

PNG rainforest 'in grave danger'

By Roland Pease
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The natural forests of Papua New Guinea are in danger of being wiped out because of illegal logging, according to a conservation organisation.

Forest Trends said foreign logging firms were violating laws intended to promote sustainable forestry, and the PNG government was not enforcing them.

The country has one of the world's most extensive natural rainforest ranges.

Most evidence is drawn from reports commissioned and published by Papua's government with World Bank support.

But Forest Trends says they have never been pulled together into a single body of work, nor have they been acted on.

Consumer pressure hope

Natural forests are being chopped down unsustainably, mostly by Malaysian companies, the organisation says.

It reports that much of the labour is imported, and says that Papua New Guineans are not getting an acceptable return for the logging while one of the country's precious natural resources is dwindling.

Most of the timber is exported to China, and is often turned into products for export to the West.

The conservationists hope that consumer pressure from these destination countries will change the loggers' ways.

The existing laws in Papua New Guinea would suffice if they were enforced, and the local form of community-based land ownership is conducive to sustainable management of the forests, they argue.

But if felling continues the way it is done now, they warn, Papua New Guinea could be bereft of its natural cover in a decade.

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