Illegal Logging & Deforestation Monitoring

EUDR Context

Field	Value
eudr_commodity	wood
country_focus	Colombia
deforestation_risk	high
last_updated	2026-05-26

Overview

Illegal logging is one of the most persistent and structurally embedded drivers of deforestation in Colombia. IDEAM estimates that logging drives approximately 10% of national deforestation, while FAO and IDEAM jointly estimate that 40-47% of all timber circulating in Colombia's domestic market originates from unauthorized harvesting or extraction from forest reserve zones. Between 2008 and 2019, more than 40% of the country's forest product exports were assessed as having illegal origin. This systemic illegality represents the most significant EUDR compliance barrier for Colombian timber entering EU markets.

The geography of illegal logging in Colombia closely tracks the country's deforestation hotspots: the Pacific coast (Chocó bioregion), the Amazonian arc of deforestation (Caquetá, Guaviare, southern Meta), and increasingly the Catatumbo region (Norte de Santander). These areas share common enabling factors: weak institutional presence, armed group control, poverty-driven participation by rural communities, and high-value timber species that incentivize extraction.

Between 2000 and 2020, Colombia lost approximately 3 million hectares of natural forest, with deforestation peaking in 2017 at over 220,000 hectares annually. The government's Comprehensive Deforestation Containment Plan (2023-2026) has contributed to declining rates—preliminary data suggests continued reductions through 2025—but the structural drivers of illegal logging persist in remote, conflict-affected territories.

Colombian Context

Three critical deforestation and illegal logging hotspots define the compliance landscape:

- **Chocó / Pacific Coast (Critical Risk)**: The Chocó bioregion is one of the world's most biodiverse ecosystems and a primary source of high-value tropical hardwoods. EIA investigations documented

that species like Dipteryx odorata (cumarú/choibá) are harvested illegally from the Atrato watershed and Pacific coast forests, processed through intermediary sawmills, and exported to the US and EU for use in decking and flooring. Local Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities participate in extraction under economically coercive conditions with few legal alternatives.
- **Amazon Arc / Caquetá-Guaviare (Critical Risk)**: The Colombian Amazon deforestation arc stretches from Caquetá through Guaviare into southern Meta. While cattle ranching is the primary driver, illegal logging often precedes or accompanies land clearing, with valuable timber extracted before pasture conversion. MAAP satellite analysis has documented deforestation encroaching into Chiribiquete National Park and the Llanos del Yarí Indigenous Reserve, with 148 hectares cleared in 2024 and 198 hectares in early 2025 within park boundaries.
- **Catatumbo / Norte de Santander (High Risk)**: Armed group presence and coca cultivation drive deforestation in this region, with timber extraction forming part of the conflict economy. Cross-border dynamics with Venezuela complicate enforcement.

Colombia's monitoring infrastructure centers on IDEAM's Forest and Carbon Monitoring System (SMByC), which produces annual deforestation statistics and quarterly early warning bulletins (Alertas Tempranas de Deforestación). The system uses Landsat and Sentinel-2 imagery to detect forest cover change at 30m resolution. Global Forest Watch provides additional near-real-time alert data. However, monitoring detection is not equivalent to enforcement—detected deforestation events frequently go unaddressed due to limited institutional capacity in remote areas.

EUDR Compliance Requirements

Addressing illegal logging risk for EUDR compliance requires:

- **Supply chain mapping to forest of origin**: Identify the specific forest compartment where each timber batch was harvested, with GPS coordinates, CAR jurisdiction, and permit numbers. This is the most critical and most difficult step given the long and opaque timber supply chains in Colombia.
- **Red-flag screening**: Implement supply chain screening for known high-risk origins (Chocó, Caquetá, Guaviare, Catatumbo), species (Dipteryx, mahogany, cedar), and intermediaries. Any sourcing from these areas requires enhanced due diligence.
- **Satellite-based harvest verification**: Cross-reference claimed harvest locations against satellite imagery to verify that (a) the area was forested at the time of claimed harvest and (b) no clear-cut deforestation occurred—only selective, sustainable extraction consistent with the approved management plan.
- **IDEAM data integration**: Use IDEAM deforestation alerts and annual monitoring data as a primary evidence source in due diligence reports, supplemented by higher-resolution commercial imagery for specific verification.
- **Pacto Madera Legal alignment**: Leverage Colombia's Intersectoral Pact for Legal Timber (PIML), which involves 70 public and private organizations committed to legal timber sourcing, as a governance framework for supply chain compliance. While membership in the PIML does not guarantee EUDR compliance, it signals commitment to the legality verification processes the regulation requires.

Revisión #1
Creado 2026-05-27 04:00:16 UTC por Gideon Blaauw
Actualizado 2026-05-27 04:00:16 UTC por Gideon Blaauw