



Environmental Cooperation-Asia (ECO-Asia)

Responsible Asia Forestry and Trade (RAFT)



Mark Goffroy/The Nature Conservancy

A wide path is often cut through the forest to bring illegal logs to the river and transported to the trading post

BACKGROUND The tropical forests in Asia are among the biologically richest in the world. In Borneo, for example, a mere 1.5 forested acres frequently have more tree species than does all of North America. However, forests are lost or degraded at an alarming rate. Every month for the past five years, Indonesia has lost an average area of forest equal to 115,000 American football fields.

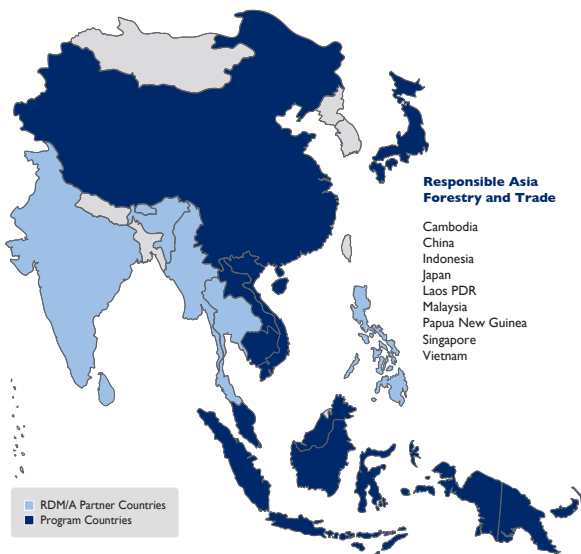
Illegal logging, poorly planned conversion of natural forests and oil palm are the main drivers of deforestation in the region. This destructive forest exploitation comes with high environmental and economic costs for both the rural poor and national economies, and undermines good governance and the social fabric of communities.

The Asia-Pacific region is home to half the world's population, with growing demands for timber, wildlife products and other forest resources. The region is the world's largest producer and consumer of tropical timber. What happens in Asia-Pacific tropical timber markets shapes the rest of the global market.

TRANSFORMING THE TROPICAL TIMBER TRADE Recognizing the importance of sustainable management of Asia's forest resources, USAID recently partnered with The Nature Conservancy, a non-profit environmental organization, to protect Asia's unique forest biodiversity. The new partnership, the Responsible Asia Forestry and Trade (RAFT) program, brings together a catalytic group of NGOs, governments and the private sector to transform the tropical timber trade.

RAFT builds on the successes of the Global Development Alliance, a USAID-sponsored program in Indonesia, and applies lessons learned on a regional scale. RAFT works with forest producers in Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Papua New Guinea. Additionally, RAFT works in other countries such as China, Japan, Singapore, members of the European Union, and the U.S. to address procurement and investment policies that promote the legal timber trade.

APPROACH Through the RAFT initiative, The Nature Conservancy and ECO-Asia protect forests in Asia by transforming the market for tropical timber to achieve sustainability. RAFT focuses on promoting responsible timber trade and the sustainable management of forest resources and biodiversity. The initiative aims to improve



forest management practices, promote timber trade from certified legal sources, reduce forest-related conflict, and strengthen regional cooperation on forest management and trade.

Increase regional timber trade from legal sources.

Currently, there are no widely accepted legal standards when it comes to the timber trade. RAFT works to mainstream the use and acceptance of credible legal standards regionally, allowing businesses to ensure that the wood they purchase comes from well-managed, legally logged forests. Additionally, RAFT assists governments and private enterprises to develop and apply responsible timber purchasing policies and investment screening procedures to favor legally verified forest products and exclude illegal forest products.

Improve sustainability of forest management on the ground. RAFT provides training workshops for partners in the areas of participatory planning, conflict management and identification and management of High Conservation Value Forest areas. The program also works with forest managers to identify and set aside areas of high biodiversity.

Strengthened regional cooperation on forest management and trade. RAFT shares lessons learned on a regional scale by working collaboratively with a wide range of partners from private industry, governments and NGOs to inter-governmental agencies such as ASEAN and the International Tropical Timber Organization. It is important to develop demonstration sites and model enterprises for sustainable and well-managed production forests, for supply-chain management systems, and for responsible investment screening procedures. ECO-Asia's partners play a key role in informing national and regional policy discussions, as well as facilitating learning networks that will help share knowledge and have a significant impact on the conservation community.

Implementing Partners The Nature Conservancy will be the lead a consortium of public and private organizations and NGOs including: World Conservation Union (IUCN), Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), Tropical Forest Trust (TFT), Tropical Forest Foundation (TFF), Regional Community Forestry Training Center (RECOFTC), ASEAN, International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), ScanCom, DLH, The Home Depot, Lowe's, and Xerox

Contact: Apichai Thirathon

*Environmental Cooperation-Asia (ECO-Asia)
U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)
Diethelm Towers A, 10th Floor, 93/1 Wireless Road Bangkok, Thailand 10330
Office +66-2-263-7400
Fax +66-2-263-7499
Email: athirathon@usaid.gov*