

On the newswire | January 2014
Certified tropical timber: unlocking market opportunities

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Good Common Sense

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" Our Quebecker friends just love
the expression: *Gros Bon Sens*
(good common sense), that sound ability
to be practical and see things clearly. "



If something is pretty clear today, it is that things have changed in the world of African timber, as **the Brazzaville Forum** has shown; **a crucial event, the Forum has been quite timely in making a strong case for this new set-up.** Our lines of work, each and every one of them, badly need to perk up their image, **while striking a balance with economic interests. Actually, whether it's current legislations such as FLEGT, LACEY ACT, JAPAN'S GOHO WOOD, AUSTRALIAN ILLEGAL LOGGING PROHIBITION BILL [1]... or proactive measures taken by some countries (rapport Védrine) [2],** in order to meet the demands of NGOs, populations and stakeholders and above all markets, we must clearly realize the new context in which we are evolving. **We have no other choice but to make it crystal clear that we are doing the right thing.**

But exactly how can we make sure we are truly doing the right thing?

In the Internet era, the era of social networks, of *consum-actors* (i.e. consumers who choose to use their purchasing power consciously to stand for their values), **it is vital to think transparently, act transparently, organize transparently. One cannot but welcome the efforts carried out by ATIBT, an organization that slowly but surely is going towards more and more transparency by letting external observers join in; or, to give another example, by introducing evaluation methods for its new members.** One cannot tell others about governance unless one practices what one preaches. **Finally, given its double role as interface and international association, it is ATIBT's duty to facilitate change and that is just how its members should understand this collective endeavour.**

In a nutshell: not only is this transparency effort healthy, but also vital. **Equally vital is to encourage it, or even demand it, in all segments of our sector: forest operators, processors, importers, traders, resellers, sub-contractors, managers and professional associations.**



**GUIDE
DU
BON SENS**

Deontological rules invariably look somewhat unattractive. They cannot be easily satisfied. At times they draw lines leading to excluding, rather than welcoming, new members in our league. However, **we know all too well that, while reputation is the result of relentless work being carried out, day after day, by everyone in the community, it can be tarnished once and for all, if even one is dysfunctional.**

In our deontological responsibility, we can draw inspiration from what some importer associations have done.

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(Of course, this does not rule out continuous improvement.) It's about starting to make a list identifying the players in a given segment, recording all relevant information about them, cross-checking to see that the information is objective and correct, ensuring balance, conducting comprehensive checks and finally, deciding what to do.

To make a long story short: Good Common Sense is nothing but the realization that **we won't be able to carry out our collective actions** (marketing, training, research, control laboratories, lobbying, developing closer ties with other forest products producers...); that **we won't succeed in convincing our donors**; that **we won't gain international recognition, unless we strive for better governance, right where we are**, starting from our companies, our associations or representative bodies.

Those of us who cannot, will not be willing, or will not be in a position to act accordingly, will automatically cut themselves off from markets.

[1] International regulatory and logistics timber framework: analysis of the European Union Timber Regulation. Opportunities for the logistics sector.

[2] A new partnership model for the future: 15 suggestions for a new economic dynamics between Africa and France.