

DRC's Logging Industry Marred by Systemic Illegalities, New Findings Show

Possible Lifting of Moratorium on New Forest Concessions and Lack of Enforced Log Export Ban Threaten the Future of World's Second Largest Tropical Forest

KINSHASA, CONGO-KINSHASA, October 14, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- An unprecedented body of work, including big data research, an undercover investigation, interactive data visualization, and solution-oriented recommendations, stemming from the collaboration between Actions pour la Promotion et Protection des Peuples et Espèces Menacés (APEM), Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA US), and Rainforest Foundation UK (RFUK), shows that industrial logging in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is plagued by systemic alleged illegalities.

According to the findings, the [log-centric industrial logging sector](#) isn't contributing its fair share to the Congolese economy and employment, and

undermining regional efforts to control the export of logs and address governance challenges in the forestry sector. In the runup to the critical meeting of parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the report underscores that the industrial logging sector is imperiling the DRC's status

as a biodiversity and climate "solution" country. While these challenges are real, policy solutions are at arm's reach of the new Congolese government, including implementation of a ban on the export of unprocessed logs, and the maintenance of a national moratorium on logging concessions.

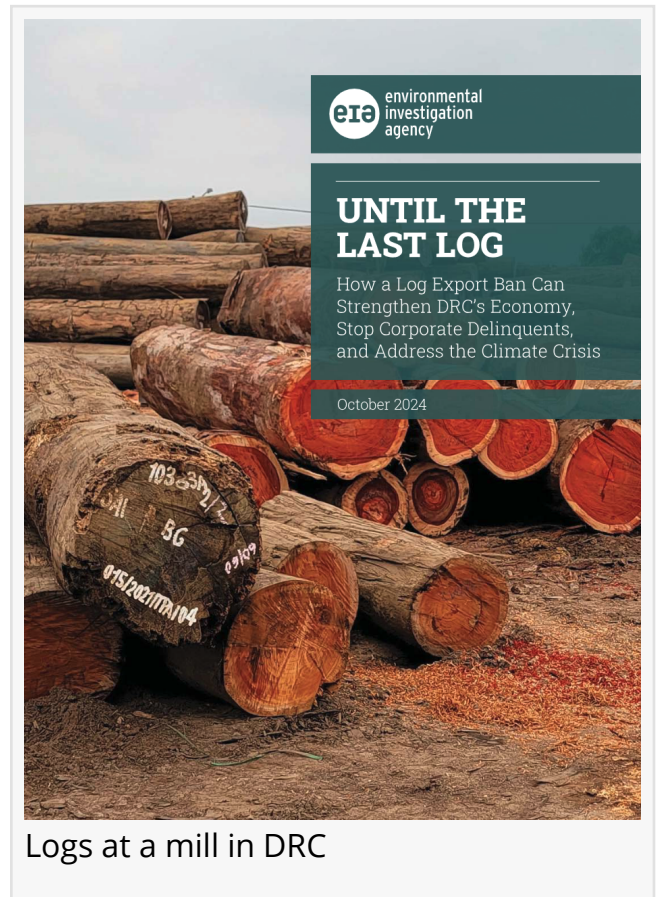
“

The failure to enforce a log export ban is a missed opportunity for the DRC”

Raphael Edou, Africa Program Manager, EIA US

These findings are concerning given that DRC is home to

approximately 60% of the Congo Basin rainforest, the second-largest tropical forest in the world and a vital carbon sink. Logging, including industrial logging, is a key [driver and catalyst](#) of forest



Logs at a mill in DRC

degradation and deforestation in the country.

Preliminary findings of APEM and RFUK's analysis of 82 forest concessions managed by 29 companies and covering approximately 14.5 million hectares (13 million hectares for industrial logging concessions and 1.5 million hectares for conservation concessions), only 6% of industrial logging concessions in the country met the criteria for legality according to the country's forest code. Results of the analysis, which included a review of government audits, donor reports and interviews with officials are currently being reviewed in consultation with civil society actors and government experts and will be available soon. Furthermore, industrial logging in DRC provides negligible economic benefit, with over 42% of logging concessions not in order with the payment of their surface taxes. The sector is also characterized by poor social impact, with only 15% of companies compliant with their socioeconomic obligations to local communities.



Logs loaded on trucks in DRC

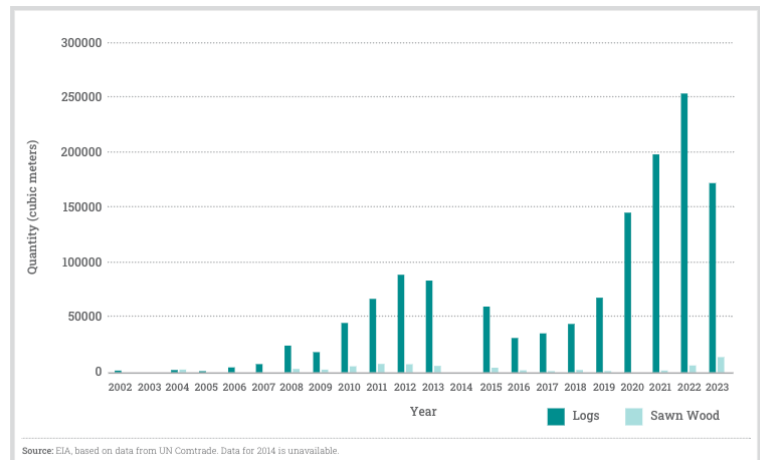


Figure 13
Chinese imports of logs and sawn wood from DRC by volume, 2002-2022.

Chinese imports of logs and sawn wood from DRC by volume, 2002-2022

“This research shows that the vast majority of forest concession holders in DRC are failing to meet even the most basic environmental, social and fiscal standards, undermining the country's role as a ‘solutions country’ to the climate and biodiversity crises in the run up to crucial global summits taking place in Cali and Baku in the coming weeks” said Blaise Mudodosi, APEM National Coordinator.

“While we welcome the recent government's decision to suspend the contracts of 16 concessions operating illegally; however, this does not go far enough. It should now take similar actions with other illegal companies, shelve a plan to open up tens of millions of hectares of forests to the timber industry and expand its support for scaling up community forest management in the country - something that DRC is a leader in.” he added.

EIA's report, [Until the Last Log](#), is an investigation into the two largest industrial logging companies operating in DRC by area of their holdings, Wan Peng and Booming Green. According to the research, the two Chinese-owned groups are engaged in an array of apparent forest

crimes and corruption to meet their clients' demand for unprocessed logs. EIA investigators heard from company insiders who described engaging in the violation of harvesting quotas, misdeclaration of species to facilitate overharvesting in order to satisfy clients in China, and routine payment of bribes to cover up illegalities. A manager at Wan Peng also admitted that the company obtained a concession in DRC by paying a bribe to "the General"; an apparent reference to General Gabriel Amisi Kumba, who has been sanctioned by the United States and European Union for human rights abuses.

Forestry insiders who spoke with EIA investigators also explained that there is one respect in which DRC is a standout destination for laundering tropical logs from neighboring countries: the fact that companies have the freedom there to export timber in the form of raw, unprocessed logs, whereas other countries in the Congo Basin and elsewhere are increasingly moving to ban the export of unprocessed logs. Indeed, Wan Peng employees showed EIA investigators piles of logs freshly smuggled from the neighboring Republic of Congo, where a log export ban has recently been adopted. EIA's investigation further revealed that the ability for forestry operators to export logs plays a significant role in making their forest crimes profitable. Managers from Wan Peng and Booming Green explained that they export "100 percent" logs, and that doing so is critical to meeting their clients' demand.

"The failure to enforce a log export ban is a missed opportunity for the DRC," said Raphael Edou, Africa Program Manager, EIA US. "If industrial loggers are made to transform wood in the place it is harvested, and proper accompanying policies are implemented, it will stimulate the national and provincial economies and create jobs for young people. DRC's forest sector receives significant financial support from international organizations like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and bilateral donors like the U.S., France, and Norway. But that money will not be effective without addressing the structural issues in the industrial logging sector, like the log-laundering laissez-faire in DRC that threatens forest governance in neighboring countries."

These findings point to a need for concerted action by the DRC to address the governance issues in the industrial logging sector to meet its climate and biodiversity commitments. Urgent priorities include issuing a national log export ban to encourage the industrialization of the wood processing sector in DRC and maintaining the 2002 national moratorium on new logging concessions until such time as the existing concession system is demonstrably brought under control. They underscore the need for the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of DRC to take corrective measures against bad actors including action against illegally operating concessions, canceling permits; investigating Booming Green and Wan Peng, and public officials who have enabled them.

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