

An Analysis of the U.S. Wood Products Import Sector: Prospects for Tropical Wood Products Exporters

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Abstract

The U.S. has dramatically altered its wood product imports and exports during the past few years, and at present, it is the second largest wood product importer in the world. Hence, an understanding of market structures, factors in selecting foreign suppliers, and the emphasis placed on environmental issues/certification are critical to understand from the perspective of wood products importers in the U.S. This study provides an analysis of the U.S. wood products import sector with special emphasis on current and future opportunities for tropical wood products exporters to the U.S. market.

In this study, 158 wood products importers in the U.S. were surveyed using a mailing questionnaire. The adjusted response rate was 40.6 percent. Results indicated that most of the respondents were small to medium scale firms, but major importers of wood products. According to respondents, wood products to the U.S. mainly come from Brazil, Chile, and China. From the importers' perspective, Brazilian wood products ranked first for its quality followed by wood products from Chile and Finland. Product quality, long term customer relationships, on-time delivery of orders, fair prices, and supplier reputation were the factors deemed important in selecting overseas suppliers. Majority of respondents were importing certified wood products. FSC, SFI, and ISO 14000 were the mostly accepted certification programs. However, certification was not a major factor in foreign supplier selection criteria. When considered the U.S. wood products importers' tendency to diversify their products and species imported, attractive opportunities exist for wood products suppliers from tropical countries.

Keywords: Wood products, imports, exports, certified wood, tropical wood suppliers
