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Log Tracking Systems

Introduction

Log tracking is designed to gather, store and report information about the flow of wood products into, out of, or across a country or region. It involves recording the log or processed wood product at the points of origin (the forest) and destination (sawmill, factory or port), as well as at other critical control points along the route such as stockpiles, road checkpoints and international boundaries. In this way a picture is built up of when each product reached each point, and what happened to it. The document [Timber Flow Control](#) gives an overview of possible systems.

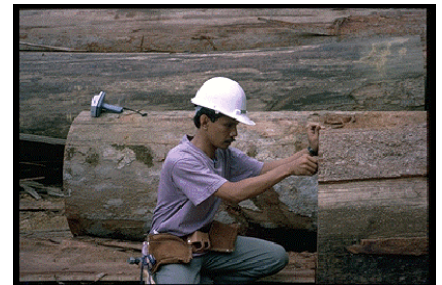
The benefits

Log tracking brings all the data collected about logs and other wood products into a single place where it can be analysed to yield useful management information about log production and the processing chain. An accurate picture of activity in the forest sector is obtained, and unexpected results can be pinpointed and investigated.

Elements of a log tracking system

A typical log tracking set-up is outlined below, but the system can be varied to allow for interventions at any point in the forest product supply chain. Components are described in more detail in the document [Log Tracking Technology](#).

- Log producers and wood processors are allocated a number of uniquely-numbered bar-coded tags in relation to their approved annual production. Tags have a range of features to make them difficult to copy or re-use.
- The allocation of tags is recorded in a central database. At any time the producer's use of tags can be compared with his production forecasts in order to monitor his level of activity.
- Wood products are measured and tagged by the producer. Data about the products, including tag number, measurements, species, origin, date, operator etc., are declared by the producer. These may be supplied in electronic form or written on paper sheets.
- The data are transferred to a central database. Any declarations made on paper sheets are converted into electronic form for loading into the database.



- Since the bar-code number uniquely identifies the product, products may be declared by the operator at critical control points (e.g. stockpiles or road checkpoints) simply as a list of bar-code tag numbers. Similarly logs can be tallied by the regulating authority simply by scanning the bar-codes.
- At random points in the transport and processing chain, independent inspectors carry out checks on the products. These inspections are tailored to the local requirements of the system, for example products can simply be checked visually to ensure that they are tagged (any untagged products are regarded as having been illegally produced); or else products can be identified and measured in order to verify the data declared. Independence is maintained by the inspectors not knowing what data the producer originally declared.
- These random checks are statistically-determined, i.e. the scale of the check depends on the variability of the data. Re-measurement of around 20-30% of the products is generally sufficient to provide a reliable estimate of the accuracy of the original declaration
- It is possible to relate a batch of wood products in a sawmill back to the bar-code number(s) of the log or group of logs from which they were cut. This requires careful monitoring of the material as it passes through the mill over the relevant time period. Systematic collection of this information allows a calculation to be made of the percentage conversion of logs into wood products.
- A further level of sophistication may be employed, whereby inspectors query the database remotely in real time to determine what details have been recorded for a product.



Points to note

- The use of a log tracking system can significantly reduce the number and frequency of compulsory log checks and routine paperwork in the forest. Production declarations are made by the producers themselves under the supervision of the regulating authority, through a system of random checks.
- Log tracking may be extended to labelling standing trees and cut stumps in the forest, thus facilitating pre-harvest inventories and post-harvest checks.
- Log tracking provides documented chain-of-custody for logs and processed wood products, to enable eco-labelled timber to be traced back to certified sources, or to achieve CITES goals.

How to contact SGS NRMS

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