Russian Federation

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The land area of the Russian Federation extends across several climate and vegetation zones, including polar and sub-tropical regions. The Russian Federation has the largest forest area of all countries and is also a major producer and exporter of timber. For example, it was the **largest exporter of sawn wood in 2020**. In recent years, Russia has been experiencing significant environmental issues including deforestation. From 2001 to 2021, Russia lost **76 Mha of tree cover**, equivalent to a 10% decrease in tree cover since 2000. In an effort to combat illegal logging, the government introduced an eight-year plan in 2012 called *The Development of Forestry 2013-2020*, aiming to reduce illegal logging and increase profits from the timber sector. This was followed by an update to the Criminal Code in 2014 to include stricter penalties for illegal logging, transport and sale and, in 2015, the launch of an electronic system for recording timber-related information, the Uniform State Automated Information System (EGAIS). Currently, a new strategy (*Strategy for the Development of the Timber Industry until 2030*) is under development with the objective to decriminalize and expand the wood sector. The project includes an upgrade of the **LesEGAIS** system and a pilot project for increased traceability functions within this system.

Forest Management

Forest Governance

According to the Forest Code (2006), Russia's forest lands are owned by government authorities. Legal entities and individuals are permitted to use the national forest estate for commercial and subsistence activities under the recognition of rights to use (three types), lease agreements and sale-purchase contracts for forest parcels.

While the Russian Federation governs the implementation of national laws and regulations pertaining to forest estate lands, specific forestry regulations may differ on a regional basis. For a list of regions within the Russian Federation, see **here**. Take care to conduct additional due diligence based on the applicable region.

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

- **Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation**: Oversees statutory regulation of the study, use, renewal, and conservation of natural resources such as forests located in designated conservation and protected areas, fauna and their habitat.
- **The Federal Forestry Agency of the Russian Federation**: Defines forest policy with regards to the use, regeneration and conservation of forests. The agency also provides information on forest fires and illegal logging.
- **Roslesinforg**: An all-Russian organization that acts as the main contact for the private sector regarding forest management, cadastral activities and other related services.

Transparency

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

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

Laws and Regulations

Forest Laws

- **Forest Code (No. 200 – FZ) (2006) (as amended in 2023)**: Acts as the main forestry law of the Russian Federation. The Code defines ownership, usage rights, renewal, protection, administration and management of forest resources. There are different regulations for forest use for commercial activities and subsistence needs activities, which are outlined in Article 25. Based on the intended use or designation of the forest estate, forest management plans/forest plans are established by the federal entity of the Russian Federation responsible for forestry development. Individuals/legal entities granted rights to use forest parcels must submit an annual forest declaration to State authorities (Article 26).
    - To engage with the commercial use of forest estate lands, individuals must register with the Russian Federation in accordance with **Federal Law No. 129-FZ (2001)**. The Code also establishes rules on timber harvesting. The commercial harvest of wood is only permitted in production and protection forests and cannot exceed the permissible volume of wood established for the cutting area. To harvest wood, citizens or entities must have a lease agreement for forest parcels. If the harvester does not have a lease agreement, the wood must be harvested under a sale-purchase contract for forest stands (Article 29). The Code provides rules and processes for awarding leases, rights to use forest resources, and sale-purchase contracts, including rules on auctions and terminating leases. Commercial forest users must submit a forest use report and forest protection report to public authorities or local self-governance bodies (Articles 49 and 60). Forest users must comply with forest management regulations and forest development plans related to forest renewal (Article 61). Forest development plan is required for individuals or entities with permanent rights to a forest parcel or under a lease (Article 88). Forest parcels and other rights must be registered in the state cadastral registration (Article 92). Reforestation must be undertaken by the lessees of forest parcels intended for wood harvesting (Article 62).
    - For the establishment and use of forest plantations for commercial use, citizens and entities must have a leased forest parcel (Article 42). Rules for operating and using forest plantations differ from forest resources use in the natural forest estate.

- **Federal Law "On appraisal activities in the Russian Federation" of 29.07.1998 N 135-FZ (1998)**: Specifies the rules to determine the minimum price for forest concession tenders that will be determined by an assessment of the forest area to be put under a concession.
- **Federal Law No. 415-FZ on amendments to the Forest Code of the Russian Federation and the Code of the Russian Federation on Administrative Offenses (2013)**: These amendments to the Forest Code (2006) establish requirements for timber accounting and the marking, transportation and the sale and trade of wood. This law also establishes the Unified State Automated Information System for Accounting for Wood and

Transactions (LesEGAIS), which records data on the entire timber supply chain from use rights and lease agreements to harvesting and transactions (Article 50.6). Violations related to any of these requirements may result in fines and/or the confiscation of products or machinery (Article 2).

- **Land Code of the Russian Federation (No. 136-FZ) (2001) (as amended in 2023)**: Establishes regulations on the allocation and use of land throughout the Russian Federation. The Code provides the process for creating forest parcels from publicly- or municipally-owned land (Article 11.3). Protective measures for forests are detailed within the Code's text.

Processing/Manufacturing Laws

- **Forest Code (No. 200 – FZ) (2006) (as amended in 2023)**: To process wood and forest resources, processing infrastructure must be established. Forest processing infrastructure is not permitted in protection forests or other cases specified by federal law (Article 14). Publicly-owned or municipally-owned forest parcels must be leased to citizens or entities for processing wood and other forest products (Article 46). Processed wood, wood received for processing and any other wood intended for processing are subject to timber accounting by the Government of the Russian Federation (Article 50.1). Information regarding the processed wood or wood intended for processing must be entered into the State Forest Register which includes reports on forest uses, imported and exported wood, processed timber and other products, and the registration of timber transactions (Article 50.5).

Transport Laws

- **Forest Code (No. 200 – FZ) (2006) (as amended in 2023)**: Any transport of wood for commercial purposes must be accompanied by a document that includes information about the owner, consignor, consignee, carrier of wood, its volume, species and composition, points of departure and destination, the number of the declaration on transactions with timber and the state registration plate number of the transportation vehicle (Article 50.4). Exceptions to the requirement of the accompanying document are detailed in Article 50.4.1. For wood purchased on the retail market/retail trade organization in volumes greater than 10 cubic meters, a primary accounting document on the trade transaction is required by the seller (Article 50.4.5).

Tax Laws

- **Resolution No. 310 on payment rates per unit volume of forest resources and payment rates per unit area of a forest parcel located in federal ownership (2007) (as amended in 2023)**: Establishes the payment rates for different forest species and for forest products by the Russian Federation region of origin. This resolution also provides the rental rates for different forest resources use rights, such as lease agreements.
- **Tax Code of the Russian Federation (Part One) (No. 146-FZ) (1998) (as amended in 2023)** and **Tax Code of the Russian Federation (Part Two) No. 117-FZ (2000) (as amended in 2023)**: The Tax Codes of the Russian Federation establish federal, regional and local taxes applicable to individuals and legal entities. Some of these include value-added taxes, income tax, transport tax, land tax, trade fees and more. The land tax is not applied to land parcels within forest lands (Article 389). A patent tax system applies to SME

business activities, including those in the forestry sector (Chapter 26.5 *Patent Tax System*). During trade and processing, VAT applies in the forest sector as in other sectors. The VAT Tax Code of the Russian Federation specifies the VAT rate.

- **Forest Code (No. 200 – FZ) (2006) (as amended in 2023):** Under a lease agreement for publicly-owned or municipally-owned forest parcels, a lease charge (rent) is applied to the lessee based on the intended use of the parcel (Article 73).

Trade Laws

Forest Code (No. 200 – FZ) (2006) (as amended in 2023): Wood of valuable forest species (oak, beech, ash) intended for export must be marked by the entity or individual exporting these products (Article 50.2). Records of wood marking must be submitted to the Unified State Automated Information System for Recording Wood and Transactions (LesEGAIS). Additionally, any individual or entity involved in the import or export of wood must submit a declaration of transactions with wood to the Information System (Article 50.5). Details on the required information for submission are outlined in Article 50.5(2).

International Trade (2022) – Effects of the Russia-Ukraine conflict
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Russia's armed conflict with Ukraine affects Russia's international trade in forest products in several ways, measures include:
• The European Union banned the import of forest-based products under **Council Regulation (EU) 2023/427 of 25 February 2023 amending Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilizing the situation in Ukraine**.
• Several EU Timber Regulation (EUTR) competent authorities, such as **Germany**, stated that products not covered by the above-mentioned sanctions do not comply with the EUTR.
• In August 2023, the European Commission launched an **official investigation** into the possible circumvention of anti-dumping measures on birch plywood imports from Russia.
• Russia issued **Decree No. 313** in March 2022, banning the export of several forest products/HS codes to "unfriendly" countries including the EU and the US. The export ban was extended until 2025 according to **Resolution No. 2285 (2023)**.
• In 2022, US House Republicans introduced the **No Timber From Tyrants Act**, which would prohibit wood imports from Russia and Belarus. However, the bill was not passed. So far, the US government has only **raised tariffs** on Birch plywood.
• Several stakeholders are raising concerns that consumer country due diligence regulation, sanctions and tariffs are frequently circumvented with products still entering the **US** and the **EU**.

Criminal Laws

- **Forest Code (No. 200 – FZ) (2006) (as amended in 2023)**: Administrative, criminal and other violations of the Forest Code and existing forestry legislation are established in Chapter 13: *Responsibility for Offense in the Field of Forest Relations*. This chapter details the liabilities for forestry violations.

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. The Russian Federation signed onto the Convention in 1992.

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 the Russian Federation, the managing authority is the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation. For permits and certificates, contact the Federal Service for Supervision of Natural Resources Management.

Forest Resources

Resources Overview

In 2010, Russia had **755 Mha of tree cover**, extending over 45% of its land area.

According to the Forest Code (2006) (as amended in 2023), the Russian Federation divides its forest resources into three categories (Articles 110-119). Timber harvesting is allowed in production and protection forests.

- **Protection forests**: Consists of natural forests subject to development for the preservation of environmental, water, sanitary-hygienic, cultural and other useful functions of the forest.
    - **Specially protection forest areas** (Article 112): Consists of forests within state natural reserves, national parks, natural parks, natural monuments and other specially protected natural areas. Logging is prohibited in these areas.
- **Production forests**: Forests in which any use outlined in Article 25 of the Forest Code is permitted.
- **Reserve forests**: Consists of forests not intended for harvest within the nearest 20 years.

The Government of the Russian Federation allows publicly- and municipally-owned forest parcels within the national forest estate to be made available for forest uses (outlined in Article 25) to individuals and legal entities (Article 71). The rights to use and permissions are as outlined (Articles 9; 25; 71-72):

- **Right for permanent use (use for indefinite periods);**
- **Right for limited use of other owners' forest parcels (Easement);**

- **Right for gratuitous (free) use of forest parcels during established periods** (Article 74.2);
- **Forest lease agreement** (Article 72)**;** and
- **Sale-purchase agreement/contract for forest plantations** (Article 75).

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

- **Russian Forestry Review**
- **Russian Forest Association (National Association of Timber Industry)**

Civil Society Organizations

*In 2023, the Office of the Russian Federation Prosecutor General declared several organizations 'undesirable' under **Federal Law No. 129-FZ (2015) on amendments of some legislative acts of the Russian Federation**. Since 2015, this declaration has banned many environmental organizations' activities in the Russian Federation, including **Greenpeace International**, **WWF**, the Bellona Foundation and **Chatham House**. According to Federal Law No. 129-FZ (2015), these organizations' activities "threaten the foundation of the constitutional order of the Russian Federation, the country's defense capability or the security of the state."*

- **Biodiversity Conservation Centre (BCC)**
- **Russian Social-Ecological Union / Friends of the Earth Russia**

Government Ministries

- **Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation**
- **The Federal Forestry Agency of the Russian Federation**
- **Roslesinforg**
- **Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Russian Federation**

Research Institutes

- **Forestry Research Institute of Karelian Research Centre (FRI)**
- **Saint Petersburg Forestry Research Institute**
- **V.N. Sukachev Institute of Forest of the Russian Academy of Sciences**
- **Northern Research Institute of Forestry**

References and Resources

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

- **Preferred by Nature - Timber Sourcing Hub: Russia**
- **Timber Trade Portal: Russia**
- **Global Forest Watch (GFW) Country profiles**
- **FAO (2020) Global Forest Resources Assessment (Russian Federation)**