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Briefing on the Implementation of Natural Resources and Environment (Audit) Rules, 2008



Photo: Mr Peter Sawal briefing Participants on the revised Guidelines for NRE (Audit) Rules, 2008

This monthly news bulletin is produced by Sarawak Timber Association (STA) to disseminate information to our counterparts on training, research and other relevant areas.

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The Natural Resources and Environment Board Sarawak (NREB) conducted a *Briefing on the Implementation of Natural Resources and Environment (Audit) Rules, 2008* [NRE (Audit) Rules] for members of Sarawak Timber Association (STA) on 12 July 2017 at Wisma STA, Kuching.

The objectives of the Briefing were to inform member on the implementation of Environmental Compliance Audit in forestry sector and to get inputs on the revised Guidelines for NRE (Audit) Rules, 2008.

In his welcoming remarks, Mr Peter Sawal, Controller of Environmental Quality Sarawak, informed participants of the Briefing that the NRE (Audit) Rules, 2008 was formulated in 2008 and came into effect on 1 January 2013. Full implementation of the Rules is expected to happen in 2019.

He further mentioned to the participants of the Briefing that the implementation of the NRE (Audit) Rules will help to promote self regulation in environmental protection within the industry. In the Briefing, he suggested pilot projects on the environmental compliance audit in the forestry sector be conducted in order to facilitate a smooth and feasible implementation of the NRE (Audit) Rules, 2008. Once the NRE (Audit) Rules are fully implemented, the environmental audits will replace the submission of Environmental Monitoring Report (EMR).

Ms Elizabeth Nyomek, Senior Environmental Control Officer (Environmental Audit) briefed the participants on the amendments in the Guidelines for NRE (Audit) Rules, 2008.

Various inputs were provided by members such as timelines for internal and external audit process, prior consultation with industry on audit plan and financial proposal, as well as the schedule for re-sit examinations.

ASEAN Events Held in Malaysia

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Malaysia (NRE) hosted the following meetings and seminar at the Marriot Putrajaya Hotel, followed by a field trip to Forest Eco-Park in Kuala Lumpur on 29 July 2017:

- The 20th Meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Working Group on Forest Development (AWG – FPD) from 24 to 25 July 2017;
- The 18th International Seminar on Current International Issues Affecting Forestry and Forest Products on 26 July 2017; and
- The 20th Meeting of the ASEAN Senior Officials on Forestry (ASOF) from 27 to 28 July 2017.

Malaysia, as one of the ASEAN Member States (AMS), was honored to host the first meeting of AWG-FPD after the streamlining of ASOF's Working Groups under the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) as well as the 20th Meeting of ASOF.

The newly formed AWG-FPD comprised the three (3) working groups; namely the ASEAN Expert Group on Forest Products Development (AEG-FPD); ASEAN Expert Group on Herbal and Medicinal Plants (AEG-HMP); and the ASEAN Working Group on a Pan-ASEAN Timber Certification Initiative (WG-PATCI).

Dr Megat Sany Bin Megat Ahmad Supian, Under Secretary, Biodiversity and Forestry Management Division of NRE, on behalf of the host country, warmly welcomed all delegates to the 20th AWG-FPD Meeting.

He highlighted in his speech that AWG-FPD is expected to uphold and consolidate the aspirations and visions of the previous working groups and push forth the efforts to further develop ASEAN Forest Products including Herbal and Medicinal Plants as well as timber certification initiatives to greater heights for the benefits of AMS.

He underlined the importance of protecting our forests through sustainable forest management so that the

forestry and timber industry can be sustained. He further commented that forest resources management in the future must gradually move towards the concept of *"Forest Beyond Timber"* by promoting herbal industry, *Non-timber forest products (NTFPs)*, etc.

He hoped AMS, through AWG-FPD, could strengthen regional cooperation by developing various initiatives within ASEAN platform towards better management of ASEAN's forests.

The Meeting exchanged views and discussed matters on forest products development, herbal and medicinal plants and timber certification. The Meeting also received country progress reports from each AMS on their implementation of timber certification and legality assurance systems.

In a separate event, the 18th ASOF Seminar on the *Current International Issues Affecting Forestry and Forest Products* focusing on the forest landscape management was officially declared open by Dato Sri Dr Haji Wan Junaidi Bin Tuanku Jaafar, the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Malaysia.

The Seminar highlighted amongst many others, the importance for the AMS to strengthen forest law enforcement and governance for better management of forest resources, to develop common understanding on forest landscape management and forest landscape restoration, to develop ASEAN guidelines on Agroforestry as a bridge between agriculture and forestry sector, to promote the paradigm of *"Forest Beyond Timber"* to get more benefits derived from the forest goods and services sustainably, and to promote transboundary connectivity landscape partnership implementation in the region, e.g. Heart of Borneo.

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Did you know that.....

Approximately 3,000 wood-based panel enterprises in Wen'an County, Langfang City, Hebei province in China were told to cease production. As these companies were found to be generating and emitting pollutants that contaminated surrounding farmland, they have been either asked to re-tool to meet environmental requirements or relocate to rehabilitate around 2,700 hectares of farmland in the area.

Source: International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) Tropical Timber Market Report, Volume 21, Number 14, 16th-31st July 2017, available at: http://www.itto.int/market_information_service/

Did you also know that....

The European Union-Viet Nam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) will become effective in 2018, at which time Viet Nam will become EU's biggest trade partner in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). At entry into force of this EVFTA, Vietnam will liberalise 65% of import duties on EU exports to Vietnam while EU will eliminate 85.6% of import duties imposed on exports from Viet Nam.

Source: FTA, Foreign Trade Association, EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement, available at <http://www.fta-intl.org/sites/default/files/FTA%20Insight%20-%20EU-Vietnam%20trade%20agreement%20-.pdf>



Training on Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in the Context of Forestry in Sarawak



Photo: Training in progress

A Training on Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in the Context of Forestry in Sarawak was organised by Forest Department Sarawak (FDS) from 17 to 22 July 2017 at Aiman Batang Ai Resort and Retreat, Batang Ai. A total of twenty (20) participants from the timber industry and forestry-related agencies participated in the training which was funded by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) and the State Government.

Tuan Haji Sapuan Ahmad, the Director of Forests in his opening speech read by Ms Zarina Haji Shebli, Assistant Director in the Social Forestry Division shared with participants of the Training that FPIC is a globally known principal that acknowledges the right of indigenous and local communities to take part in decisions, policies and activities that could affect them.

It is specified in Criteria 2.2, 3.1 and 3.4 as well as Indicator 3.1.2 of the Malaysian Criteria and Indicators for Management Certification for natural forest; and forest plantation under the Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme (MTCS). FPIC is also a requirement in the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), both of which are adhered to by the Sarawak Government.

Ms Rejani Kunjappan, a trainer from Regional Community Forestry Training Center (RECOFTC) led the 6-day training with the main objectives to explain

the key principles and values of FPIC in forestry and forestry related programs and appreciate why FPIC is needed in project design implementation;

“Free” in FPIC refers to free from force, intimidation and coercion, or pressure by anyone, be it government, company or any organisation. Meanwhile, “Prior” in FPIC implies that consent has been sufficiently sought in advance of any authorisation or commencement of any project.

“Informed” in FPIC means that the community has been given all the relevant information which includes risks, benefits and background information of the project, to make its decision about whether to give consent or not. Identifying the right people or group to inform and language barriers are among some of the challenges faced in the process of giving information. “Consent” in FPIC is the community’s clear and full agreement to a proposed project, an outcome that cannot be equated to consultation or negotiation. All of the criteria of FPIC are inter-related and are further supported by values such as self-determination, recognising rights holders, tenure and participatory decision-making.

Participants of the Training were also given the opportunity to obtain firsthand knowledge through discussions with local communities and relevant stakeholders in the field visit to Rh Manggat in the proposed Sg Menyang Conservation Area.

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Pest and Disease Workshop

SARAWAK FORESTRY Corporation (SFC) organised a *Pest and Disease Workshop* on 24 July 2017 at Imperial Hotel, Kuching. The Workshop was part of the activities under the Planted Forest Research Program (PFRP) and was attended by the representatives from State Forestry Agencies, Licence for Planted Forests (LPF) companies and STA Secretariat. Mr Wong Ting Chung, SFC Chief Executive Officer was also present at the Workshop, in addition to the invited participants from Sabah's Government Agency as well as a private company.

The main speaker for the Workshop was Professor Michael John Wingfield, Director of Forestry and Agricultural Biotechnology Institute (FABI) cum President of the International Union of Forest Research Organisations (IUFRO). Professor Wingfield is an expert in the field of forest tree pests and diseases, specialising in the identification of insect pests and pathogens of plantation-grown tree species, as well as in devising strategies to reduce the impact of these pests and diseases.

Mr Ahmad Shazwan, researcher from Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) presented a research project entitled "*Strategy and Management of Ceratocystis wilt disease in Malaysia Acacia mangium plantations*" to the participants of Workshop. This project was funded by the Malaysia Timber Industry Board (MTIB) with the aim to mitigate the *Ceratocystis* disease infection which has affected the *Acacia* plantations in Malaysia. FRIM, with assistance from SFC, will conduct the wilt disease surveys in selected *A mangium* plantations in Sarawak.

He informed the participants of the Workshop that threats from pests are increasing globally and it will likely to continue to affect the health of plantation trees. He shared with the participants of the Workshop a few cases of pest invasions around the world and its devastating impact on plantation trees. He added that

Other presenters at the Workshop were researchers from SFC and LPF companies.