

TEAKNET undertakes new research study

TEAKNET, the international teak information network, that is managed by the Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI), India, currently undertakes a new research study to assess the teak resources growing in about 80 countries in the tropics and analyze the multilateral trade relations between exporting and importing countries. The research study is supported by the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) through its Special Programme for the Development of Capacities (IUFRO_SPDC) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). It is a follow-up to the previous study “Teak Resources and Market Assessment 2010” that was conducted by FAO as a special study of the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010 (FRA 2010).

The results of the 2010 study estimated the area of natural teak forests at 29 million hectares in India, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Thailand, almost half of which was in Myanmar. Planted teak forests were found to be the only valuable tropical hardwood to constitute a globally emerging forest resource at an estimated 4.346 million hectares, of which 83% were located in Asia, 11% in Africa, and 6% in tropical America. Taking into account the lack of data from 22 teak-growing countries, these figures certainly underestimated the actual area of planted teak forests.

Ever since a number of events have had a profound impact on the international teak sector. The area of planted teak forests has increased in many African, Asian and Latin-American countries. The international trade in teak roundwood and sawn timber has expanded tremendously, though Myanmar, the most important producer of high-quality teak from natural forests, has introduced a log export ban from April 2014. These events prompted the 4th World Teak Conference held in Ghana in September 2022 to recommend that an update of the 2010 report on global teak resources and markets was urgently needed.



A clonal seed orchard near Toungoo, the home of teak in central Myanmar.
Photo: W. Kollert

In the first phase of the study the challenge is to bring on board relevant experts in each teak growing country for retrieving reliable and consistent data on national teak resources. The data will be collated through a standardized questionnaire available in Chinese, English, French, Portuguese and Spanish language. This work is supported by five regional coordinators¹, mainly from national forest research institutions, who will manage the communication with the identified contact persons and monitor the distribution and collection of the questionnaires.

As many teak plantations are owned or managed by private companies, particularly in South America, it is of utmost importance to note in this context that the resource data reported in each particular questionnaire will be aggregated at national level. Thus, it will not be possible to trace resource data back to any public or private entity within a given country. Information on the international trade of teak roundwood and sawn timber also to be included in this report will be captured from official customs records - for instance, the UN Comtrade database - that publishes teak data since January 2022.

The information on teak resources and markets will be published on national and global level in 2024 by the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) in one of its publication series. It is expected that these results and findings will facilitate an improved assessment of the significance of teak resources and the international teak trade providing policy- and decision-makers, investors, and managers with a better understanding of the important role that teak resources are playing today in the provision of wood products for the national economies of many countries.

Walter Kollert and S. Sandeep, TEAKNET, July 2023.

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