

PRESS RELEASE

Online Training Platform helping Vietnamese timber industry get to grips with FLEGT

Hanoi (30th August 2016) – Today NEPCon and SFMI launch an online training platform providing knowledge and ready-to-use tools on timber legality for Vietnamese timber enterprises and relevant stakeholders. This is part of the project “Increasing capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to implement FLEGT requirements”, co-funded by the European Union (EU) and NEPCon.

Vietnam is negotiating a formal FLEGT (Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade) Voluntary Partnership Agreement with the EU. The Agreement is expected to be signed by end of 2016. Vietnamese timber sector, particularly SMEs, therefore need to equip themselves knowledge on the EU FLEGT Action Plan, applicable requirements and the possible impacts on their business in the long run.

In the FLEGT process, CSOs - organisations working closely with timber companies on the ground, such as timber associations, NGOs implementing FLEGT related projects, appear to be practical supporters to timber enterprises within their reach.

Freely accessible at flegt-tools.org/toolkit-and-training-centre/, the training content comprises of explanation on FLEGT, the EU Timber Regulation – an important part of the FLEGT Action Plan, and indispensable concepts on managing Chain of Custody (CoC) in the timber sector. This ultimately aims at supporting SMEs to better comply with the applicable requirements towards the legal timber trade.

“This resource aims to benefit a variety of stakeholders, such as timber enterprises, timber associations, non-governmental organisations, institutions working in timber industry who would like to have more detailed understanding of the above subjects”, said Ms Ann Weddle, Project Manager from NEPCon.

Built in the form of presentation videos, free downloadable tools and materials, and quizzes to help learners test the knowledge and track their learning progress, the platform is available in both Vietnamese and English.

This set of user-friendly materials is the result of more than two years of development work between the project team in collaboration with Vietnamese SMEs, timber associations, and other NGOs and programmes on FLEGT. Designed by seasoned experts on timber legality, all materials have undergone a testing period. This process is to ensure the training materials fill in the information gap on FLEGT among CSOs and SMEs and are understandable by its targeted learners.

“The most recent versions of these materials have taken in feedback collected through training workshops with CSOs, enterprise visits, and stakeholder consultation meetings. All inputs and

recommendations are invaluable contributions to the development of the materials”, explained Ms. Weddle.

The platform also provides a comprehensive list of tools specifically designed for SMEs working in the timber industry. Interested timber companies can use these tools for their business operation to improve compliance to applicable timber legality requirements. The toolkit contains guidance documents, checklists, and templates that are ready for use. “The participants were equipped with knowledge on timber legality, the Timber Regulations of EU and requirements of FLEGT, and especially how to use the tools provided to assess the readiness and prepare enterprises for FLEGT’s requirements”, Ms. Phan Tran Hong Van, Office Manager of Vietnam Rubber Association said after attending a training workshop.

This online platform is set to widely share essential knowledge on the topics to interested stakeholders, those could not attend in-person training courses organised by the project. Four training workshops in the North, Central and South of Vietnam have been conducted so far. The fifth training will be held this September in Ho Chi Minh City, using the same set of training materials. Interested participants can contact the project team to register for this last training course within the project period at VNFLFLEGT@nepcon.org.

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About the Project

The project “Increasing capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to implement FLEGT requirements” is funded by the EU and implemented by NEPCon and SFMI from March 2014 to March 2017. The project aims to strengthen the capacity of Vietnamese SMEs to fulfil the EU FLEGT requirements. By providing tools and training for the SMEs through key intermediary organisations, the project supports legal timber trade in and out of Vietnam. For more information, please visit: <https://flegt-tools.org/>

About SFMI

The Research Institute for Sustainable Forest Management and Forest Certification (SFMI) is a Vietnamese NGO working on forest science and related topics. Founded in 2006, under the Vietnamese Union of Science and Technology Science, SFMI has contributed significantly to forest management and certification in Vietnam. The details of projects and research conducted by SFMI can be found at <http://sfmi.org.vn/>

About NEPCon

NEPCon (Nature Economy and People Connected) is an international, non-profit organisation working to mainstream sustainability. NEPCon is specialised within legal and sustainable forestry and trade. Their timber legality team works with importers of timber products in the EU and their suppliers worldwide to build due diligence and facilitate legal timber trade.

To foster legal timber trade, NEPCon makes its EU-endorsed LegalSource™ Due Diligence System freely available. The organisation was the first organisation to be formally recognised by the European Commission as an EUTR Monitoring Organisation providing assistance to companies in all EU member states. Learn more about NEPCon and their LegalSource Programme at www.nepcon.org

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