)

**FORESTRY SECTOR**

Forested Area: 59.14 million ha (21% protected)

Deforestation Rate: 0.3% annually

Forest Management (as of 2015):

- 18.3 million ha privately-owned (30%)
- 39.6 million ha publicly-owned (66%)
- 2.17 million ha other-owned (4%)

Certified Forests:

FSC Certification: 153,137 ha (2019)

**Domestic Production**: 46

- Wood Fuel: 6.09 million m³ (2019)
- Logs: 2.67 million m³ (2019)
- Wood Chips: 363 thousand m³ (2019)
- Sawnwood: 353 thousand m³ (2019)
- Particleboard: 167 thousand m³ (2019)
- fibreboard: 123 thousand m³ (2019)
- Plywood: 43 thousand m³ (2019)
- Veneer: 1 thousand m³ (2019)
- Paper: 3.45 million metric tonnes (2019)
- Pulp: 1.41 million metric tonnes (2019)
- Charcoal: 102 thousand metric tonnes (2019)

**COLOMBIA’S TOP SOURCE MARKETS FOR FOREST PRODUCTS BY DECLARED IMPORT VALUE (2019)**
TRADE DISPARITIES: COLOMBIAN EXPORTS TO VIETNAM AND VIETNAMESE IMPORTS FROM COLOMBIA (2014 – 2019)\textsuperscript{51, 52}

**COLOMBIA’S TOP DESTINATION MARKETS FOR TIMBER PRODUCTS BY DECLARED VALUE (2019)\textsuperscript{50}**

![Bar chart showing Colombia's top destination markets for timber products by declared value (2019).](chart)

- **Panama**
- **USA**
- **India**
- **Vietnam**
- **Mexico**
- **China**
- **Chile**
- **Ecuador**
- **Singapore**
- **Israel**
- **Costa Rica**
- **Guatemala**
- **EU + EFTA**
- **Lebanon**
- **Dominican Rep.**
- **Other Markets**

**Colombian Exports**

- **Other Forest Products**
- **Logs**
- **Densified Wood**
- **Charcoal**
- **Flooring, Molding & Strips**
- **Wood Furniture (Kitchen)**
- **Sawnwood**
- **Wood Furniture (Office)**
- **Joinery Products**
- **Wood Furniture (Bedroom)**
- **Wood Furniture (Other)**

**Vietnamese Imports**

- **Logs**
- **Sawnwood**

**Trade Value (US$)**

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HIGH-RISK EXPORTS: SAWNWOOD EXPORTS IN YEARS IN WHICH COLOMBIA HAD AN ACTIVE SAWNWOOD EXPORT RESTRICTION (2014-2019)

Trade Value (US$)

2015 2016 2017 2018 2019

HIGH-RISK EXPORTS: LOG EXPORTS IN YEARS IN WHICH COLOMBIA HAD AN ACTIVE LOG EXPORT RESTRICTION (2014-2019)

Trade Value (US$)

2015 2016 2017 2018 2019
Illegal logging is widespread with illegal timber from the Amazon region primarily supplying the domestic market. Most timber sold to international markets is sourced from the Pacific region of Colombia. Governance remains weak in both the Amazon and Pacific regions.

Each year about 200,000 hectares of tropical forest are destroyed as a result of illegal logging, cattle ranching, coca production and mining, according to official figures. The Instituto de Hidrología, Meteorología y Estudios Ambientales (IDEAM) estimates that illegal logging contributes to around 10 percent of all deforestation in Colombia.

There has been a rapid increase in rates of deforestation since the 2016 peace deal between the Colombian government and FARC – formerly the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – that ended half a century of armed conflict. Criminal gangs are reportedly working together with FARC splinter groups to seize land and/or extract extortion money from farmers for each hectare deforested to expand their illicit revenue streams in the post-conflict areas where governance remains weak. Most of this deforestation is taking place in the Amazon region in the south and east of Colombia with the majority of forest being converted to pastureland but reports suggest that illegal logging and informal timber extraction also play a role. Illegal logging in Colombia’s protected areas and national parks has also been reportedly increasing.

Reports suggest that much of this illegal timber from the Amazon region primarily supplies the Colombian domestic market. Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development data suggests that 47 percent of timber sold in Colombia is illegal, with 2.5 million cubic meters of illegal timber traded each year.

However, illegal timber from the Amazon is also reportedly being trafficked between Colombia and Panama and over the border into Peru using routes used for trafficking people and illegal gold. The vast majority of commercial timber sold to international markets is, however, sourced from the Chocó-Darién forests in Colombia’s Pacific region.

In the Chocó-Darién, there are reports that illegal activities have weakened governance in the region. Armed groups have been reported to bring outsiders to assist in illegal business operations: farmers who are neither Afro-Colombian nor indigenous grow coca or cut timber illegally in the northern part of Chocó-Darién. Some reports indicate that timber from this region is later transported to the port of Buenaventura where it is also laundered into domestic supply chains.

For all regions, fraud and corruption are common and there is a risk that illegal timber is laundered into supply chains for both the domestic and international markets.

Much of the illegal timber that is harvested in Colombia is reportedly laundered into supply chains. Recent NGO investigations in the Colombian Amazon revealed some ways in which illegally harvested timber can be laundered into supply chains. Intermediaries locally known as apoderados reportedly pay landowners lump sums to sign the paperwork necessary to obtain harvesting authorization from the Regional Environmental Authorities (REAs), and then obtain power of attorney to act on behalf of these landowners for both logging and obtaining transport permits. In some cases apoderados report to REAs they have not harvested the total allowable timber in one area which has been fully logged. This allows timber that was illegally harvested elsewhere to be laundered into supply chains by using paperwork issued by REAs for a different location.

In some other cases, the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) found evidence to suggest that apoderados make deals with community members who own land with no standing forest on it and encourage the landowner to fraudulently claim timber harvesting rights to obtain both harvesting authorizations and transport permits which can then be used to launder timber that was illegally harvested elsewhere. The legal owner of the land usually receives some sort of agreed compensation from the apoderado. In the end, the landowner is the one legally liable for any wrongdoing because Colombian legislation does not establish third party liability for apoderados.

Fraudulent paperwork is enabled by the reported levels of corruption within the REAs, tasked with issuing permits for harvesting and transport. In 2018, there were around 400 investigations related to corruption in REAs and the Attorney General called for abolishing REAs altogether claiming that they are “the largest corruption nest that attacks fundamental rights in the country.” Corruption increases the risk for false information and paperwork and also calls into question the independence, impartiality and accuracy of the inspections/supervisions performed by REAs.
Despite several high-profile operations, enforcement is limited in capacity and REAs do not monitor industry compliance with forest laws with enough regularity.

In 2019, the Colombian government reported nearly 90 military operations were carried out to help protect the environment which included seizing illegal timber and arresting more than 200 people for environmental crimes.73

REAs have the mandate and authority to perform supervisions to verify forestry operators’ compliance with Colombia’s forestry laws. According to regulations, timber harvest authorization areas are to be supervised or inspected by REAs at least twice a year.74 However, in practice, field inspections by Corpoamazonia (the REA with jurisdiction in three departments of the Amazon) that might help reduce fraud are not regularly conducted, due to reported lack of resources, personnel or political will.75 This means that REAs in the Amazon either fail to notice or are too late in detecting when unauthorized harvesting has occurred or when issued transport permits are based on false or fraudulent information.

In 2020, the Colombian government announced a commitment to improve monitoring and enforcement through the creation of a special military unit, including troops and equipment from the army, air force, navy and national police, focused on protecting national parks and stepping up operations against illegal armed groups.76

Environmental defenders working against the interests of criminal groups face significant risks in Colombia.77 Park rangers face increasing dangers, patrolling natural reserves where armed groups also roam.78 Global Witness reports that Colombia is the world’s most dangerous country for environmental defenders, with 64 reported deaths in 2019.79 Many cases are often never solved and rarely prosecuted.80

Smuggled Peruvian and Ecuadorian timber is reportedly laundered into Colombian supply chains.

The Colombian Amazon region has 1,644 km of forested river or land border with Brazil, and another 1,650 km with Peru. Control points maintained by either the military or Corpoamazonia, are few and far between along the main ports of the Putumayo and Amazon rivers. Each post may have 10-20 officials to patrol 170+ km of river border and surrounding forest.81 Traffickers can easily play "cat and mouse", moving back and forth between Peruvian and Colombian sides of the border to evade authorities.82

Cargo boats regularly navigate along the Putumayo River loading timber from both sides of the border, in exchange for goods, and using transport permits purchased from Colombian harvest authorization holders.83 In ports like Puerto Asis, EIA investigations revealed a black market of transport permits that allows traders to launder timber smuggled from Peru.84

Similarly, there are reports of timber harvested in Ecuador that is smuggled and laundered into Colombian supply chains.85

Colombia imports and exports timber of unknown legal origin in violation of Colombian law.

The only official customs entry point along the 1,650 km river border between Peru and Colombia is the town of Leticia. While an official notice from the Colombian customs authority Departamento de Impuestos y Aduanas Nacional (DIAN) stated that around 9,663 cubic meters of sawn timber boards were imported from Peru and Brazil into Colombia through Leticia between 2015 and the first trimester of 2019,86 official documents from Colombia’s national authority for environmental licensing Autoridad Nacional de Licencias Ambientales (ANLA) confirmed these import authorizations had not been issued as required under Colombian law.87

During the same period, 2015-2019, Superintendencia Nacional de Aduanas y de Administración Tributaria (SUNAT) the national customs authority in Peru, had not registered a single shipment of timber for export to Colombia along the entire Loreto-Amazonas border,88 which EIA suggest means that all timber imports into Colombia from Peru could be considered contraband according to Peruvian legislation.89

In addition, EIA research indicates that less than 1 percent of the timber and timber products exported from Cartagena (which accounts for around 87 percent of timber and timber products exports from Colombia in terms of value)88 had obtained an authorization for export between 2015 and the first trimester of 2019.90
Timber Legality (continued)

- Colombia has a timber import regulation, but it appears rarely enforced.

In addition to complying with customs requirements, all timber imports and exports, regardless of value, need to obtain approval from ANLA, which involves demonstrating the legal origin of timber. In 2016, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development issued a guideline for importers and exporters to increase awareness and compliance with this regulation. Nevertheless, EIA’s investigations suggest that this framework is not being enforced.

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:

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 While the World Bank does not formally categorize Colombia as a Fragile and Conflict-affected Situation, Colombia only recently, in 2016, signed a peace treaty with the FARC – formerly the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia following fifty-two years of ongoing conflict. The situation remains fragile in some areas.

c 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.

d Except where otherwise specified, all trade statistics and chart data is sourced from UN Comtrade, compiled and analyzed by Forest Trends.

e Regulated markets reflect countries and jurisdictions that have developed operational measures to restrict the import of illegal timber. As of 2021, this includes 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.
Colombia’s export restrictions on timber vary significantly by source, and the exact coverage of these policies remains unclear. The policy as quoted above comes from the “Guide to Exporting and Importing Timber and Non-Timber Products in Colombia” (“Guía para exportar e importar productos maderables y no maderables en Colombia”) published in 2016 by the Colombian Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development (Minambiente). For more information on this guide, see Calderón et al., 2016.

Other interpretations of Colombia’s timber export restrictions include a reported policy banning the export of only certain logs (see Tocarruncho et al., 2016], and a reported policy of banning the export of all logs from natural forests (see Preferred by Nature, 2017; and WWF, 2015).

Species that are not CITES-listed are legally allowed for export from Colombia, but exporters must obtain a Non-CITES permit from the competent authorities. Colombian legislation does not explicitly ban the export of endangered or vulnerable species, but it does prohibit the export of “unauthorized species in order to avoid the export or import of threatened or endangered species” (emphasis added), with the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development (Minambiente) serving as the competent authority. This suggests that Minambiente has a responsibility to deny export licenses for these species, although the actual legality of individual exports of these species remains unclear.


Since 2002, Colombia has published a list of threatened or vulnerable species under the “Libros rojos de especies amenazadas de Colombia” or “Red Book of Threatened Species of Colombia”. This list has been repeatedly updated, with the most recent update reportedly occurring in 2017.


All references to “EU + EFTA” signify the 27 Member States of the European Union, as well as the United Kingdom, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

Exports of logs from plantation species are allowed.

Exports of sawnwood from plantation species are allowed.

Timber imports into Leticia are usually measured in dozens of sawn boards. As per DIAN, the total number of “dozens” imported between 2015 and the 1st trimester of 2019 was 43,487. Experts consulted indicated that the common conversion rate of dozens of sawn timber boards to cubic meters is around 4.5 dozens per cubic meter.

Calculation made for exports of HS4403, HS4407 and HS4409 in the 2016-2018 timeframe.

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66 Van Eynde and Blomley, “Informe: Causas de la Ilegalidad de la Madera en Colombia.”

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69 EIA, “Condenando El Bosque: Ilegalidad y falta de gobernanza en la Amazonía colombiana.”

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71 EIA, “Condenando El Bosque: Ilegalidad y falta de gobernanza en la Amazonía colombiana.”


73 Moloney, “Colombia receives multi-million funding boost to protect tropical forests.”


75 EIA, “Condenando El Bosque: Ilegalidad y falta de gobernanza en la Amazonía colombiana.”

76 Moloney, “Colombia receives multi-million funding boost to protect tropical forests.”


81 EIA, “Condenando El Bosque: Ilegalidad y falta de gobernanza en la Amazonía colombiana.”

82 EIA, “Condenando El Bosque: Ilegalidad y falta de gobernanza en la Amazonía colombiana.”

83 EIA, “Condenando El Bosque: Ilegalidad y falta de gobernanza en la Amazonía colombiana.”

84 EIA, “Condenando El Bosque: Ilegalidad y falta de gobernanza en la Amazonía colombiana.”


EIA, “Condenando El Bosque: Ilegalidad y falta de gobernanza en la Amazonía colombiana.”


EIA, “Condenando El Bosque: Ilegalidad y falta de gobernanza en la Amazonía colombiana.”

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The Dashboards have been compiled from publicly available information sources to support risk assessments on the legality of timber products entering international supply chains. The Dashboards are for educational and informational purposes only. The Dashboards have been drafted with input from the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) and are subject to external peer review. The Dashboards will be updated periodically based on newly available information.

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