

For immediate release:

2 April 2009

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U.S. PILOTS MAJOR NEW ELECTRONIC SYSTEM FOR WOOD IMPORTS

Declaration requirements under the Lacey Act will be enforced beginning May 1st

Washington DC – The US yesterday flipped the switch on its new declaration system for plant product imports, a groundbreaking initiative established to collect information on what wood products are coming into the country and from where they are harvested.

Creation of form PPQ-505 and the corresponding database, which is intended to gather information about the country of origin and species of a wide variety of wood and plant products, was set in motion by the 2008 amendments to the US Lacey Act. These amendments made the US the first country in the world to prohibit the import, export or trade in illegally sourced wood and plant products.

US officials announced late last week that enforcement of the first phase of the declaration requirement – which covers logs, sawn timber, flooring, stakes, veneers, molding and tool handles, among other products – would be delayed until May 1st, but nonetheless encouraged importers to begin reporting now “for live testing of the electronic system.”

The US had previously announced that the Lacey Act declaration requirement would be phased in over a period of two years beginning April 1st, to give enforcement officials and the private sector time to adapt their systems. According to the government statement, enforcement of subsequent phases is not expected to be delayed.

“These declarations are a vital piece of the US’s new law against trade in illegal wood, bringing transparency to supply chains and enabling better enforcement,” said Alexander von Bismarck, Executive Director of the non-profit Environmental Investigation Agency, which spearheads the coalition of organizations supporting the Lacey Act. “We hope both the government and the private sector will use this extra month to get their systems into shape and begin the enforcement phase of this important law.”

“Importers and their trading partners should, of course, be aware that the underlying prohibition on trade in illegally sourced products is already in effect. The consequences are heavy and the message is clear: the US is closing its doors to illegal wood.”

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For more information about the specifics of the Lacey Act, see:

- EIA Lacey Act resources page: www.eia-global.org/lacey
- USDA-APHIS official website:
http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/lacey_act/index.shtml