Mexico

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Mexico has temperate and tropical climates and is a major consumer and producer of timber. **In recent years, Mexico has experienced a rise in deforestation rates, especially from agricultural land conversion (see Global Forest Watch's article on avocados and deforestation)**. As of 2020, **95% of deforestation in Mexico occurs illegally**. In October 2023, the National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR) released the ***State of the Forestry Sector in Mexico 2022*** which provides insights on developments, action areas and opportunities for Mexico's forest sector. Notably, the report highlights the threat of illegal logging and associated trade throughout the country, mainly attributed to the presence of organized crime and illegal laundering of forest products, restrictions to join legal forestry activities, social conflicts and the existence of government corruption. In response, the government of Mexico has established interinstitutional collaboration mechanisms and schemes of action to continue combatting illegal logging and associated trade. Mexico has also updated its primary forest laws, beginning in 2018, to improve forestry regulations throughout the country.

Forest Management

Forest Governance

In Mexico, **forest lands are privately owned** (30.4%), communally owned through ejidos or by Indigenous communities (70.6 million hectares, 50.9%), owned by the State (2.9%) and other non-identified types of properties (15.8%). While there are national laws that regulate production in forest areas, the **General Law on Sustainable Forestry Development (2018) (modified in 2024)** delegates each Federal Entity to design and develop economic instruments to comply with the forestry policy and manage the forests within their jurisdictions (Articles 9-14; 136).

Forest products can be commercially harvested from forest lands (natural forests) and forest plantations. According to CONAFOR's National Forestry Information System (SNIF) **webpage**, Mexican timber production in 2022 amounted to 8.8 million m3 of roundwood. Mexico no longer issues concessions for forest production and other forestry activities. Instead, the Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT) issues authorizations and notices for forest use purposes directly to the landowners.

The following agencies/ministries oversee regulation and management of forest lands and products in Mexico:

- **Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT)**: Responsible for developing and carrying out national sustainable forestry development policies, designing forest policy instruments, operating the National Forest Registry, generating policies, evaluating programs related to forest illegality and issuing Official Mexican Standards on forest issues. SEMARNAT also promotes the participation and coordination of relevant stakeholders within the forest sector. The Secretariat oversees several programs and governmental entities for forests and the use of forest resources.
    - **National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR)**: CONAFOR is a decentralized public body that is responsible for developing and promoting productive activities,

conservation, restoration, sustainable use, commercialization, and education within the forest sector. Oversees programs and plans for sustainable forestry development throughout Mexico and supports and coordinates agencies and programs involved in forest matters. For a list of CONAFOR offices in Mexico's states, see **here**.
        - The **National Forest Information System (SNIF)** is a service provided by CONAFOR that integrates and records forestry information on Mexico's forest ecosystems and sustainable forest development actions. Within SNIF, there is publicly available data on various aspects of forestry matters, including production data, forest monitoring and deforestation tracking and forest inventories. Recently, efforts to integrate SNIF with **State Forest Information Systems (SEIFs)** have been underway.
    - **Federal Environmental Protection Agency (PROFEPA)**: With a focus on environmental justice priorities, PROFEPA monitors compliance with environmental laws and regulations and carries out inspections, verifications, and surveillance to promote the protection of natural resources and the environment.
    - **National Commission of Protected Natural Areas (CONANP)**: Oversees Mexico's Protected Natural Areas (ANP) and is responsible for the preservation and sustainability of ecosystems, natural environments and the promotion of biodiversity.
- **National Forestry Council (CONAF)**: As an advisory body established through the General Law on Sustainable Forestry Development, CONAF provides supervision, surveillance, evaluation and monitoring support for priorities and compliance efforts established within this Law.

Transparency

For information regarding transparency and risk scores in Mexico, head to these links:

- Transparency International's **Corruption Perceptions Index**
- The World Bank's **Worldwide Governance Indicator Data**

Laws and Regulations

Forest Laws

- **General Law on Sustainable Forestry Development (2018) (modified in 2024)**: Establishes the roles and responsibilities of different government entities regarding forestry activities. The law promotes the sustainable use and development of forests and forest resources and regulates forest product harvesting, processing, transport and trade. Outlines seven policy instruments that make up Mexico's national forestry policy, including the **National Forest Monitoring System (SNMF)**.
    - The Secretariat is required to authorize the use of timber or forest resources from forest lands. To obtain forest use authorization, forest owners must have a forest management program (Article 73). Forest owners must also submit a report on the execution, development and compliance with the forest management plan (Article 74).
    - Environmental impact authorization must be obtained for forestry activities and harvesting in natural protected areas, jungles and species of difficult regeneration as outlined in Article 75.

    - This law prohibits clearing existing forest vegetation to establish commercial forest plantations on forest lands but permits the creation of forest plantations on temporarily forested and preferably suitable for forestry lands (Article 78). Written notice is required to receive authorization for the creation of forest plantations in these permitted areas. Plantations owners must **submit annual reports** regarding the planted surfaces and the volume of raw materials harvested. This report is required to document proof of legal origin (Article 83).

- **Regulation of the General Law of Sustainable Forestry Development (2020)**: Provides regulations on the General Law of Sustainable Forestry Development. This regulation outlines various forest policy instruments, their components and applications. Regarding forest harvesting, timber and forest products must be expressed in cubic meters (Article 32).
    - **Forest use on forest lands**: Individuals or companies seeking authorization for the use of forest resources on forest land must present the Secretariat with legal documentation and fulfill the Secretariat's requests for information (see Article 38 for details). Forest use authorization is only issued when accompanied by a management program (Article 39).
    - **Forest use on commercial forest plantations**: For commercial forest plantations on lands categorized to be suitable for forests ("preferred for forest cover") with planted areas greater than 800 hectares, an application must be submitted to the Secretariat (details on the application requirements are established in Articles 62 and 63). For commercial forest plantations on temporary forest lands and preferably forest lands with planted areas less than 800 hectares, the individual or company must provide written notice to the Secretariat (detailed in Articles 65 and 66). Holders of plantation notices and authorizations must provide reports on the volume of forest products harvested (Article 69).

Legal origin documents must be maintained by the forest or plantation owner for at least two years from the end date of the authorization or notice (Article 121). Phytosanitary technical reports are required for forest and plantation owners (Article 198).

The regulation also provides guidelines for the use of non-timber forest resources, scientific research, procedures for forest land use change, forest services, forest health and more.

- **Mexican Official Standard NOM-152-SEMARNAT-2023 (2023)**: Establishes the criteria for sustainable forest management programs in forests, jungles and vegetation in arid areas. Forest Management Programs are one component of receiving authorization for the use of forest resources and contain objectives on the sustainable use of timber and forest resources or the sustainable use of non-timber forest resources. This standard provides the objectives of various forest management programs, the required information to present within each Program and the necessary measures to follow to complete a forest management program.
- **Agrarian Law (1992) (last modified in 2023)**: Regarding forestry, this law regulates the ownership of forest lands, from small landholders to companies.
- *For additional regulations on the use of non-timber resources, trade in forest products, forest health and other fundamental issues related to forest management, see the 2021 list of Mexican Official Standards (Normas Oficiales Mexicanas) (NOM) **here**. Note: This is **not** a complete list of all NOMs applicable to the forest sector.*

Non-regulatory public policy instruments

The National Forest Program and Operating Rules for the 2023 Sustainable Forest Development for Wellbeing Program are not regulatory instruments. Instead, they are public policy instruments aimed at promoting the forest sector and the management of forest ecosystems.

- **National Forest Program 2020-2024**: Establishes a four-year framework that consists of five priority objectives such as sustainable community forest management, forest ecosystem protection, inclusive approaches to conservation and restoration efforts in forests, forest governance and developing the forestry sector. The program articulates specific strategies and actions to achieve the goals of the five objectives.
- **Operating Rules for the 2023 Sustainable Forest Development for Wellbeing Program**: Establishes financial support mechanisms for different forest ownership and management structures based on the implementation of conservation, restoration and sustainable management efforts. These rules outline the requirements and procedures to apply for support as well as the obligations of beneficiaries upon receiving support. For more details on the program, follow this link: **Sustainable Forest Development Program for Wellbeing 2023**.

Processing/Manufacturing Laws

- **General Law on Sustainable Forestry Development (2018) (modified in 2024)**: Any individual involved in the use, transport, storage, processing or trade of forest products must have proof of the products' legal origin (Article 91). Semiannual reports must be submitted by the owners of processing and storage centers (Article 92).
    - To operate storage and processing centers not integrated into a primary transformation center, the Secretariat and local authorities must grant prior authorization (Article 92).

- **Regulation of the General Law of Sustainable Forestry Development (2020)**: Any storage or processing center not integrated into a primary transformation center (detailed in Article 122) must maintain forest referrals, forestry reshipments, customs requests and tax receipts for at least five years from its issuance. For centers that maintain entry and exit record books, these documents must be kept for at least five years from the document's closure (Article 121).
    - **Authorization to operate a storage or processing center** is required. To obtain authorization, the owner must submit an application to the National Forestry Commission with the necessary information established in Articles 123, 124 and 128.
    - For **centers that are not integrated into a primary transformation center**, see Articles 125 and 126 for additional requirements. Storage and processing centers must maintain an entry and exit record book (Article 130). The official format for the record book can be found **here**.

Transport Laws

- **General Law on Sustainable Forestry Development (2018) (modified in 2024)**: Forestry referrals for the transport of raw forest materials or products will not be issued unless the forest owner has presented the report for their forest management plan (refer to the Forest Law section for details) (Article 74).
- **Regulation of the General Law of Sustainable Forestry Development (2020)**: Article

98 establishes the forest products that must prove their legal origin. According to Article 99, the legal origin of forest products can be proven by the following documents:

- **Forest referral**: Used when forest products are moved from the harvest area to the storage or transformation center, or another destination. A forest referral is also used when forest products are removed from harvest areas for preventative purposes, such as the control of disease or pests, as well to reduce or avoid risks to ecosystems. To receive a forest referral, the individual or company must submit an application with the information outlined in Articles 103-105 to the National Forestry Commission.
- **Forestry reshipment:** Used when forest products are transported from the storage or processing center to any destination. To obtain a forestry reshipment, the individual or company must submit an application with the relevant information established in Articles 113 and 114 to the Secretariat or the National Forestry Commission. Additional information can be found in Articles 115-118.
- **Customs request**: Used when forest products are imported and transported to a storage or transformation center. A customs request is also applied to imported Christmas trees.
- **Tax receipts**: Includes the identification codes of harvest locations of forest products as established in this regulation.

The forest products in which each of these documents apply can be found in Articles 100-102.

Tax Laws

- **General Import and Export Tax Law (2023):** Establishes the import and export taxes for goods and services by HS Code. See Section IX for information regarding forest products.
- **Value Added Tax Law (1978) (last updated in 2021)**: Logs and stripped wood not industrialized have a 0% tax rate (Article 2A). Sawn or processed timber is taxed at 16%.
- **Income Tax Law (2013) (amended in 2024)**: Ejidos and communities that produce logs or striped wood not industrialized are exempt from income tax. Cooperatives and other social enterprises that produce wood in pieces or without transformation are exempt from the tax for the equivalent of USD 2,300 per member up to a maximum of USD 460,000 per year, paying a 30% tax on the surplus. Companies that transform or commercialize forest products and timber are taxed at 30% on net profits.

Trade Laws

- **Regulation of the General Law of Sustainable Forestry Development (2020)**: In accordance with international forestry standards, the Good Forest Management Certification intends to help combat the illegal harvest and trade of timber and other forest products. This certification promotes forest product traceability and transparency within the chain of custody (Chapter V, Section I).
    - To import, export or re-export raw forest materials and other forest products, a phytosanitary certificate is required. Requirements for importing forest products can be found in Articles 180, 182 and 184. To obtain a phytosanitary certificate for forest exports, see Articles 191 and 193, and Articles 194 and 195 for re-exports.
    - For the international trade of sawn wood and the use of wood packaging it is also necessary to follow the phytosanitary procedures and criteria outlined in **Norma**

Oficial Mexicana NOM-144-SEMARNAT-2017 and **Norma Oficial Mexicana NOM-016-SEMARNAT-2013**.

- **User Manual: Phytosanitary Export and Re-export Certificate (2023)** and **User Manual: Phytosanitary Import Certificate/Phytosanitary requirements sheet for the import of raw materials, products and by-products (2023)**: These guides provide the procedures and a step-by-step overview of the Mexican Digital Foreign Trade Window (VUCEM) regarding phytosanitary import, export and re-export certificates.

Criminal Laws

- **General Law on Sustainable Forestry Development (2018) (modified in 2024)**: Article 155 provides a list of violations against this law and forest lands. Articles 156 and 157 establish the penalties for these violations, including fines, suspension of authorizations, confiscation of products or machinery, and more.

Bilateral Agreements

- **United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA)**: Entered into force in 2020 and replaced the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the USMCA eliminates tariffs and barriers to US services. Chapter 24.23 on Sustainable Forest Management and Trade stipulates that, as part of the free trade agreement, the US, Mexico and Canada are committed to combatting trade against illegal logging and illegal trade in wildlife. The chapter also underlines a commitment to take action to enhance governance in the country's forest sector and promote legal trade in timber products. USMCA also features the *Environment Cooperation and Customs Verification Agreement between the U.S. and Mexico* in which Section II *Customs Verifications related to Trade in Illegally Taken Wild Flora and Fauna, including Transshipment* stipulates that either party may request legality information regarding a particular shipment and take additional steps to verify legality. The USMCA main webpage can be accessed **here**.
    - The **Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC)** was originally established under the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC) in 1994. The NAAEC complemented NAFTA and was later updated and replaced by the USMCA and **Environmental Cooperation Agreement (ECA)** in 2020. The CEC was established by the US, Mexico and Canada to not only enhance cooperation but to **address complaints for non-compliance** with the agreements.

CITES

The **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)** is an international agreement among governments whose purpose is to ensure that the international trade of wild animals and plant species does not threaten the survival of these species. It is up to each country to draft their own domestic legislation to comply with its CITES obligations. Mexico signed onto the Convention in 1991.

For more information on the procedures for the trade (import, export, or re-export) of CITES listed species, see the Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT) webpage on **Authorization, permit or certificate for the import, export or re-export of specimens, parts and derivatives of wildlife**.

The species under the protection of CITES are listed in three Appendices based on how threatened they are by international trade. The species listed in Appendix I are the most endangered and international trade in these species is prohibited unless the purpose of import is noncommercial. The species listed in Appendix II are tightly controlled in international trade and may be authorized with an export permit or re-export certificate. Appendix III lists species at the request of a Party that needs other countries' cooperation to regulate the trade in the species. International trade in Appendix III is allowed with appropriate permits or certificates.

If you don't know if the species you are interested in sourcing from this country is CITES listed, please check this **link**. If it is, please use this **database** to identify the National CITES Authority. In Mexico, the CITES managing authority is the **Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT)**.

Forest Resources

Resources Overview

In 2010, Mexico had **50.2 Mha of natural forest**, extending over 26% of its land area.

According to the **Regulation of the General Law of Sustainable Forestry Development (2020)**, Mexico divides forest resources into three categories (forest zones). The forest zoning classification is used for completing management programs to receive forest use authorization by SEMARNAT (Article 40).

- **Conservation areas/Areas of restricted or prohibited use:** Consists of protected natural areas, protection areas, areas located above 3,000 meters above sea level, land with slopes greater than one hundred percent or forty-five degrees, areas covered with mangrove vegetation or mountain cloud forest, areas covered with gallery vegetation and areas covered with tall evergreen forests.
- **Production areas:**
  - Forest lands of high productivity;
  - Forest lands of medium productivity;
  - Forest lands of low productivity;
  - Lands with forest vegetation in arid areas;
  - Lands suitable for forestry; and
  - Lands preferred for forest cover: CONAFOR forest zoning classification includes a "preferred for forest cover" category which is defined as lands that are better suited for forest cover over other land uses due to their climate, soil and topography conditions. While some "preferred for forest cover" lands might not be forested, they have the potential to be forests.
- **Restoration areas:**
  - Forest lands with high degradation and severe erosion;
  - Lands preferred for forest cover lacking forest vegetation and severe erosion;
  - Forest land and lands preferred for forest cover with low degradation; and
  - Forest land and degraded lands preferred for forest cover that are subject to environmental treatments.

Contacts

Below are incomplete lists of government ministries, industry associations, civil society groups, and research institutes involved with forestry, trade, and efforts to combat illegal logging and associated trade.

Industry Associations

- **National Chamber of the Wood Industry (CANAINMA)**
- **APA Engineered Wood Association**
- **National Association of Importers and Exporters of Forest Products (IMEXFOR)**
- **Mexican Association of Suppliers of the Wood and Furniture Industry (ExpoAMPIMM)**
- **Wood Moulding and Millwood Producers Association (WMMPA)**
- Mexican Association of Forestry Professionals
- **Mexican Association of Forest Planters (AMEPLANFOR)**

Civil Society Organizations

- **World Resources Institute – Mexico (WRI Mexico)**
- **World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) (Mexico)**
- **Conservation International (CI) (Mexico)**
- **The Nature Conservancy (Mexico)**
- **Mexican Fund for Nature Conservation (FMCN)**
- **Reforestamos Mexico**
- **Mexican Civil Council for Sustainable Forestry (CCMSS)**
- **Mexican Network of Forest Peasant Organizations, A. C. (MOCAF Network)**
- **Rainforest Alliance Mexico**
- **Mexican Center for Environmental Law (CEMDA)**
- Community Resilience and Development (Resiliencia y Desarrollo Comunitario)

Government Ministries and Agencies

- **Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT)**, Forest Management, Soils and Ecologic Land Use Planning Unit
- **National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR)**
    - **National Forest Information System (SNIF)**
- **Federal Environmental Protection Agency (PROFEPA)**
- **National Commission of Protected Natural Areas (CONANP)**

- **National Forestry Council (CONAF)**
- **Ministry of Economy**
- **National Customs Agency of Mexico (ANAM)**

Research Institutes

- **National Institute of Forestry, Agricultural and Livestock Research (INIFAP)**
  - **National Center for Disciplinary Research in Conservation and Improvement of Forest Ecosystems (CENID-COMEF)**
- **Division of Forest Sciences at Chapingo Autonomous University**
- **Antonio Narro Autonomous Agrarian University**
- **Agricultural and Forestry Sciences at the Autonomous University of Chihuahua**
- **Official College of Forestry Technical Engineers**

References and Resources

For more information regarding forest legality in Mexico, head to these links from our partners:

- **Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Mexico**
- **Preferred by Nature Timber Sourcing Hub: Mexico**
- **Forest Trends Illegal Logging and Associated Trade (IDAT) Risk: Mexico**
- **Global Forest Watch (GFW) Country Profiles**
- **Madera Legal: Country Risk Assessment**
- **FAO (2020) Global Forest Resources Assessment: Mexico**
- **National Forest Monitoring System (SNMF)**