

For immediate release:

1 October 2009

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MAJOR US ILLEGAL LOGGING LAW ENTERS NEW ENFORCEMENT PHASE
Additional HTS Headings Require Plant Product Declaration Form at Border

Washington DC – It has been five months since the official beginning of the declaration requirement phase-in for plant and plant products under the amended US Lacey Act. USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) now requires importers of certain wood products including logs and veneer to declare the value, volume, scientific name, and country of harvest origin of the wooden constituents.

This declaration form, also known as PPQ 505, is a critical element of the 2008 amendments to the US Lacey Act, the world’s first ban on the import, export or trade in illegally sourced wood and plant products. “The transparency that these declarations bring will help global efforts to clean up the forest sector and protect forests around the world from the epidemic of illegal logging,” says Executive Director of Environmental Investigation Agency, Alexander von Bismarck.

The Federal Register announced on September 2 the new changes to the declaration phase-in schedule. Phase II has been in effect since May 1, 2009 and includes logs, sawn timber, flooring, stakes, veneers, molding and tool handles, among other things. Phase III, now in effect as of October 1, includes wood charcoal, veneered panels, wooden frames, tableware, kitchenware and marquetry, caskets and statuettes.

As implementation of the declaration phase-in rolls-out, other products such as musical instruments, furniture, pistols and umbrellas, for example, will also require a declaration form. APHIS made clear in the federal register, “that while enforcement of the declaration requirement is being phased in, the other Lacey Act amendments are already effective, and actions to enforce provisions of the Act other than the declaration requirement may be taken at any time.”

Importers of products not yet on the declaration phase-in schedule should still be doing all they can to eliminate illegal wood from their supply chains and ask the right questions of their suppliers. “Our investigations in the field have found that increased scrutiny from buyers in the US has caused even the most informal timber exporters to pay attention to questions of legality, which is a great step toward keeping the world’s forests standing,” says investigator Adam Khedouri of EIA.

The US had previously announced that the Lacey Act declaration requirement would be phased in over a period of two years which began on May 1st.