

Forest Laws of PNG

Policy

and

Legislation

Following the Forestry Commission of Inquiry a considerable amount of new forest policy and legislation have been introduced. These include:

- **National Forest Policy** – this was issued in September 1991 by the National Executive Council and covers areas of forest management, the forest industry, forest research, forest training and education, and forest organization and administration.
- **Forestry Act 1991** – this was gazetted in June 1992. This Forest Act was a direct result of the Commission of Inquiry and provided for the establishment of the new and autonomous Forest Authority to replace the old Department of Forests. The Act provides for much tighter controls in the acquisition and allocation of land for forest development.
- **Forest Regulation No. 15, 1992** – this was introduced to enable registration of forest industry participants and consultants under the Act.
- **Forestry (Amendment) Act, 1993** - this was certified in April 1993 and provided for a clear administrative function of the Board, the National Forest Service through the Managing Director and the Provincial Forest Management Committees.
- **The National Forest Development Guidelines** – these were issued by the Minister for Forests and endorsed by the National Executive Council during September 1993. The Guidelines established essentially an implementation guide for aspects covered in the new Forest Act, especially in terms of sustainable production, domestic processing, forest revenue, training and localization, review of existing projects, forest resource acquisition and allocation and sustainable development.
- **The National Forest Plan** – under the Forestry Act 1991 (as amended), the Forest Authority is required to prepare a National Forest Plan to provide a detailed statement of how the national and provincial governments intend to manage and utilise the country's forest resources. The National Forest Development Programme (NFDP) under the Plan is now under implementation.
- **The Logging Code of Practice** was finalized in February 1996 and tabled in Parliament in July 1996. The PNG Code is inconsistent with the Regional Code proposed at the 1995 Suva Heads of Forestry Meeting but is more specific to PNG operating conditions. It will be mandatory as of July, 1997.
- **The 1996 Forestry Regulations**, which cover all facets of the industry procedures and control, were approved by the National Executive Council during 1996, in principle subject to some changes to be finalized soon. These Regulations provide the legal status for the implementation of many of the requirements specified under the Forestry Act 1991 (as amended).
- **The Forestry (Amendment no. 2) Act 1996** was passed by Parliament and certified on the 11 October 1996. The major amendment relates to the membership to the Board to still have eight members, including the representatives of a National Resource Owners Association and the Association of Foresters of PNG.

- Since the Forestry Act was first enacted in 1991, it has been amended four times. The first in 1993, followed by others in 1996, 2000, 2005.

Policy formulation in progress

a) Downstream Processing Policy

Successive governments have been emphasizing on onshore processing of forest products however, the forest industry continues to be log export oriented. To ensure wise utilization of the nation's forest resource, and to increase in value of forest products as well as technological transfer, the PNGFA is formulating a policy on downstream processing. The policy once finalized and implemented shall contribute significantly towards the government's export driven economic recovery strategy. The policy is has been approved by the National Forest Board and will soon go before the National Executive Council for its consideration and approval for use.

b) Reforestation Policy

The forest resource of Papua New Guinea is depleting at a faster rate. Papua New Guinea is a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol for carbon sequestration under the clean development mechanism. Hence, the need for reforestation in Papua New Guinea is very crucial. The PNG Forest Authority with the Resource Management Division has drafted a Reforestation Policy to meet future timber demand both domestically and for export purposes as well as to fulfil the government's commitment to the clean development mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol. The policy has been approved by the National Forest Board and will soon be submitted to the National Executive Council.

c) Eco-Forestry Policy

Most if not all major timber operators in the country are foreign owned in view of the high cost involved in forestry businesses. To ensure resource owner participation in the development of their timber resource, the European Union funded Eco Forestry Project came about. The three components to the project were:

- Field component;
- Marketing component; and
- Policy component.

The PNG Forest Authority has formulated a policy on Eco-Forestry to create a conducive environment for landowner participation and wise utilization of the forest resource. After gauging views from various stakeholders through regional workshops, the policy has been approved by the National Forest Board and will soon go before the National Executive Council for its consideration and approval.

FUTURE POLICY AREAS

a) Forest Research Policy

The recent review of the forest research programmes under the PNG Forest Research Institute (FRI) recommended that a policy on forest research is required. The policy will aim to redirect limited resources (financial and manpower) to conduct applied forest research and dissemination of results.

b) Non – Timber Forest Products (NTFP)

The flora of PNG contains apart from the timber species non-timber forest products most of which have commercial importance. This includes rattan, sandalwood, eaglewood, medicinal plants, resins etc. Smuggling of eaglewood and sandalwood is prevalent in the Western, Gulf and Sepik provinces. Hence, the PNG Forest Authority is considering formulating a policy on non-timber forest products.