

International Symposium on Legality Verified Wood 2010
Part Two Report: Activities in Japan to Tackle Illegal Logging Issues

Presenter Information

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Title	Vice-chairperson, Environment Committee
Career summary	Currently vice-chairperson of the Nippon Association of Consumer Specialists (NACS) Environment Committee. Worked as a high school home economics teacher, and then in a milk and rice consultation office. Actively participates in corporate stakeholder meetings and government commissions to deliver the voice of consumers and ensure that information from enterprises and organizations properly reaches consumers.

Report Outline

Title: Our Lifestyle is All Connected to the World: Let's Learn about Product Life Cycles
 Consumer specialists serve as a bridge linking consumers and enterprises. We feel it is important to pay attention to the full product life cycle when selecting products giving consideration to the environment. The NACS conducts ongoing activities to increase, as much as possible, the number of green consumers toward the formation of a sustainable future society through such activities as holding consumer lectures with local governments and participating in environmental advisory councils.

Report Summary

The NACS Environment Committee has been conducting research and activities toward the formation of a sustainable society since 1999. The Committee conducted survey research on effective environmental labels and environmental reports as communications tools between enterprises and consumers, and compiled the nine principles of environmental labels that green consumers seek and a checklist. Also, while consumers may only be concerned about what they can perceive directly, to select products that are truly environment-friendly it is important to take interest in entire product life cycles ranging from raw materials procurement through to transportation, production, sales and post-use disposal and recycling. The NACS holds consumer workshops on topics such as product life cycles and conducts other activities to increase, as much as possible, the number of green consumers toward the achievement of a sustainable future lifestyle.

Last year, the NACS published the pamphlet "Our Lifestyle is All Connected to the World: Let's Learn about Product Life Cycles" as the conclusion of three years of activities. The pamphlet is being used by environmental educators.

Turning to wood products, unfortunately Japanese consumers do not show strong interest in the wood sources, even though 70 percent of Japan is covered with forests. Many consumers understand that using recycled paper is good for the environment, but there are still not many consumers who are concerned enough to ask where the timber originally came from, and how it was sourced. Yet this is due to the lack of the type of information that consumers are interested in. No consumers want to purchase items that are bad for the environment. So we feel the problem is the present insufficient provision of information by the suppliers.

In efforts to learn about the life cycle of paper diapers, we conducted surveys and research on the environmental impact at each stage. Because paper diapers are disposable products, they are believed to have large environmental effects at the logging sites where timber is cut for the raw materials, and at places where crude oil is extracted.

While correctly informing consumers that timber from illegal logging still exists and regarding the impact from illegal logging on the natural and social environment, it is also important to make a broad appeal, for example, with information on FSC and PEFC wood certification and SGECC domestic wood certification as reliable standards for selection by consumers, and on products effectively utilizing thinned lumber.

Recently, these certification labels are finally being seen on familiar items such as stationary goods, household articles, and copy paper. [If PowerPoint materials are prepared, photos of certification labels on actual products are available.] It is hoped that large volumes of legality verified wood will be used at schools and other public facilities from now on as a result of its inclusion in the Green Purchasing Law (Act on Promotion of Procurement of Eco-Friendly Goods and Services by the State and Other Entities).

I visited coffee farms in Guatemala last year. My strongest impression was their explanation that they had gained Conservation International certification at the request of Canadian consumers. Also, a farm owner who had gained Rainforest Alliance certification had done so as a means to convey their environmentally sensitive cultivation methods and concern to consumers. Ultimately, society changes depending on what consumers demand and what consumers choose. I think that, like others, Japanese consumers must do more to raise their voices.