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China and the Global Market for Forest Products Transforming Trade to Benefit Forests and Livelihoods

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White A, Sun X, Canby K, Xu J, Barr C, Katsigris E, Bull GQ, Cossalter C, et al. *the Global Market for Forest Products: Transforming Trade to Benefit Forests and Livelihoods*. Washington: Forest Trends. ISBN 1-932928-21-9

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Abstract

China's spectacular economic growth over the last decade is felt throughout the world. It has become a leading nation in terms of forest products, and its influence is being felt as far afield as Cameroon and the United States. Burgeoning domestic consumption, in a nation with per capita forest resources, has fueled the rapid rise in China's import demand. Growing demand in the US, Europe and elsewhere for low-cost wood products has also contributed to the country's ever-increasing demand. China has rapidly become the wood workshop of the world, capturing all trade in furniture over the last eight years.

In many supplier countries, particularly those with weak governance, trade flows into China are associated with unsustainable harvest and abuse of forest communities' rights. However, China's growing demand and the possibility that millions of low-income forest producers can benefit from it. Trees and forests are the primary asset of millions of the world's poor. If governments enable the poor to use them wisely, they can be an important driver of rural development.

China is now in the world's spotlight, with governments, industry & academia eager to learn more about the global impact the country is having on various industries. Until recently, they have been hampered by a scarcity of reliable market information to date has been proprietary analysis, the cost of which is prohibitive for their use by all but the largest international investors and trade associations.

This paper and the body of research it represents aims to help fill this gap with an overview of the key findings of many research studies conducted by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) for Chinese Agricultural Policy (CCAP), the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and their many partners in China and the Asia-Pacific region. As a synthesis, it focuses on broader and more globally critical issues.

The synthesis of this research presents a wake-up call for the global forest market. One of our key findings is that domestic and export demand for Chinese forest products will continue to grow dramatically, at least over the medium to long term. So, in turn, will the demand for both home-grown and imported forest products. China should be seen as the harbinger of even greater change, as other emerging and developing countries increase their demand for forest products.

It is now clear that the global forest market is undergoing dramatic changes and these changes have important implications for forests, forest people and forest dependent communities. This paper helps governments, industry and civil society gain a clearer understanding of their respective roles in the global timber market. It is also hoped that it will play an important leadership role in helping to transform the forest product sector. Sustainable forest management only ensures sustainable forestry and conservation, but to one that also provides livelihood opportunities for forest dependent communities, and promotes economic development for all nations.

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