

# EPCH connects Vriksh to participants at TREE

Timber Regulation Enforcement Exchange (TREE), Valencia, Spain

23rd-25th October 2017



*Glimpses of the Timber Regulation Enforcement Exchange (TREE) Conference. Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Joint Director, EPCH, represented the Council at this conference and made an elaborate presentation on Vriksh timber legality assessment and verification standards*

EPCH was represented at the conference on Timber Regulation Enforcement Exchange (TREE), held in Valencia, Spain from 23rd to 25th October 2017. This was co-hosted with the Conselleria de Agricultura, Medio Ambiente, Cambio Climático y Desarrollo Rural, in Valencia.

Since 2012, Forest Trends and Chatham House have been working with officials from EU Member States and US Lacey enforcement agencies, to further understanding of complex high-risk supply chains for wood products and support coordinated implementation of the EU Timber Regulation and US Lacey Act. These two workstreams have merged into a process called the Timber Regulation Enforcement Exchange (TREE), an ongoing series of networking and information-sharing meetings, which bring the growing group of officials together every six months. The TREE process aims to support robust and consistent enforcement of demand-side timber regulations by providing a forum for officials to gain detailed insight into high- and low-risk timber flows entering their countries, discuss practical enforcement issues with each other and relevant experts from the forest sector and other relevant product/environmental sectors, establish emergent norms for Due Diligence/care in relation to different forest products, and build relationships with producer country governments, industry representatives and other stakeholders involved in combating illegal logging and promoting global markets for legal timber. The conference saw the presence of around 60 participants from various EU countries who are EUTR nominees in their respective countries. Many presentations were made by experts on Timber Regulation Enforcement Exchange, VPA institutions, Timber Portal interactive, etc.

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Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Joint Director, EPCH, made a presentation on Vriksh and explained the entire processes of certification as well as EPCH's engagement with CITES and issuance of Vriksh Shipment Certificate. His presentation also touched upon the exports of woodware as against furniture from India. Details on production trends of woodware and consumption in India were also provided. The organisers as well as the participants were happy to know that EPCH has made significant progress since and has come a long way wherein it has certified over 400 companies under Vriksh and have also issued over 4500 Vriksh Shipment certificates.

The audience was very receptive and it is hoped that the interactions would help EPCH reach out to the EUTR nominees in Europe and also to USDA and forest Trends officials in USA.

The queries put forth by the participants were attended to with detailed explanations. Some of the questions were: Whether imported wood or recycled wood is part of the Vriksh system; How often the standards are reviewed; How is batch accounting done; How many companies are certified and do you intend to bring all wooden handicrafts exporters under the ambit of Vriksh?; etc. ■