

Press release March 3, 2010:

TPAC concludes: MTCS conform, but decision Minister necessary on risk of forest conversion.

The Dutch Timber Procurement Assessment Committee (TPAC) judges that the Malaysian certification system MTCS is conform to the Dutch Procurement Criteria. Until recently, TPAC was sincerely concerned that certified timber could be mixed with timber from forest conversion or plantations. Late 2009 this concern was addressed by MTCS for Peninsular Malaysia with the requirement to give such timber a special code in the chain of custody. As from this week, this procedure is also required in Sabah and Sarawak, the Malaysian states in Borneo. This means that MTCS meets all conditions set by TPAC and that it receives the final judgement 'conform'.

An important point however, is that the certified forest area in Malaysia is not secured against politically-initiated forest conversion for (timber) plantations or infrastructure. "Nevertheless, the certification system cannot be held accountable for this kind of conversion because politicians and not forest managers take the decision," clarifies TPAC chairman Udo de Haes. "It is therefore not up to TPAC, as a technical Committee, to judge this politically initiated and approved conversion. The judgement, including possible consequences for the Dutch procurement policy, is up to the Minister of Environment", says the chairman. Whatever the outcome, the Committee has advised the Minister to prioritise the issue of conversion in the international dialogue on forest issues.

Reports

The Committee will publish a public report and a forum report on the MTCS assessment. The latter contains all reactions received through TPAC's online stakeholder forum, as well as information how these have been taken into account in the final judgement. Both reports will be available on the TPAC website as from the 8th of March, 2010.

The TPAC assessment only concerns timber coming from forests that are certified against the MTCS MC&I(2002) standard. On top of that, the certificates have to be awarded by accredited certification bodies as required within the new MTCS structure. This timber is also eligible to carry the PEFC logo.

Other assessments

TPAC not only assessed MTCS, but also the umbrella certification system PEFC International. TPAC will communicate the final judgement of this system shortly. In the last year and a half, TPAC has assessed the following systems conform to the Dutch Procurement Criteria: FSC International and the national PEFC systems of Finland, Sweden, Germany, Belgium and Austria.

The TPAC assessments – which are based on the Dutch procurement criteria for timber – enable the Dutch government to identify and procure timber that is produced sustainably. From 2010 onwards, the Dutch government is committed to sustainable procurement.

For further information please contact Myrthe Haase, Secretary TPAC; telephone +31 (0)70-3586300, email mhaase@smk.nl, website www.tpac.smk.nl