Promoting legal and sustainable timber: The role of public procurement policy

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Introduction

- Use of government’s purchasing power in market to achieve public policy objectives – examples as far back as 19th century
- Voluntary EU Green Procurement Policy process 2008
- SDG 12.7 (2015): ‘Promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities’
- Public procurement policy used to promote sustainable timber since 1970s – aim to improve the protection of forests and biodiversity; now to mitigate climate change
- FLEGT Action Plan, 2003, stimulated development within EU – relatively easy early step that could be taken
Public procurement policy: timber

• Public sector major purchaser of timber products:
  – Paper and packaging
  – Furniture (office, street, park)
  – Timber for construction and maintenance (social housing, schools, hospitals …)

• Product-specific data generally lacking, but is clear significant impact in some sectors, e.g.:
  – UK office furniture, 30–50% purchased by public sector
  – Harbour and flood defences

• Also can have knock-on effects (20–40%?)
Timber procurement policies

- 2008: 9 countries with timber procurement policies
- 2014: at least 26 countries (19 in EU)
- 2016: at least 33 countries (22 in EU), including those in development
- Many examples of regional and local governments, some with stricter requirements
- Major public projects (e.g. London Olympics)
Objectives and criteria

• Mostly aiming to purchase legal and sustainable timber
• Some aim for legal, encourage sustainable
• Some countries develop own criteria for ‘legal’ and ‘sustainable’
• Some use certification scheme criteria
• Voluntary EU Green Procurement Policy process
  – Common criteria, now 21 product groups
National timber procurement policies

(Blue: EU. Italics: voluntary policy. Not all policies cover all product categories.)

- ‘Comprehensive’ criteria-based:
  - Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, Netherlands, UK
- ‘Simpler’ scheme/document-based:
  - Australia, Austria, China, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland
- EU GPP-based:
  - Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Malta, Slovenia
- Under development:
  - Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Ghana, Indonesia, Ireland
Satisfying the criteria

• Main challenge is to make it easy for government buyers to ensure products meet criteria
• Criteria generally satisfied through certification schemes
  – So market impact may be similar whatever the criteria
  – Though also note impact on certification schemes
• Some use wider range of evidence
• Several recognise FLEGT licenses, some as evidence of ‘legal’ (including GPP), some as evidence of ‘legal and sustainable’, some as own criterion
Impacts

• Impact on penetration of certified timber products
• UK:
  – 2008 study: certified products 80% of market (domestic and imported) – up from 55% in 2005
  – 2010 study: identified TPP as one of drivers
• Netherlands:
• 2011 ETTF survey: public sector and commercial big buyers main drivers for demand for certified products
• 2015 FLEGT evaluation:
  – Most member states identify TPPs achieving results, including creating awareness and changes in the timber industry, increasing demand for certified timber
  – Though generally no systematic enforcement or monitoring
Conclusions

• Timber procurement policies are useful tools in helping to steer the market
  – Can be developed and introduced relatively quickly
  – Send signal to market, reinforce other actors
• Support for buyers necessary: guidance, promotion, communication (e.g. CPET, TPAC)
• Appear to have impact in terms of increasing market share of certified (FSC and PEFC) products
• Comprehensive criteria-based policies have advantages
  – Positive impact on schemes themselves
  – More difficult to draw up, but plenty of models
• Useful lessons from timber for procurement policy for other products (e.g. palm oil, cocoa)
Thank you