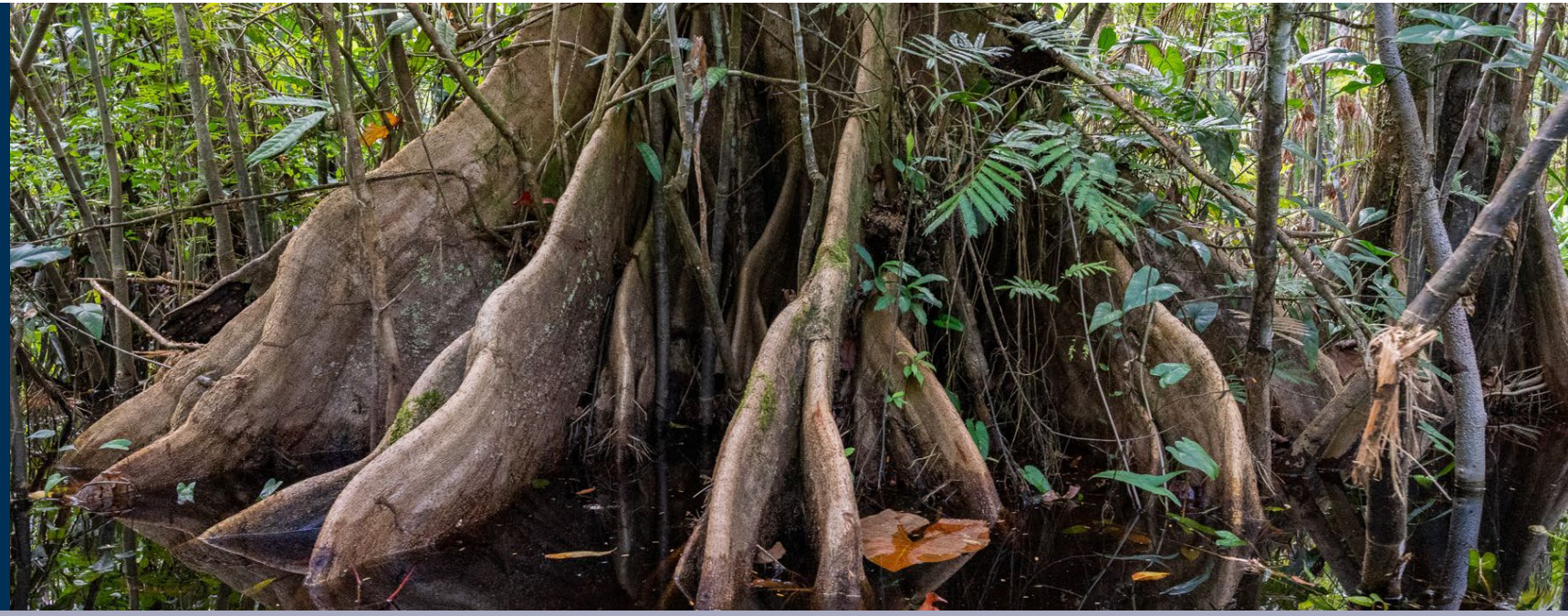
Tropical timber from the Congo Basin

Eli Prins, Stichting Probos

International Hardwood Conference
Antwerp, 6 November 2026



Probos: sustaining forests, supporting forest-based value chains

Stichting Probos

Non-profit, mission-driven knowledge institute - founded in 1965

> Sustainable forest-based value chains contribute to forest conservation.



Supporting sustainable forest management and market access



Stimulating markets for sustainable timber products

Timber market survey

Monitoring and data

The Congo Basin forest

Ecosystem services and threats

WHY IT MATTERS

~200 M ha

2nd largest tropical rainforest

Carbon sink

largest net tropical forest carbon sink

~10,000

plant species, ~30% endemic

60 M+

people depend directly on the forest

UNDER PRESSURE

~600,000 ha

primary forest loss per year (2015–2024); 780,000 ha in 2024

Main drivers

- (Smallholder) agriculture; cassava, maize, cocoa, oil palm
- Charcoal & fuelwood
- Unsustainable & illegal logging (degradation)
- Climate change

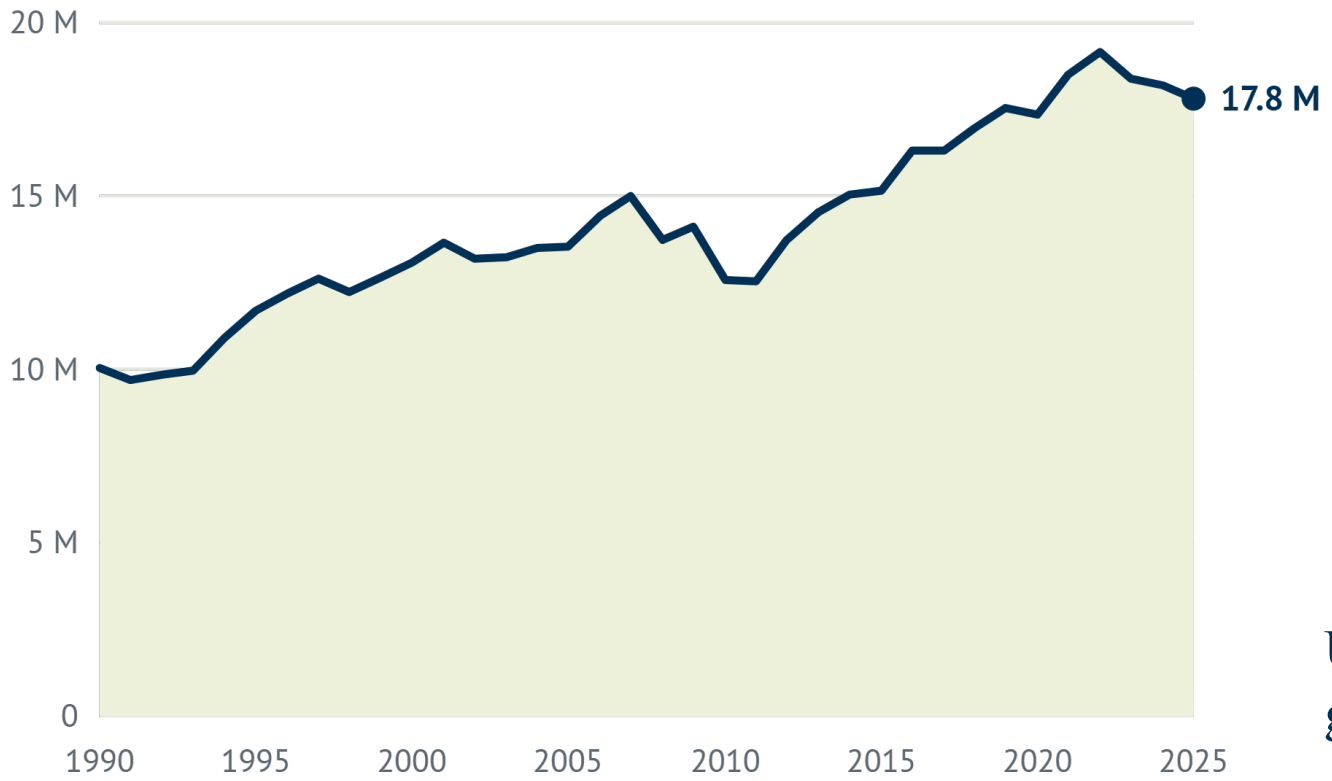
Sustainable forest management

Combines the economic, social and environmental functions of the forest

Sources: CIFOR/OFAC (2021); Harris et al. (2021); WWF; Global Forest Watch (2026); Tyukavina et al. (2018).

Congo Basin roundwood production

Annual industrial roundwood production (non-coniferous, tropical), six Congo Basin countries combined, 1990–2025, m³



10.0 M

m³ in 1990

19.1 M

m³ peak in 2022

17.8 M

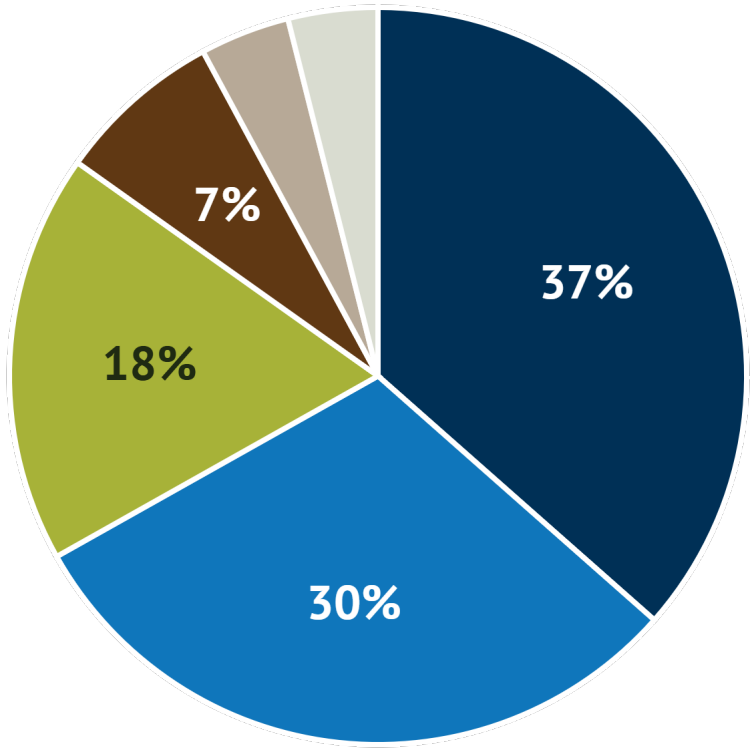
m³ in 2025

Up to 49% increase of total global roundwood demand 2020–2050

Sources: ITTO statistical database (JFSQ data); FAO (2024), State of the World's Forests. Cameroon, CAR, Rep. of Congo, DRC, Eq. Guinea, Gabon.

Production per country

Annual industrial roundwood production by country, 2025, total 17.8 million m³



DRC	6.5 M m³	37%
Cameroon	5.4 M m³	30%
Gabon	3.2 M m³	18%
Republic of Congo	1.3 M m³	7%
Central African Republic	0.7 M m³	4%
Equatorial Guinea	0.7 M m³	4%

Source: ITTO statistical database (Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire data); tropical roundwood.

Certification of SFM

FSC- and/or PEFC-certified forest area vs total forest area and forest designated for production, six Congo Basin countries (double certification accounted for)

251 Mha

total forest area

56 Mha

designated for production

8.5 Mha

certified FSC and/or PEFC (of which 4.2 Mha under both schemes)

15% of production forest certified — 8.5 of 56 Mha



3.4% of all forest certified — 8.5 of 251 Mha



Sources: FAO FRA 2025 country data; FSC certificate database and PEFC Find Certified.

Certified forest per country

FSC- and/or PEFC-certified area



CAR, DR Congo and Equatorial Guinea: no FSC- or PEFC-certified forest.

Sources: FSC certificate database and PEFC Find Certified, valid FM certificates on 28 Oct 2026; production forest: FAO FRA 2025 country data.

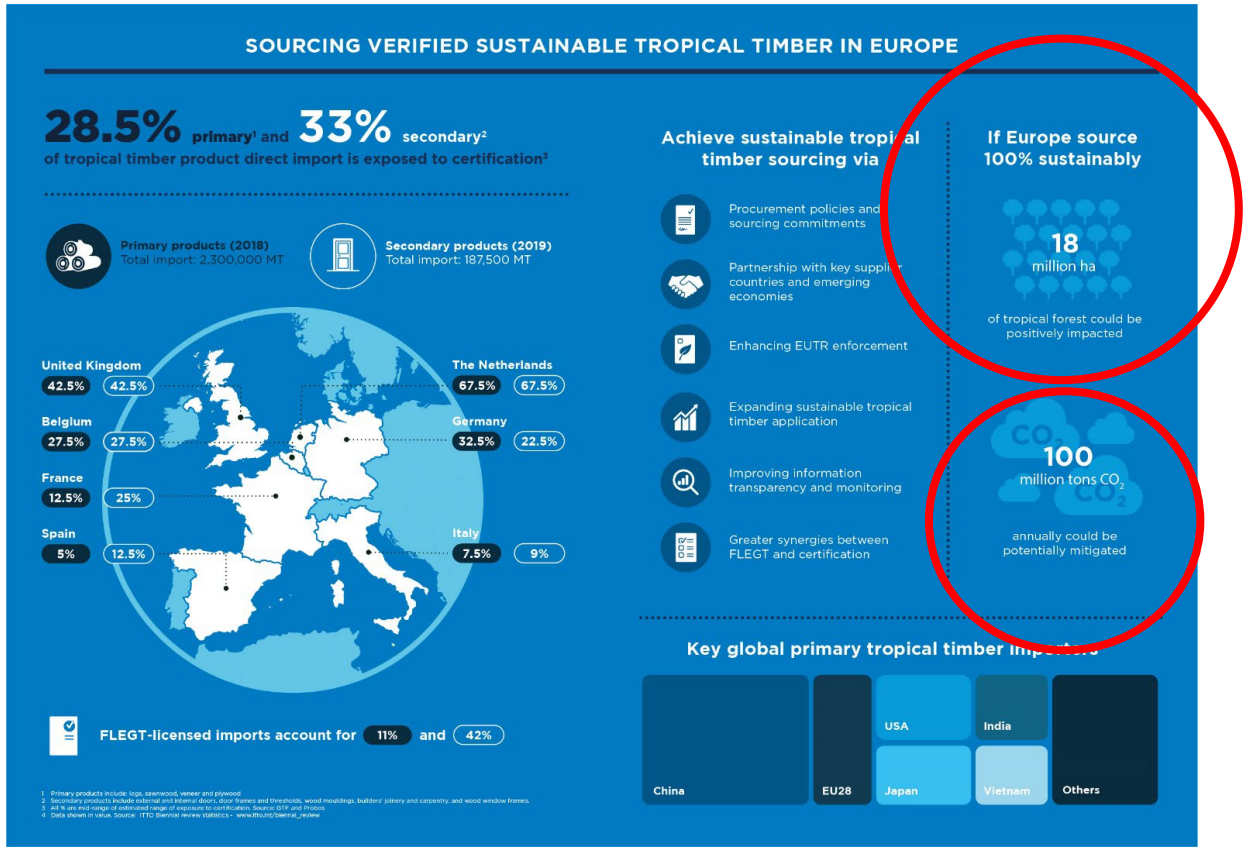
Certification in the market

FSC- and/or PEFC-certification levels and potential impact

Share certified sustainable

Certified sustainable[1] Verified legal[2] Uncertified wood

Overall	92.6%
Softwood	98.0%
Temperate hardwood	65.5%
Tropical hardwood	63.0%
Wood-based panels[3]	95.9%
Tropical wood-based panels	96,0%



Momentum for certification

The opportunity of certified sustainable forest management in the Congo Basin

1 Political commitment

- Zámba Heritage Congress (Feb 2026)
- Tax incentives: Gabon, Cameroon

2 Possibilities for IFL concessions

- FSC Motion 45 (General Assembly 2025)
- Outcome-based IFL conservation instead of fixed set-aside

3 Supporting evidence for EUDR

- EUDR applies from 30 December 2026
- Certification = risk-mitigating evidence

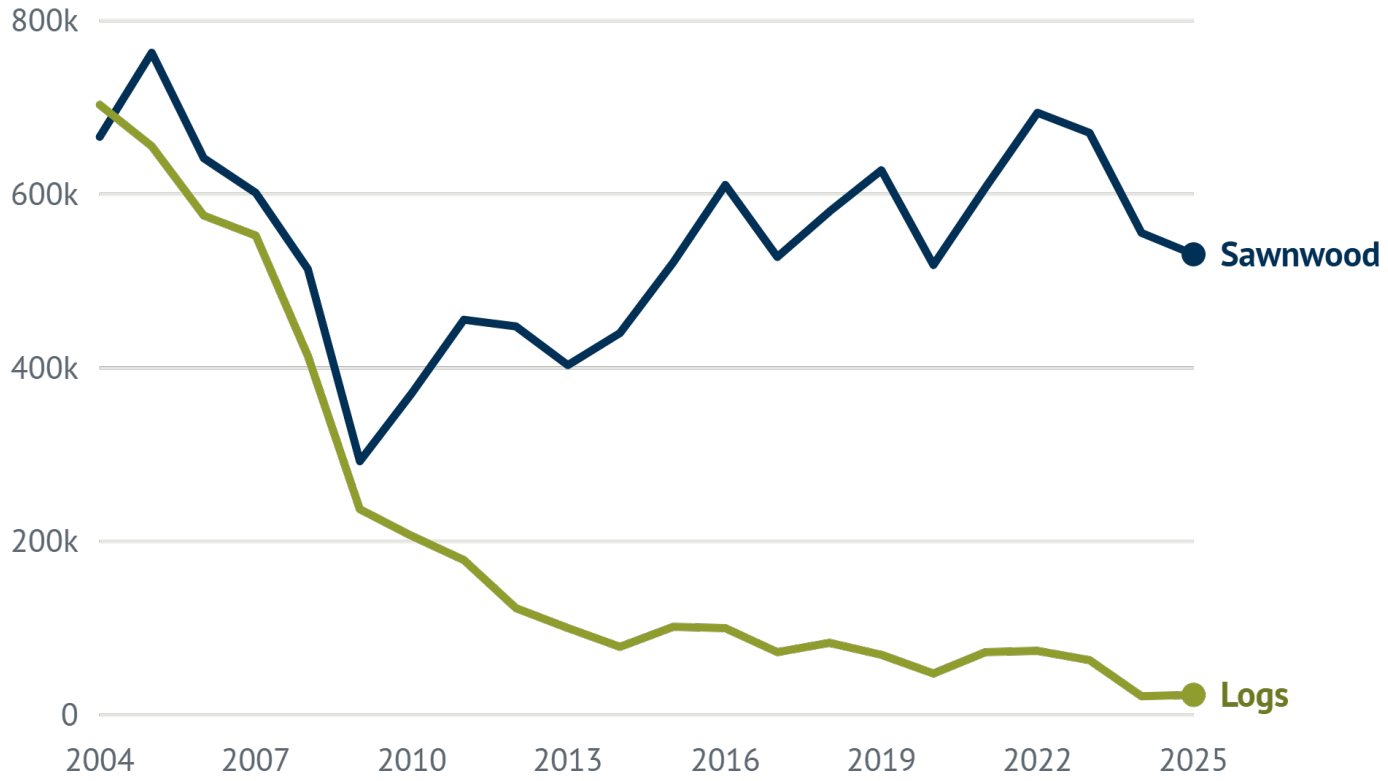
4 A positive story for tropical timber

- Proof of sustainable origin
- Supports image of tropical timber as a sustainable material

Sources: FSC (2026), Zámba Heritage Congress; ATIBT (2025, 2026) on FSC Motion 45; FSC/ASI (2025) EUDR benchmark

Exports to Europe: logs vs. sawnwood

Congo Basin exports of tropical logs and sawnwood to Europe (EU-27 + UK), 2004–2025, m³



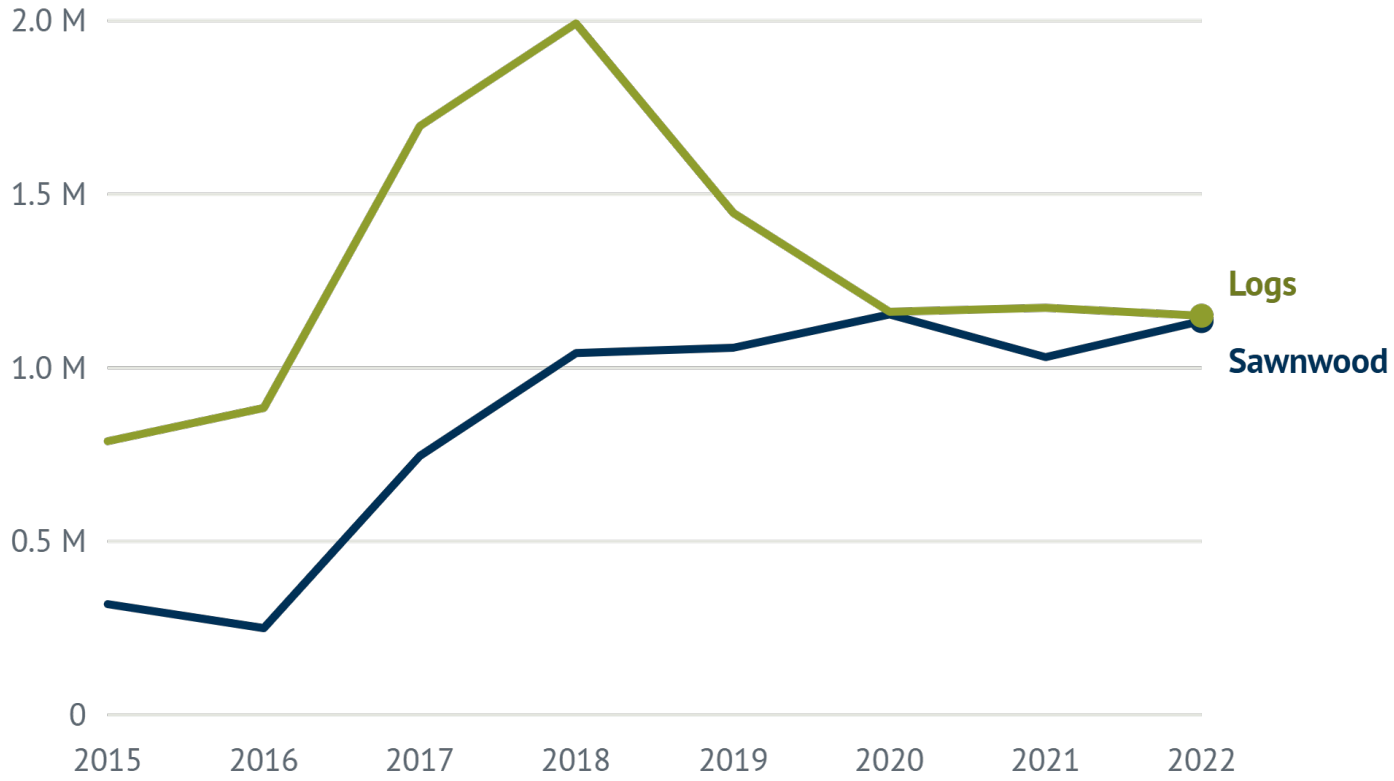
–97%

Logs, 2004–2025
703k → 23k m³

Source: STIX (based on Eurostat COMEXT); ITTO conversion factors per country. Congo Basin countries include Cameroon, CAR, Rep. of Congo, DRC, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon.

Exports to Asia (mainly China)

Congo Basin exports of tropical logs and sawnwood to Asia, 2015–2022, m³



×3.5

Sawnwood, 2015–2022
0.32 M → 1.13 M m³

2.0 M

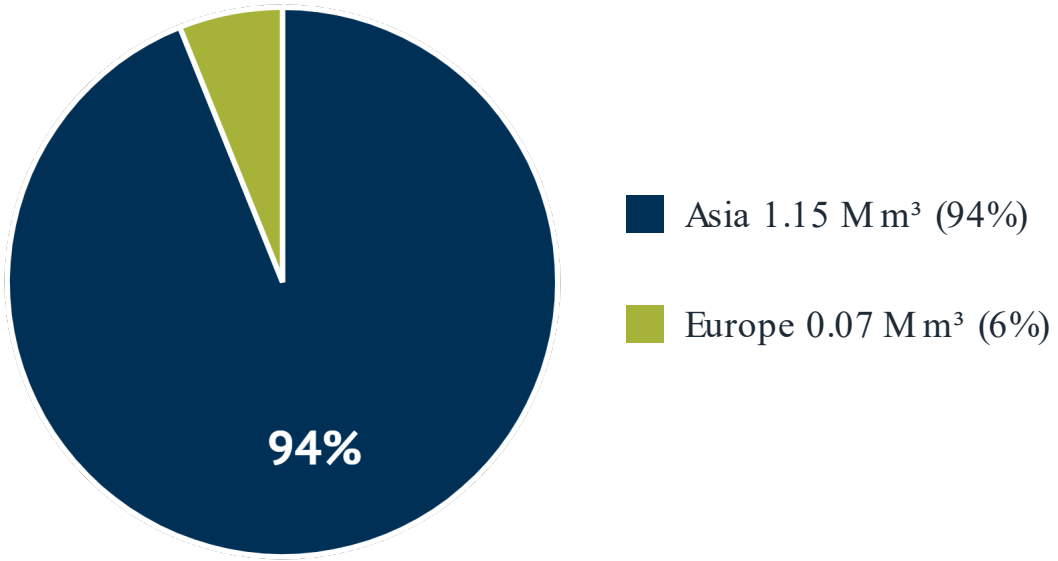
Peak in log imports (m³), 2018

Source: STIX (based on Eurostat COMEXT)

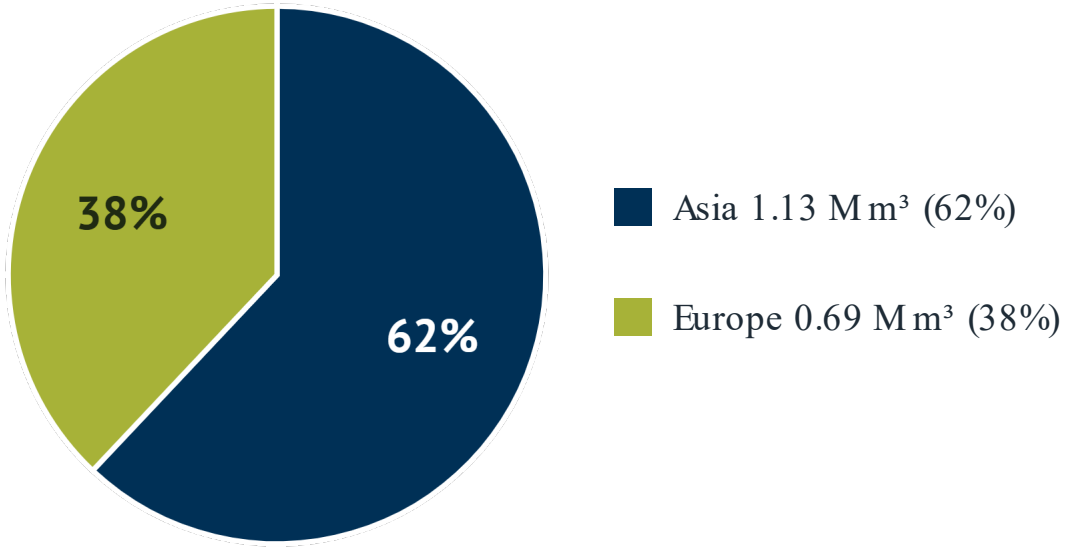
Asia vs. Europe

Congo Basin exports to Asia vs Europe, 2022 – the latest year with sufficient data for both regions (m³)

Logs



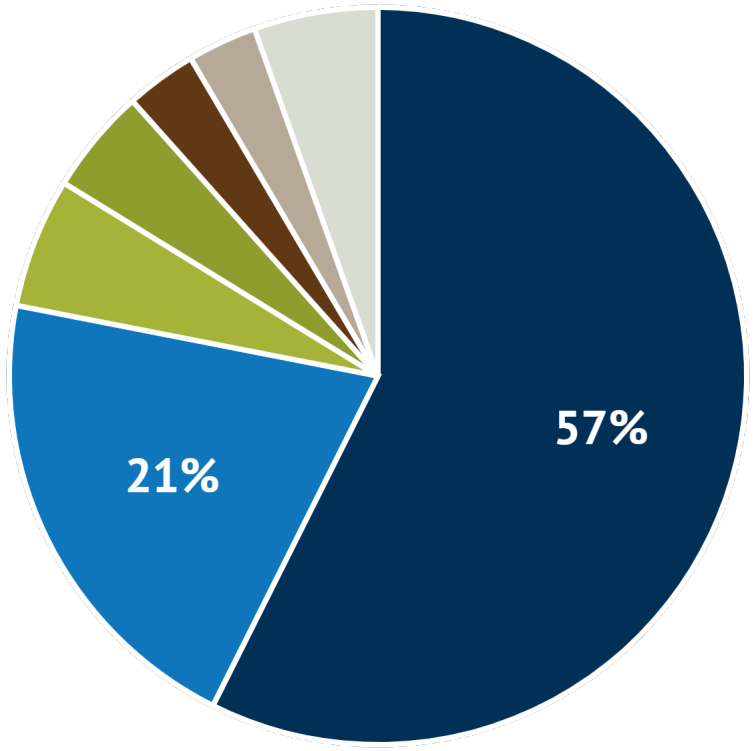
Sawnwood



Source: STIX (based on Eurostat COMEXT).

Main importers of Congo Basin sawnwood

Share of 2022 imports among the ten largest importers of Congo Basin sawnwood (m^3)



China	1,105k m^3
Belgium	398k m^3
Italy	110k m^3
France	89k m^3
Netherlands	60k m^3
United Kingdom	58k m^3
Other (USA, ES, PT, IE)	105k m^3

Source: STIX (based on Eurostat COMEXT). Imports from Cameroon, CAR, Rep. of Congo, DRC, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon.

Congo Basin species well represented in Europe

Most-cited species per end-use segment, survey among 32 tropical timber traders and experts in NL, BE, DE and FR

Congo Basin species | Other origin (South America, Southeast Asia)

Exterior joinery	Sapeli Entandrophragma cylindricum 21	Meranti Shorea spp. 15	Sipo Entandrophragma utile 14
Civil & hydraulic engineering	Azobé Lophira alata 26	Okan Cylicodiscus gabunensis 9	Bilinga Nauclea diderrichii 8
Residential garden products	Cumaru Dipteryx odorata 12	Bangkirai Shorea laevis 11	Ipé Handroanthus spp. 9
Exterior building envelope	Ayous Triplochiton scleroxylon 12	Fraké Terminalia superba 11	Padouk Pterocarpus soyauxii 9
Public & outdoor furniture	Iroko Milicia excelsa 10	Cumaru Dipteryx odorata 10	Azobé Lophira alata 6

Source: Probos (2026), Market Intelligence Report on Certified Tropical Timber End-use Segments, for ATIBT.

Lesser Known Timber Species (LKTS)

Underutilised timber species with market potential

Overharvesting threatens forest & business case

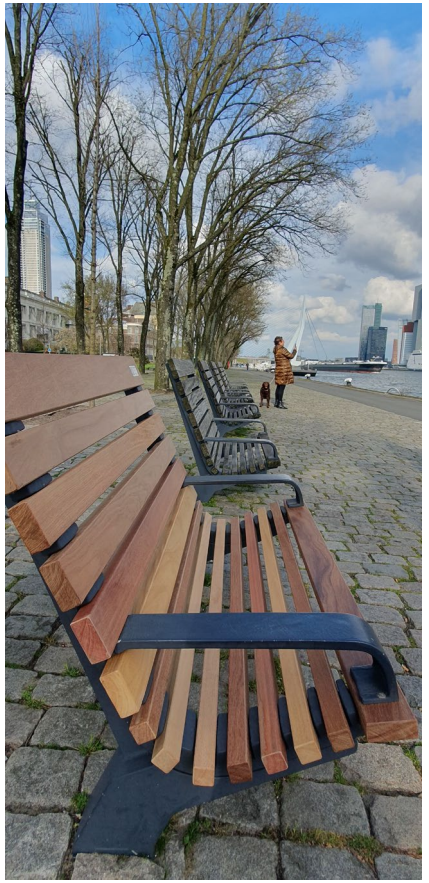
Fewer commercial timber volumes in the 2nd cutting cycle → weaker business case

Potential of LKTS

Can have suitable properties, but practical experience and knowledge lacking

CITES

Some commercial species on CITES Appendix II, LKTS can ease pressure



Sources: Probos (2025), infographic Lesser Known Timber Species (based on CIFOR-ICRAF, BGCI, ITTO)

How to stimulate the uptake of LKTS

1

Develop knowledge

Lab tests, fact sheets, pilot projects

2

Mitigate initial risks

Support for first shipments and pilot projects

3

Involve innovative partners

Producers, processors, traders, specifiers, end-users

4

Secure long-term supply

Standing volumes, processing capacity

Conditions Sustainably managed forests | Sustainable harvest intensity | Monitor regeneration

Source: Probos (2025), infographic Lesser Known Timber Species.

Take-home messages

1. Global timber demand likely to keep rising – sustainable forest management is key to secure long-term productivity of forests

2. Europe remains an important market for sawn timber from the Congo Basin

3. There is momentum for certified sustainable forest management in the Congo Basin and certified market demand in Europe

4. Promotion of and pilots with LKTS can support the business case for sustainable forest management in the long term

Thank you

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