



TE WAHA NUI

FREE

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Blood on the verandah floor



PHOTO: GREENPEACE



PHOTO: HELEN TWOSE

Greenpeace says 99 per cent of Indonesian kwila is logged illegally. Many of these logs end up in our timber yards.

By Scott Winton

Blood is being spilt in Indonesia to provide Kiwis with kwila — New Zealand's most popular hardwood flooring, say environmental campaigners.

Fellowship of Baptist Churches leader Reverend Socratez Yoman says many people are being removed from their land in the Indonesian province of Papua to make way for loggers.

"The military work closely with the logging companies and then share the profits. If the people protest they are either arrested or shot," says Yoman, who visited New Zealand for a month-long tour.

If the current rate of deforestation continues, Indonesia will have no native forests by the year 2015.

The London-based Environmental Investigation Agency investigated the extent of illegal logging in early 2005. It found that more than \$US1 billion worth of illegal timber was being removed from Papua every year.

Kwila is in high demand for use in outdoor decking because of its durability and low cost.

Grant Rosoman, from Greenpeace, estimates 99 per cent of kwila coming from Indonesia has been sourced illegally. He wants timber import sources to be certified.

The timber is then shipped to other countries, including Malaysia and Singapore, so its origin can be concealed.

Rosoman says this means New Zealand companies often do not know exactly where the logs come from because the "logs flow all over the place".

"While companies like Mitre 10 and Placemakers are doing their best to find out where the wood comes from, they're never 100 per cent sure. I think they'd like to be regulated, so it becomes a level playing field," says Rosoman.

Another company which imports kwila from Indonesia is Timspec.

Spokesperson Jim Marshall says it does not trace its timber "in any detailed way".

"There's no way to guarantee it (purchase of legal wood). The odd bit gets through, but the self-regulatory system we have in place works pretty well," says Marshall.

He says the timber importers "keep an eye on each other" and can tell if one of

the companies is importing illegal wood because it will be a lot cheaper.

Trevor Johnson, from the Warehouse, says it is leading the way in New Zealand by buying exotic timber as responsibly as possible.

He says the Warehouse does not purchase from high-risk categories and all other wood it imports is certified.

Most timber importers in New Zealand are members of the NZ Timber Importers Association (NZTIA), which upholds a self-regulatory system. It rejects trade restrictions and bans on the import of tropical timber.

In 2004, Lumberbank NZ was expelled from the NZTIA because it could not prove the logs it bought from Papua New Guinea were from a legal source.

Lumberbank general manager Buster Wyllie claims his company had been expelled so the other members of the group could avoid scrutiny.

"We have been effectively made a sacrificial lamb," he says.

Rosoman says Lumberbank refuses to do anything about the illegal sourcing of timber from places like Papua.

"They are the worst company there is," he says.

The government is currently considering draft regulations and a decision is expected later in the year.

Rosoman believes it is unlikely regulations will be introduced as this may jeopardise a free-trade agreement with Indonesia.

He says a much weaker voluntary system could be put in place.

"The government has been pathetically weak on this issue," he says.

The NZ Forest Owners Association supports any effort to address illegal logging. It says studies have shown the import of illegal timber is having a significant negative impact on the legal timber trade.

Yoman was in New Zealand to promote "dialogue" for West Papua, which has been under Indonesian control since 1962.

He urges New Zealanders not to buy kwila imported from Indonesia. He also wants the New Zealand government to raise the issue of West Papuan independence at the Pacific Islands forum in the Cook Islands next month.

"This illegal logging is leaving our people homeless and hungry," he says.

"We need your help."

