

FAO FLEGT Programme



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations



Government institutions, Non-State Actors and
Private Sector Organisations
VPA countries

**Supporting priority actions to participate in the
implementation of the VPA process**

Call for Concept Notes

**Deadline for submission of Concept Notes:
30 September 2015, at 16.00 GMT**

Notice

Only submission by email is permitted under this Call for concept notes.

This is a Call for concept notes. Applicants whose concept notes have been pre-selected will be invited to submit a full proposal. Relevance to the FLEGT objectives and the VPA process constitutes the major criterion in pre-selection.

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1. Introduction

The selection of projects for funding will be done through a competitive two-phased approach. First, all eligible institutions are invited to submit a concept note of maximum 3 pages through the present call for concept notes (see template in **Annex 1**). The concept notes will be evaluated by the Programme Management Unit (PMU) after which only proponents of selected concept notes will be asked to submit full proposals. The full proposals will be evaluated and scored by an Expert Panel who will agree on a final selection of projects to be endorsed and funded. The final funding decision will be made by the Steering Committee of the Programme.

2. Programme objective, priorities and eligibility criteria

2.1 Background

Illegal logging poses a major challenge for the establishment and maintenance of efficient markets and sustainable logging practices in a global economy that increasingly demands assurances of legal and sustainable production of wood and wood products. Illegal actions in the logging sector results in lost government revenue, missed opportunities for rural and industrial development, and increased environmental damage and social problems.

In 2003, the European Commission adopted the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (**FLEGT**) Action Plan¹, whose ultimate goal is to encourage sustainable management of forests. To this end, ensuring the legality of forest operations is a vital first step. The FLEGT Action Plan focuses on governance reforms and capacity building to ensure that timber exported to the European Union (EU) comes only from legal sources.

The Voluntary Partnership Agreement (**VPA**) is one of the pillars proposed in the FLEGT Action Plan. It is a legally binding trade agreement between the EU and a timber-producing country outside the EU. The agreement helps timber-producing countries to stop illegal logging by improving regulation and governance of the forest sector and by ensuring that wood products comply with the legality requirements in place.

2.2 Global objective

The FAO FLEGT Programme is a five-year demand-driven Programme launched in 2015 that supports stakeholders to put elements of the FLEGT Action Plan into practice. The scope of the Programme includes two groups of countries:

- countries engaged in a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the EU; and
- other eligible timber producing countries which are not engaged in a VPA with the EU (also called non-VPA countries).

For the purpose of this Call for concept notes **only applicants from countries engaged in a VPA with the EU** (defined in point 2.3) are eligible to submit concept notes.

¹ FLEGT Action Plan: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52003DC0251&qid=1435586269486&from=EN>

2.3 Definition of “VPA countries”

VPA countries are countries that have already negotiated or are in the pre-negotiation / negotiation phase of a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the European Union. The following 16 countries are concerned:

Regions	VPA Countries
Africa	Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Liberia, Republic of the Congo.
Asia	Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam.
Americas	Guyana, Honduras.

2.4 Specific objectives for this call for concept notes

The objective is to ensure that governmental institutions, civil society and private sector organizations² continue to identify, through a demand driven process, the highest priority actions to support and participate in the implementation of the VPA process.

Considering the importance of increasing participation of the private sector in the VPA process, particular attention is given to initiatives that support private sector engagement. Therefore, this Call has been divided in two lots corresponding to two distinct categories of projects. Concept notes have to be submitted in either Lot 1 or 2, and can cover up to a maximum of 2 Thematic Priorities, as defined below.

Promotion of gender equality and youth participation will be one of the criteria to evaluate concept notes. As a crosscutting objective, concept notes should promote the inclusion of gender and youth in the forestry sector. This includes strategies towards gender equality, increasing participation of women and youth into the decision-making process and the activities, strategies that involve changing the attitudes and behaviour of men and boys and breaking sex role stereotypes.

LOT 1: Supporting the private sector participation in the VPA process

Projects endorsed under Lot 1 will aim at enhancing the understanding of and compliance to legal frameworks by small and medium size businesses and promoting legal production and best management practices throughout the wood product value chain. Priority will be given to small and medium scale producer organizations supplying the domestic and regional markets. The term “Small and medium size businesses” as used here encompasses both small-scale forest resource operators producing raw material, and small and medium enterprises (SME) engaged in processing and placing forest products on the market.

Projects under Lot 1 will focus primarily on the following six (6) thematic priorities. The examples presented under each thematic priority are not exhaustive and only given as an indication of possible actions. We encourage the applicants to use this list to guide the development of innovative actions addressing stakeholder's specific needs and priorities.

² A private sector organization is a **non-profit** organization representing members of the private sector including trade unions, federations, organizations of chainsaw operators and charcoal producers, or other small scale unions or associations representing small and medium sized enterprises operating exclusively in the forest sector. Private sector organizations can produce for domestic markets or export to regional and/or international markets. Direct support to private companies is not available through the Programme.

1. Information, awareness raising and communication related to VPA

- Increase and improve access to information on legality requirements;
- Increase and improve exchange of information and communication/dialogue between small and medium businesses and all different categories of actors involved in the VPA process (governments, civil society and private sector) to facilitate their participation in the political dialogue;
- Raise awareness on FLEGT-related matters (forest governance, monitoring and traceability systems, new international market requirements etc.);
- Improve and harmonize communication around VPA-related issues through media and sensitization materials and their dissemination;
- Promote visibility of local VPA-related initiatives on international markets, exchanges between national associations and clients or federations in the EU etc.;
- Strengthen private sector awareness of the European Union Timber Regulation (EUTR) and other trade regulations or certification standards which affect their market.

2. Training, capacity building and synergies

- Organise trainings for forest operators on the existing legislative framework, norms and existing tools to comply with the legal and market requirements;
- Organise 'trainings of trainers', increase the pool of experts which will be able to provide training on legislative frameworks;
- Provide training in internal audits on Timber Legality Assurance System (TLAS) requirements;
- Provide trainings in business management, forest management planning, lower impact harvesting;
- Promote collaboration between large scale industries and small and medium size businesses to improve governance and technical capacity;
- Encourage collaboration among small and medium enterprises to increase the exchanges of good practices/experiences in preparation of or support to VPA implementation;
- Promote linkages/synergies between VPA and certification schemes through specific pilot test cases;
- Improve forest management practices particularly for sourcing from smallholders that may have limited capacity, both in terms of knowledge and financial resources.

3. National timber traceability, control and verification systems

- Support strengthening, development and piloting of viable systems for traceability, control and verification of timber products at national or sub-national level;
- Support the development of systems for internal monitoring of legality compliance, responsible timber sourcing and traceability;
- Help small and medium size businesses to improve traceability of their products to be compliant with the Timber Legality Assurance System proposed or in place;
- Conduct feasibility studies on tracking systems adapted to small and medium size businesses needs and provide insights/options to decision makers;
- Promote synergies and compatibility between forest certification schemes and VPA-TLAS.

4. Access to finance

- Support the identification of barriers and opportunities to increase access to finance and investment for producers, particularly small and medium size businesses, to facilitate their progress towards legal compliance;

- Pilot initiatives to develop and test new tools for investment in the forest sector, which emphasize legal production and markets;
- Foster or pilot supply-chain investments by wood product buyers which promote long term corporate-producer relationships for legal and sustainable production.

5. Formalisation of the sector and access to legality

- Conduct cost-benefit studies on the actions required by the private sector to comply with VPA requirements in order to provide government with recommendations and options to achieve legality;
- Promote reforms of the country's legal framework in order to create better incentives for all level of private sector actors to achieve legality;
- Assess whether rights and tenure conditions in VPA countries act as barriers to legal timber production and promote actions to improve the situation;
- Support simplification/clarification/streamlining of legality requirements;
- Promote simple, cost-effective legality verification systems (e.g. grouped certification, risk based assessment);
- Support the establishment/reinforcement of professional organizations (e.g. timber industry associations, SMEs associations, chambers of commerce etc.) to deliver better services to timber operators.

6. Markets

- Conduct studies on characterisation of the informal artisanal logging and processing sector, identification of potential benefits or barriers of including this sector in the current VPA systems and promote actions for its inclusion;
- Promote the use of legal timber at the national level through development of procurement policies directed to public and private market;
- Promote actions to increase legality in regional wood product markets, such as coordination between national product classification and tracking systems, information sharing for trans-boundary monitoring and control, and training of custom agents;
- Facilitate exchanges/cooperation between producers and suppliers (including importers) through online interfaces, roundtables etc.

LOT 2: Supporting the VPA negotiation/implementation process

Projects under Lot 2 aim at enhancing the support in the preparation for negotiation and implementation of Voluntary Partnership Agreements.

Projects under Lot 2 will focus primarily on the following seven (7) thematic priorities. The examples presented under each thematic priority are not exhaustive and only given as an indication of possible actions. We encourage the applicants to use this list to guide the development of innovative actions addressing country or stakeholder specific needs and priorities.

1. Information, awareness raising and communication related to VPA

- Identify, through consensus-based processes, priorities in the country and actions to address the challenges encountered to improve forest governance;
- Raise awareness on forest governance, the FLEGT Action Plan and its different elements (e.g. VPA, the European Union Timber Regulation (EUTR), etc.) through briefings, meetings and communication material;
- Disseminate information regarding trends in international timber trade (i.e. EUTR, Lacey Act) and access to markets for different segments of the forest sector;
- Promote involvement of different groups of actors with the aim of implementing the VPA;
- Improve and harmonize communication around VPA through media, sensitization materials etc. and make them available to all kind of audiences;
- Develop information-sharing mechanisms, such as online platforms, within the forestry sector, to promote access and exchange of lessons learnt and experiences among actors;
- Promote VPAs through websites, press, publications or other materials;
- Support drafting and/or consultation processes (multi-stakeholder or for specific working groups) for specific VPA annexes.

2. Training, capacity building and synergies

- Raise awareness around legal instruments governing the forest sector including stakeholders' rights and responsibility;
- Promote interactions among forest sector actors i.e. through creation of alliances and/or active coordination on information dissemination, etc.;
- Promote exchanges of experiences and information between VPA countries;
- Explore options to create synergies/compatibilities between VPA and other processes (certification, REDD+, etc.) and improve cost effectiveness;
- Promote cross-border collaboration and information exchange on timber legality and law enforcement.

3. Independent monitoring mechanisms

- Strengthen or develop and implement an independent or external observation strategy within civil society and/or indigenous organisations;
- Strengthen civil society and indigenous peoples' capacities for monitoring, collection and reporting of information on infractions of forest-related policies and legislation;
- Promote mechanisms for formal information exchange between bodies conducting independent forest monitoring and decision-makers within Governments, including regulatory and judicial bodies;

- Conduct VPA impact monitoring or monitoring of VPA safeguards.

4. Supporting community/indigenous group forestry activities in line with the VPA process

- Support initiatives aimed at improving governance at the local level through conflict management mechanisms, dialogue platforms and participatory management of forests, etc.;
- Raise awareness on the VPA process and/or of measures for strengthening forest governance among local communities;
- Support the setting-up of a Legality Assurance System (LAS) for the traceability, control and verification of community forest logging;
- Support the inclusion of communities and indigenous people into the VPA negotiation process, creating synergies between different stakeholders (Governments, private sector, communities and civil society).

5. National timber traceability, control and verification systems

- Determine the actual state of the timber legality and traceability, control and verification system, and assess needs for improvement, ensuring inclusion in the system of all profiles of forest producers and processors;
- Determine the actual state of the forestry revenue collection, monitoring and prosecution systems;
- Develop and harmonize tools for the monitoring of national or regional timber flows;
- Support the development of systems: pilot initiatives for tracking systems, control procedures, non-conformity procedures, licensing systems/databases, public information disclosure, due diligence systems for import etc.;
- Conduct pre-system audits / test runs / assessment of systems readiness.

6. Policy, legal and regulatory frameworks

- Provide diagnostic analysis of the forestry legal framework;
- Help Government to develop complementary regulatory laws;
- Support initiatives to strengthen the development of a legality definition through consensus-based processes;
- Strengthen existing national strategies or develop a strategy addressing illegal logging and forest governance, incorporating multiple actors across relevant sectors.

7. Markets

- Provide socio-economic characterization of domestic and regional market actors, including informal artisanal logging and processing sector;
- Support the integration of the informal sector into the national regulatory frameworks;
- Contribute to timber flow studies at the national and sub-regional levels in order to promote actions to increase legality in regional wood product markets, such as coordination between national product classification and tracking systems, information sharing for trans-boundary monitoring and control, and customs training.

Applicants must clearly specify under which lot and thematic priorities they are submitting the application. Concept notes should cover up to 2 Thematic Priorities corresponding to the relevant lot.

2.5 Financial allocation provided by FAO

The overall indicative amount made available under this global Call for concept notes is EUR 3,000,000 to be financed by the Programme. FAO reserves the right not to award all available funds. Similarly, this amount could be increased should more funds become available.

The funds will be distributed according to the following indicative allocation per lot:

- Lot 1 (private sector): EUR 1,000,000
- Lot 2 (VPA negotiation/implementation process): EUR 2,000,000

Where the financial allocation indicated above cannot be used due to insufficient quality or number of proposals received, FAO reserves the right to reallocate the remaining funds to other components of the Programme.

Each project will have a maximum of 15 months implementation and a FAO budget allocation of maximum EUR 100,000.

2.6 Pre-screening criteria

In order to benefit from the Programme, the following general conditions must be fulfilled:

1. The concept note has to be realistic and feasible considering the envisaged budget and time allocation (maximum 15 months and 100,000 EUR);
2. The applicant is registered in an eligible country (see list of eligible countries engaged in a VPA, **Section 2.3**), in which the project is implemented;
3. The applicant is a government institution³, a civil society organization⁴ or an organization/federation of the private sector⁵;
4. The concept note identifies the "Lot" and at least one, and a maximum of two of the related "Thematic priorities" listed above;
5. The concept note is complete and follows the required format (see **Annex 1** "Concept note form");
6. The budget is within the following financial parameters:
 - a. The funding requested from FAO does not exceed the maximum limit of EUR 100,000⁶.
 - b. The contribution provided by the applicant (in cash or in kind) reaches at least 10 percent of the total amount of the project.
7. All actions should take place in the country/ies⁷ where the applicant is based and directly operates. Applicant must also be actively involved in all stages of implementation.

³ Commerce Departments, Business development offices and other Government offices not directly related to forestry are also eligible

⁴ For the purpose of this guideline a civil society organization is defined as a not-for-profit organization that pursues an issue(s) and values defined by its members or constituency and that contributes to the common good or public interest.

⁵ For the purpose of these guidelines a private sector organization is defined as a not-for-profit grouping, union or association of private sector businesses or individuals working toward a common interest that is aligned with the public interest.

⁶ All amounts in concept notes should be expressed in Euros. To convert the proposed amount into Euros, please use the **InforEuro** exchange rate effective at the time of the proposal submission:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/inforeuro_en.cfm

⁷ The project and project proponent should be clearly established in one country but it could involve participation of other VPA and non-VPA countries.

The following types of action are **NOT** eligible:

- actions concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, congresses;
- actions concerned only or mainly with individual research, scholarships for studies or training courses;
- action intended to raise funds or only to promote the visibility of the applicant or its partner(s);
- action intended to provide immediate personal and institutional financial gains;
- actions which consist exclusively or primarily in capital expenditure, such as infrastructure, large equipment or vehicles and other resources;
- actions which discriminate against individuals or groups of people on grounds of their gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or lack of them, or their ethnic origin;
- actions directly supporting political parties;
- actions supporting activities that bear no relevance to the VPA (eg. a proposal to carry out reforestation or tree planting);
- actions that use the funds to pay all/part of existing staff salaries for Government services;
- actions for retrospective funding for activities that have taken place prior to the submission of the concept note.

Number of concept notes per applicant

An applicant may submit more than one concept note under this call for concept notes. An applicant may at the same time be partnering with one or more other applications. However, an applicant may not be awarded more than one grant under this call for concept notes.

3. Evaluation process

All concept notes submitted to the Programme shall be evaluated as follows:

- All received concept notes will be registered by the Programme Management Unit (PMU).
- All concept notes received will be pre-screened by the PMU using the criteria presented in point 2.6.
- Concept notes that pass the pre-screening will be further evaluated by the PMU according to the evaluation criteria presented in Table 1. A maximum of 100 points is available for the 10 criteria combined. A total of 70 points and a minimum of 5/10 points per criterion are required to be selected for the submission of a full proposal.
- The PMU shall inform all applicants who submit concept notes of the evaluation results of their concept note. Applicants who have submitted concept notes that fulfil the pre-screening criteria and score at least 70 / 100 points as per requirement noted above, will be asked to **submit a full proposal within 2 months after notification**. These applicants will receive Guidelines for writing the full proposals with a description of the evaluation criteria and selection process.

During the evaluation process, a balanced geographical distribution will be sought as much as possible, depending on the quality of the concept notes received.

Table 1: Evaluation criteria and scoring system for concept notes

Evaluation criteria	Score
1. How coherent is the overall design of the project? In particular, does it reflect the analysis of the problems involved; take into account external factors and relevant stakeholders?	/30
2. Are the results and activities consistent with the project's objective?	/10
3. Are the anticipated results achievable within the budget and time-frame?	/10
4. Does the project seek collaboration with other partners at the national or regional level?	/10
5. Is the project innovative and provide added value to what is already in place?	/10
6. Does the concept note effectively specify the means that will be deployed in order to sustain the project, or at least its outcomes, in the long term?	/10
7. Does the project promote inclusion of youth and/or addresses gender issues in the forestry sector?	/10
8. Does the applicant present sufficient managerial capacities?	/10
TOTAL	/100

4. Concept note submission

Concept notes in English, French or Spanish should be submitted by email. Shortly after the submission deadline the applicant will receive a notice informing them of the registration of the concept note.

The concept notes must be sent to the following address:

FAO FLEGT Programme
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla - 00153 Rome - Italy
E-mail: FLEGT-cfp@fao.org

The concept notes must be submitted no later than:

30 September 2015, 16.00 GMT

5. How to write the concept note

All concept notes should be completed using the Concept note form (See **Annex 1 below**). The description of the project should be presented in a very concise manner. The concept of the project will be presented in no more than three A4 pages. While no specific guidelines are imposed to describe the main idea of the project, please keep in mind the following:

- The objective of the project should be expressed in a single, concise statement.
- Applicants are encouraged to provide details on the expected results and activities to achieve the results. Each result or output should be described in one sentence, supported by a list of key activities and deliverables.
- The project should be in line with the priorities of the VPA process under way in the country of intervention and/or should contribute to the Private Sector's VPA engagement or preparedness.

In the Concept Note, applicants are only required to provide an estimate of the requested FAO financial contribution. Only when applicants are invited to submit a full proposal they will be required to present a detailed budget.

Only the Concept Note will be evaluated. It is therefore of utmost importance that this document contains ALL relevant information concerning the action. No additional annexes are expected.

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ANNEX 1

CONCEPT NOTE FORM

**Deadline for submission of Concept Notes:
30 September 2015, 16.00 GMT**

1. Applicant - General details	Full Name		
	Acronym		
	Country ⁸		
	Legal Status		
	Address		
	Contact person	Name	
		Tel	
		E-mail	

2. Applicant – Managerial Capacities	Annual Turnover / Budget		EUR
	Governance structure <i>Please briefly describe the structure of the organization, roles and responsibilities of the resource persons involved.</i>		

3. Lot addressed		Lot 1: Private Sector <input type="checkbox"/>	Lot 2: VPA Support <input type="checkbox"/>
4. Thematic Priority	#1	<i>[select one thematic]</i>	<i>[select one thematic]</i>
	#2	<i>[select one thematic]</i>	<i>[select one thematic]</i>

5. Main targeted country	
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6. Requested FAO Contribution (maximum 100 000 EUR)		EUR
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7. Duration (maximum 15 months)		Months
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8. Title, objective, expected results and main activities
- Title
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px;"></div>

⁸ Country in which the applicant is registered

- Objective (50 words)

Describe what the project aims to achieve in terms of its topic and the changes that should take place as a result of the project.

- Expected results and activities (500 words)

Give sufficient information so that the results, preferably no more than 3, can be clearly understood. For each result, list suggested indicators of achievement, covering BOTH quantitative and qualitative progress.

Under each result, list the activities proposed with a brief explanation of each activity. There should be at least two activities per result and preferably no more than four or five. State the key deliverable(s) that each activity should achieve.

9. Relevance (500 words)

State which theme the proposal addresses and how it complements other ongoing work. Briefly describe the problem to be addressed, how the proposal will address this problem and why the strategy was selected. Indicate how the outcome at the end of the project will be sustained.

[Empty text box for response]

10. Gender and youth (150 words)

State briefly those aspects of the proposal design that focus on gender and youth. How is the proposal different as a result of the gender and youth focus? Has it be designed to meet specific gender or youth needs?

[Empty text box for response]