Romania

Last updated: June 2024

Romania's land area mostly lies within the temperate climate zone. There is a sub-tropical region in the south-eastern coastal zone with distinct elevation gradients across the whole country. With over **33% forest cover**, Romania is an **important source of forest products within Europe** and a net-exporter of sawn wood, wood-based panels and furniture. Romania was **among the top 20 exporters of wood by volume in 2021**. The **Carpathian Mountain region comprises about half of the forests in Romania** and has high protection value as they are home to Europe's largest area of virgin and old-growth forests outside of Scandinavia and the Russian Taiga. Romania is still in transition from a state-owned forest governance regime to a system including private forest ownership. Lawmaking and enforcement struggled to keep pace with the emerging new ownership patterns, resulting in **multiple challenges for forest governance and management**. Romania is an ongoing European hotspot for **illegal**, **unsustainable**, and **unreported** logging. In 2020, reported non-compliance of Romania's forest sector with the EU Timber Regulation (EUTR) resulted in the EU opening an **infringement case (INFR(2020)2033)** on logging operations in the country. The following year, the **Competition Council of Romania sanctioned several forest companies** for coordinating activities and exchanging sensitive information.

Forest Management

Forest Governance

According to the Forest Code, forests can be publicly or privately owned in Romania (Article 7). Forests are used and managed differently depending on the land classification, form of forest ownership and purpose.

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

- **Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests**: The main agency for forest governance in Romania. The Ministry is responsible for policy formulation and law making. Several operational elements of forest governance are governed by this ministry, such as the electronic timber traceability system, **SUMAL 2.0**, the **National Forest Inventory (NFI)** and the **Forestry Inspections and Control Units**.
- **Romsilva (National Directorate of Forests)**: Under the authority of the Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests, Romsilva is the management body responsible for overseeing the roughly 50% share of publicly owned forests. Romsilva can also be contracted by private forest owners.

Transparency

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

- **Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index**

- The World Bank's **Worldwide Governance Indicators**

Forest sector transparency in Romania - SUMAL and Forest Inspector
In efforts to combat illegal logging, the government of Romania implemented the SUMAL electronic traceability system in 2008. After several reports on illegal logging that also stressed how the SUMAL system was not enforced properly, the government of Romania launched a public interface, known as **Forest Inspector**. This interface allowed the public to check whether a timber transport was registered in the SUMAL system by entering the license plate code of the transport vehicle.
This step received significant international attention and was seen as an unprecedented example of transparency in the forest sector until today. The usage of the forest inspector app by environmental activists is documented in numerous reports and media outlets. Subsequently **further updates of the app´s functionalities** were developed and the release of the SUMAL 2.0 system in January 2021 was expected to create even more transparency.
However, **initially the release of the SUMAL 2.0** meant that Forest Inspector did not work anymore. Subsequently the application was activated again and although it does not provide all functionalities envisioned by its supporters, it offers core functions aligned with the SUMAL 2.0 requirements including:
• Searching events by harvest permit (APV), vehicle license plate and transport document codes
• Accessing the transport document with all details (volume, species, product type)
• Checking the registered transport route
• Accessing mandatory photographs of the transport, uploaded to SUMAL
Thus, the platform is still frequently used and enables civil society to identify and highlight loopholes in the regulation. A recent **analysis** shows that a common inaccuracy is understated volumes (the vehicles transport more wood than authorized on the documents) and calls for the introduction of a **"digital fingerprint"** to be added to the system to impede volume fraud.

Laws and Regulations

Forest Laws

- **Forest Code (Law No. 46/2008)**: The Forest Code is the main legislation for forest governance in Romania. The Code includes sections on the national forest fund, licensing and permitting, sustainable forest management, control and compliance, and liability and penalties.
    - In March 2024, a new Forest Code draft was **published for consultation** after earlier draft versions of the revised regulation faced criticism from civil society organizations. **Some of their concerns were addressed in the updated version approved by the Senate in late April 2024**.

- **Law No. 57 of May 15, 2020, regarding the sustainable management of Romania's forests**: Establishes several forest governance mechanisms specified in the Forest Code.
- **Land Resources Law (Law No. 18 of 1991)**: Includes general land use classifications and re-establishes the concept of private land ownership. The restitution of private lands was initially limited to smaller areas and evolved in several stages until all area limitations were lifted in 2005.

Processing/Manufacturing Laws

- Currently, Romania does not have any processing or manufacturing regulations specific to the timber processing industry. However, the emerging **European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR)** will require all EU-based "downstream operators" (i.e. companies, processing material from one in-scope HS code to another in-scope HS code) to exercise due diligence and submit due diligence statements to the EU information system. Additionally, **Decision No. 497/2020** requires wood processing centers to register in SUMAL 2.0 (Article 7).
- **Labor Code (Law No. 53/2003)**: Regulates labor relations and includes provisions on employment and labor jurisdiction. The Code applies to actors in the forest sector accordingly.

Transport Laws

- The main obligations regarding timber transport are related to the electronic timber traceability system, **SUMAL 2.0**, that features a **public interface** for checking the registration of timber transports. **Decision No. 497/2020**, **Decision No. 470 of 2014** and **Order No. 1464 of 2016** require the use of SUMAL for all forest operators and traders. Transport authorization is required for the mobilization of forest products (Article 3 of Decision No. 470). Decision No. 497/2020 establishes transport rules that align with the SUMAL 2.0 requirements. The decision also stipulates that all transported wood materials must be accompanied by a proof of origin document (known as a notice) (Article 8). These notices are not allowed to be issued from 8:00 pm to 7:00 am between the months of October to March, and from 10:00 pm to 6:00 am between the months of April to September.
- **Order No. 1346 of 2011**: Stipulates that trees, roundwood and stumps must be marked with unique identifiers in order to be transported.

Tax Laws

- **Fiscal Code (Law No. 227/2015)**: Regulates the taxation of forest lands and the revenues derived from forests and their products. Establishes varying quotas based on forest type, ownership type, product type and harvested timber volumes. Title VII regulates the application of value-added tax (VAT). Article 291 specifies a reduced VAT rate of 5% on wood and wood products used for heating purposes. Article 331 establishes the VAT reverse charge regime for wood and wood materials as defined in the Forest Code. The reverse charge regime requires both the supplier and beneficiary to register for VAT purposes.

Trade Laws

- **Decision No. 497/2020**: Establishes the mandatory users of SUMAL 2.0 (the electronic timber traceability system in Romania), which includes timber importers and exporters. An accompanying notice proving the origin of the wood or wood products is required for export (Article 8).
- **Law No. 57 of May 15, 2020, regarding the sustainable management of Romania's forests**: Establishes a roundwood export ban to non-EU countries starting on January 1,

2021. Failure to comply with the ban is punishable by imprisonment of one to three years and a financial penalty.

- As an EU Member State, the Romanian forest and timber trade sectors fall under the **EU Timber Regulation (EUTR)** and will be subject to the emerging EUDR.

Criminal Laws

- **Emergency Ordinance No. 195 of 2005**: Introduced by Romania as a prerequisite for joining the European Union, the emergency ordinance is the main regulation for environmental protection. It defines the obligations of forest users in Article 69 and infractions subject to criminal law under Article 98.
- **Law No. 171 of 2010**: Establishes the sanctions regime for forest related infractions. The law has been updated several times to align with the introduction of the SUMAL 2.0 traceability system and further new regulatory requirements for the forest sector.
- **Penal Code (Law No. 286 of 2009)**: Specifies that offenses against forestry personnel are considered an offense against the authority and therefore punishable under criminal law (Article 257).

Non-Regulatory Policy Instruments

Forest governance and policy in Romania is still largely shaped by the transition from a centrally planned to a market economy-based regime. Recent research has pointed out that forest governance in Romania still heavily builds upon a rigid “command and control” type of regulatory framework while **non-regulatory instruments should be strengthened**. Under these frame conditions, the main non-regulatory instrument so far has been the uptake of forest certification.

Romania has designated Natura 2000 (N2K) sites that enable forest owners to receive EU compensation for the biodiversity conservation cost implied by N2k aligned forest management. However, it has been argued that implementation of these instruments is impeded by the prevalent top-down legislative instruments, weak law enforcement and poor consultation with stakeholders. Likewise, a 2015 amendment of the Forest Code that regulates the compensation provided to private owners who were assigned protected forests during the forest restitution program in which harvesting is prohibited is lacking correct **implementation**.

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. Romania signed onto the Convention in 1994.

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 Romania, the managing authority is the Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests.

Forest Resources

Resources Overview

In 2010, Romania had **6.50 Mha of natural forest**, extending over 32% of its land area.

According to the Forest Code (Article 1), Romania divides its forest resources into eight categories. Romania's forests are united under the umbrella term, **National Forest Fund**, which includes public or private property of national interest. The Fund defines forest area by land use designation, irrespective of existing tree cover. All lands in the National Forest Fund are used for forestry purposes.

- **Lands with forests**
- **Lands undergoing regeneration and plantations established for forestry purposes**
- **Lands intended for afforestation**: Consists of degraded and/or unforested lands established under the conditions of applicable legislation to be afforested.
- **Lands that serve the needs of forest production**: Consists of lands with wicker crops, Christmas trees, ornamental and fruit-bearing trees and shrubs.
- **Lands that serve the needs of the forest administration**: Intended for ensuring game, food and fodder production. This category is also made up of lands given to forestry personnel for temporary use.
- **Lands occupied by construction or their related use**: Consists of lands with administrative offices, cottages, pheasants, trout farms, animal breeders, areas of hunting interest, forest roads for transport and railways, industrial premises, and more. This category also consists of forest lands within the border corridor and the protection strip of the state border. Forest lands of importance to the Integrated State Border Security System are also included here.
- **Ponds, streambeds and non-productive forest land**.

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

- **Romanian Wood Industry Association (ProLemn)**
- **Romanian Forest Owners Association (APPR)**

Civil Society Organizations

- **Agent Green**
- **Carpathia**
- **Greenpeace Romania**
- **WWF Romania**
- **EuroNatur Foundation**

Government Ministries and Agencies

- **Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests**
  - **SUMAL 2.0**
  - **National Forest Inventory (NFI)**
  - **Forestry Inspections and Control Units**
- **Romsilva (National Directorate of Forests)**

Research Institutes

- **Romanian Forest Research and Management Institute**
- **University of Suceava (Faculty of Silviculture)**
- **University of Brasov (Faculty of Furniture Design and Wood Engineering)**

References and Resources

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

- **Preferred by Nature - Timber Sourcing Hub: Romania**
- **Global Forest Watch (GFW) Country profiles**
- **FAO (2020) Global Forest Resources Assessment (Romania)**
- **EIA (2018) *Behind the Scenes: How Log Yards Hide the Destruction of Europe's Ancient Forests***
- **EIA (2015) *Stealing the Last Forest: Austria's Largest Timber Company, Land Rights, and Corruption in Romania***
- **Greenpeace Central and Eastern Europe (2024) *Nature Crime Files: Romania***
- **WWF (2020) *EU Forest Crime Initiative Gap Analysis: Romania***
- **Agent Green and EuroNatur (2023) *Investigation of Romanian forests in Natura 2000 sites***