

The Sensible Environmentalist

Putting A Stop To Illegal Logging

(NAPSA)—Dear Dr. Moore:

Is there anything the rest of the world can do to stop illegal logging and the shrinking of tropical forests?



Moore

The problem of tropical deforestation has more to do with expanding cities and lands being converted for agriculture than it does with forestry, but illegal logging and—more to the point—unsustainable forest practices are still huge concerns.

Like many people, I believe that countries need an incentive to maintain their forests, namely the ability to sell their wood for a reasonable profit. In the early 1990s, the Western world's reaction to deforestation was to boycott tropical timber. As intended, the value of the timber plummeted. Unfortunately, instead of improving their practices, landowners harvested at an even faster rate—and replaced the trees with crops (such as papayas) that the world was willing to buy.

The focus now is on teaching communities how to practice sustainable forestry, so they can sell their wood and receive much-needed cash today, while maintaining their forests and ensuring a source of income in the future. It is hoped that this will also help to reduce illegal logging—that the

more communities are able to reap the economic benefits, the less tolerant they'll be of illegal activities that threaten forest health.

By their nature, illegal activities operate under the radar, but the World Bank estimates that illegal logging generates between US\$10 billion and \$15 billion every year—and includes a substantial part of the forest harvest in many countries.

The good news is that the international community—including the United Nations—is working on a number of fronts to expose and stop illegal practices. Among other things, countries are being encouraged to improve their laws, enforcement and monitoring, and to adopt certification programs that ensure forest sustainability.

Illegal logging is a complex issue caused by a range of societal pressures. As a sensible environmentalist, I believe that developed countries can contribute to a solution by sharing what we know about sustainability—and that we can all play a role by using tropical hardwoods only where it can be demonstrated that they come from sustainably managed forests.

Dr. Patrick Moore has been a leader of the environmental movement for more than 30 years. A co-founder of Greenpeace, he holds a PhD in ecology and a BSc in forest biology. Questions can be sent to Patrick@SensibleEnvironmentalist.com.