**Forestry in Brazil**

The forestry or timber industry is a major component of the financial success and stability of Brazil. By June 2012, Brazil had 7.74 million hectares of certified forest (according to FSC and CERFLOR standards). Of course, there is plenty of uncertified timber being produced and processed, which continues to plague the legitimate timber industries, who vie for clients.

This South American country is home to the third-largest remaining frontier forest (large and relatively undisturbed natural forests) on the planet, making up about 17% of the world’s frontier forests. It has the highest biodiversity in terms of the plants that these forests accommodate.

Amazon Rain Forest.

Timber can be harvested either from 1) native forests or 2) planted forests. The native forests of Brazil occupy an area of just over 517 million hectares (more than 98% of the country’s forests), while the planted forests occupy approximately 6.6 million hectares. The vast majority of the country’s planted forests are located in the south of Brazil, while the native forests that provide timber are almost exclusively part of the Amazon. There is a small section of native forest that is still being harvested for wood in the dwindling Atlantic Forest on the east coast.

Pine and eucalyptus are the two predominant timber species that are produced, processed and traded in Brazil. The main softwood export ports of Brazil comprise São Francisco do Sul, Paranaguá and Itajaí. For hardwood, the most significant ports for export are Belém, Paranaguá, Santarém and Vila do Conde.

There are three main ways of harvesting timber legally in Brazil. These are:

1. From planted trees.

2. Via land clearance that has been authorised due to the forest’s being cleared for another purpose (such as agriculture).

3. Via formal forest management, which requires approval from the PMFS (Plano de Manejo Florestal Sustentável), a sustainable forest management plan.

The most significant timber products to be exported include pulp, raw wood, wood chips, laminated wood, plywood, paper, flooring, furniture, wood fibre panels, frames and packaging. These are sent all over the world, generating an enormous income for the country of Brazil.

However, centuries of the exploitation of this magnificent natural resource is placing enormous pressure on the industry. To date, well over 570 000 square kilometres of the Amazon forests have been decimated, with an average annual loss of 17 600 square kilometres.

Deforestation has a devastating effect on the natural resources of the country and its extraordinary biodiversity. Much of the deforestation occurs to make space for urbanisation and agriculture, as well as for the export of these popular timbers. In addition, accidental fires destroy almost half of all the area that has been burned in the Amazon Basin. The Brazil nut tree, native Brazilwood and Brazilian rosewood (or jacaranda) are no longer allowed to be harvested.

All logging requires a permit, as well as a formal management plan. These need to be obtained from the Environmental Institute of Brazil (IBAMA). While not all logging and forestry is performed legally in Brazil, there seems to be a growing preference for certified, legitimate service providers within the industry. This will, hopefully, curb the indiscriminate destruction of forests and retain some of the biodiversity and natural wealth of the country.