



## Government 'failing on trees policy'

By CHARLES CLOVER  
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FORESTS three times the size of the Isle of Wight are illegally destroyed every year to provide timber and paper for Government departments and agencies, hospitals and local authorities, a report by the World Wide Fund for Nature said yesterday.

Though Tony Blair announced a policy of buying from sustainably grown sources of timber wherever possible two years ago, and Britain was the only G8 country to do this, the policy had not been implemented, the environmental group said.

A report by WWF said that G8 countries and China imported an estimated 53 million cubic metres of timber, pulp and paper from forests which were logged illegally each year. This is the equivalent of a forest the size of Belgium and the Netherlands combined.



## **Group warns on timber imports**

Almost 10 per cent of Britain's imports of timber, pulp and paper are from illegal sources, according to research from WWF, the environment group. "The UK imports timbers from producer countries where forest laws are frequently violated and where there are known problems of illegal logging," said the study.

Examples included Brazil and Indonesia, which supply a third of the UK's tropical timber supply. Ten per cent of Estonia's timber is exported to the UK, but half of this is considered illegal.

The charity accused the government of flouting the "green" timber procurement policy which it introduced two years ago. The government rejected the charge on the grounds it did not take account of the division between central and local government.

**Vanessa Houlder**



## UK warned about scale of 'illegal' wood trade

BY PAUL PEACHEY

ALMOST ONE tenth of Britain's imports of timber, paper and pulp comes from forests being illegally destroyed by loggers, the World Wildlife Fund said in a report published yesterday.

The group claims the public sector buys almost one fifth of the illegal products despite it being government policy to buy only independently certified timber. Brazil and Indonesia, which supply about one third of the UK's tropical timber, are among the worst offenders for illegal logging and violating forest laws, the report says.

Although tropical timber represents only a small pro-

portion of the wood products imported every year, the wood is among the highest valued. The Department of International Development, which has championed moves against the illicit trade, was forced to admit last month that one of its offices had been refurbished using uncertified sapele wood.

Paul Toyne, the head of the WWF's forest programme, said: "The Government must face up to their responsibilities and be sure that the timber they are buying comes from forests that are well managed for people and wildlife."

The report, *The Timber*

*Footprint of the G8 and China*, said the G8 group of the world's wealthiest nations and China were importing 53 million cubic metres of illegal timber products every year, the equivalent of a forest the size of the Netherlands and Belgium. The World Bank estimates governments lose \$5bn every year because of illegal logging.

Britain is the only member of the G8 with a "green" policy on timber procurement. But a government spokeswoman said Britain was barred by European anti-discrimination legislation from buying only eco-friendly labelled wood.



## 'Act now' to save vanishing forests

**MIGHTY** forests are being illegally destroyed every year while the Government fails to carry out its pledge to ban illegal timber from Britain, a report revealed yesterday.

The effect is to damage the environment and wildlife, pushing species such as orang utans and rare birds closer to extinction.

Ten per cent of Britain's imports of timber, pulp and paper come from illegal sources, says the report by WWF, the global environment network.

A fifth of this – equal to forests three times the size of the Isle of Wight – provides timber and paper for schools, hospitals and Government buildings.

Environment Minister Michael Meacher announced action two years ago to tackle the trade in illegally harvested timber.

But yesterday's report said: "This policy has yet to be effectively implemented." Often wood comes from countries where illegal logging is a serious problem.

Brazil and Indonesia



**MEACHER: His move to solve problem failed**

supply about a third of the UK's tropical timber.

It has been estimated that 80 per cent of logging in the Brazilian Amazon is illegal and over 70 per cent of Indonesia's timber exports are illegal.

Ten per cent of Estonia's timber is exported to the UK – half of it thought to be illegal.

Dr Paul Boyne, head of WWF's forest programme said: "Our Government must face up to its responsibilities and be sure that the timber it buys comes from forests that are well managed for people and wildlife."