

# TRAFFIC<sup>®</sup>

## The Namibian Indigenous Forest / Timber Industry

03 April 2020

*A critical assessment of the economic and environmental sustainability of the Namibian indigenous forest/timber Industry with reference to Zambia and Angola* finds Namibia is a major exporter of timber harvested in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Zambia, which forms the bulk of exports through the country's Walvis Bay harbour.

Between 2010 and 2016, 32,664 m<sup>3</sup> of Zambian timber and 21,460 m<sup>3</sup> of Angolan timber was exported via Namibia, while between 2015 and 2016, 29,190 m<sup>3</sup> of Mukula, mostly from the DRC, was transported via Zambia for export by Namibia to China.

Mukula *Pterocarpus tinctorius* is a slow-growing evergreen hardwood found in the DRC, Tanzania, Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia, but not Namibia, and has been exploited increasingly in recent years for its ornamental, furniture and medicinal properties. Trees take up to 80 years to mature and the recent increase in harvesting, trade and transport of consignments of Mukula logs from Zambia and the DRC has caused concern in both government and civil society. In June 2017, Zambia imposed a moratorium on the export of Mukula logs. Subsequently, in August 2019, government representatives attending the 18<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), held in Geneva, Switzerland, agreed to list this species in Appendix II of the Convention, a move that introduces measures to regulate its international trade.

Africa overall has become a vital source to meet China's growing demand for timber, imports of which were valued at about USD2.9 billion in 2014, a significant proportion of Africa's total timber production.

Namibia itself produces relatively little timber—the dry climate restricting tree growth and consequently opportunities for sustainable commercial production—although Kiaat *Pterocarpus angolensis* and Zambezi Teak *Baikiaea plurijuga* are both exploited from the country's Kalahari Sands and Miombo Woodlands.

Like elsewhere, timber resources are essential to local communities in Africa as household energy sources, to support livelihoods and the provision of many ecosystem services and

there are serious concerns over the sustainability of timber trade supplies and negative impacts on ecosystems.

Nevertheless, according to the study, Namibia, together with neighbouring Angola and Zambia, are making good progress with improving permitting and other timber trade regulation measures, but “a lack of capacity and resources are seriously hampering the implementation of procedures and controls over harvest, movement and export of timber.”

“It is imperative that a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Namibia, Angola, and Zambia is finalised, to enable implementation of a Joint Action Plan developed in 2015 that includes calls for cross-border patrols; standardisation of permit systems, customs requirements, and trade documentation; enhancements in species identification capacity, data capture, analysis, and harvest monitoring; and the updating of Forest Resources Inventories and the implementation of Forest Management Plans,” said David Newton, Programme Director for TRAFFIC’s southern Africa office.

Source: <https://www.traffic.org/publications/reports/a-critical-assessment-of-the-economic-and-environmental-sustainability-of-the-namibian-indigenous-forest-timber-industry-with/>