

# Chainsaw criminal Wijma

GREENPEACE



Wijma logs on their way to the sawmill. ©GF/Oosterveld

## Executive summary

“Wijma operates concessions in Africa and is committed to ensuring full compliance with all relevant forest regulations.” *Wijma website*

“Wijma is also committed to achieving environmental best practice throughout its activity whenever this is practical.” *Wijma Environmental policy*

In its company literature, the Dutch logger and timber trader Wijma has made many claims about the environmental and social acceptability of its timber. However, Wijma not only buys from some of the most notorious logging companies in Africa<sup>1</sup>, but is also itself involved in illegal logging in Cameroon.

In April 2002, Greenpeace released information about Wijma’s illegal logging activities in Cameroon. Greenpeace and Forests Monitor released additional information about Wijma logging illegally in August last year. Wijma claims these cases were isolated incidents.

Yet, in March 2003, researchers from Centre pour l’Environnement et le Developpement (CED), Forests Monitor and Greenpeace documented further evidence of the company’s illegal activities. The joint field investigations revealed that Wijma has used its legally allocated cutting permit, VC 09-04-59, to illegally access and log a much larger area, well outside the official limits of this permit. Using Global Positioning System (GPS) co-ordinates, the investigations have provided evidence of an illegal road network, log ponds<sup>2</sup> and abandoned logs over an area of about 14 km<sup>2</sup>.

### notes

<sup>1</sup> Recent Greenpeace investigations reveal that Wijma continues to buy timber from Liberia, despite numerous written statements that it had stopped. Profits made by the Liberian logging industry are used to finance conflicts in the region. Several Liberian timber companies are themselves involved in illegal arms trafficking.

<sup>2</sup> Log ponds (parc à bois) are areas where logs are temporarily stored prior to their transport.

# Forest crime file: Chainsaw criminal Wijma

Some of the illegally cut logs were found to have been fraudulently marked with Wijma's legal logging title VC 09-04-59, which is a clear method of laundering illegal timber into the marketplace. The investigations also revealed that Wijma's illegal logging operation was both destructive and highly wasteful, causing significant ecological damage.

Also, it caused significant economic damages to the Cameroonian government, and large economic and social damages to local communities. Preliminary estimates indicate that the illegally produced timber is worth (FOB value) in the region of € 1,5 million (1 billion FCFA)<sup>3</sup>. Road construction has destroyed agricultural and cash crops of at least 27 local villagers. These farmers depend upon these plantations for food and cash incomes, and have not been compensated at all. CED, Forests Monitor and Greenpeace believe that Wijma must be held accountable for the damage it has caused, and that the Cameroonian government and the local people must be fully compensated.

## Box 1 - Ventes de coupe

“Ventes de coupe” (VC) are titles to log an area of 2,500 hectares in the non-permanent forest estate over a three year period. These logging operations are allocated at auction to the highest bidder, and are often exploited in a highly destructive manner as no management plan is legally required. VC logging titles are widely abused in Cameroon, and the titles are often used to organise illegal logging operations in a much more extensive forest area than is allowed by the legal title. One World Bank financed report revealed that up to 90% of ventes de coupe in Cameroon's East Province are operated illegally.<sup>4</sup>

## To this end CED, Forests Monitor and Greenpeace call on:

- The Government of Cameroon – to urgently carry out a detailed inventory to calculate the real economic damage this illegal logging operation has caused, to impose adequate sanctions on Wijma, and to ensure full compensation for the local people affected by Wijma's illegal logging operation.
- The Dutch government and other Wijma customers – to stop buying from Wijma until Wijma stops its illegal logging operations, stops buying from known criminals and commits to moving towards certification at least to the standards demanded by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).
- Governments - to adopt green procurement policies. Governments should only buy timber from legal forestry operations, which are certified at least to the standards demanded by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).
- The Cameroon and Dutch governments and the European Union - to strengthen legislation against illegal logging and the trade in illegal timber, and make sure these laws are fully enforced.

### notes

<sup>3</sup> FOB – Free on Board; FCFA – Franc Communauté Financière Africaine

<sup>4</sup> Milol AC and Pierre J-M (2000) Impact de la fiscalité décentralisée sur le développement local et les pratiques d'utilisation des ressources forestières au Cameroun. Final report commissioned by the World Bank, January, 2000.

## THE COMPANY GEBROEDERS WIJMA EN ZONEN B.V. (GWZ)

The Dutch logger and importer Wijma (GWZ) specialises in highly durable timber for marine engineering projects. An important part of Wijma's trading activity is focused on the African species azobé. Wijma operates one of the world's largest azobé sawmills, located at the Wijma headquarters in Kampen, the Netherlands. The company owns subsidiaries and additional sawmills in Germany, Cameroon, Ghana and Ivory Coast, and has sales offices in the US, France and the UK. Wijma has been active in Africa for over thirty years.

Greenpeace first began exposing Wijma's involvement in illegal and conflict timber in November 2001. Since that time, Greenpeace has been involved in ongoing discussions with Wijma about a number of issues.



Wijma's Cameroon office in Douala. © Greenpeace/Oosterveld

### Wijma and conflict timber: Liberia

Timber from Liberia is not produced sustainably. Moreover, the profits made by the Liberian logging industry have been used to finance conflicts in the region. Several Liberian timber companies, such as OTC, are themselves involved in illegal arms trafficking.<sup>5</sup> Over the past 1 1/2 years, Wijma has made several statements about ending its purchases of Liberian timber in letters to Greenpeace.

#### Wijma statements about ending its purchases of Liberian timber

- In November 2001, Wijma claims it does not buy from the notorious Liberian company OTC.
- In December 2001, Wijma claims it will stop buying from the company RTC, which is linked to OTC.
- In January 2002, Wijma agrees to stop buying from the Liberian companies LFCD, MGC and Forum.
- In April 2002, Wijma claims it stopped buying from OTC, RTC and SMI in the late summer of 2001.
- In July 2002, Wijma claims it has stopped buying azobé from Liberia.
- In September 2002, Wijma claims it stopped buying timber from Liberia earlier that year.
- In March 2003, Wijma claims there are no more wood transports from Liberia to Wijma.

#### notes

<sup>5</sup> See: Global Witness, March 2003. The Usual Suspects. Liberia's Weapons and Mercenaries in Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone. Global Witness, September 2001. Taylor-made. The Pivotal Role of Liberia's Forests in Regional Conflict. Global Witness, September 2002. Logging Off. How the Liberian Timber Industry Fuels Liberia's Humanitarian Disaster and Threatens Sierra Leone. SAMFU Foundation, September 2002. Plunder. The Silent Destruction of Liberia's Rainforests.

## Forest crime file: Chainsaw criminal Wijma

Yet, despite these repeated claims, Greenpeace investigations have revealed that Wijma has received wood from Liberia several times in 2002, and as late as March 2003. Among the logging companies Wijma bought from were OTC and RTC. The latest shipment, arriving on the MV Liski in Nordenham, Germany, in March 2003, came from Inland Logging Company. Wood species bought by Wijma from Liberian suppliers are usually Azobé, Abura and Framiré with occasionally other typical African species like Sipo, Sapelli, and Iroko. While Azobé is used by bridge builders and for marine construction, Abura and Framiré are largely consumed by the door industry.

### Box 2 - Wijma's illegal timber on the European market

#### Is this timber legally produced?

Once Wijma's sawn timber arrives on the European market, it is impossible for the customer to verify its legality. Logs from legal and illegal sources are easily mixed and could be processed together in Wijma's sawmills in Cameroon or in Europe.

*Wijma sawn timber in the Dutch port of Delfzijl.  
© Greenpeace /Verbelen*



### Wijma and Hazim: Cameroon's most notorious logger

The logging company Hazim has been involved in large scale illegal logging several years.<sup>6</sup> After nearly a year of discussions between Wijma and Greenpeace, Wijma finally agreed, in September 2002, to stop buying from Hazim. It is unclear whether Wijma is keeping this written promise.

### Wijma logging illegally in Cameroon

Wijma itself has been involved in illegal logging numerous times.

In July 2002, Greenpeace and Forests Monitor discovered Wijma logging illegally outside its vente de coupe 09-02-132. Not only did Wijma destroy a large area of tropical rainforest by its illegal operation, the company also destroyed many farms of the local population. Wijma has publicly admitted logging outside its legal limits. To this day, Wijma is still not willing to pay proper compensation to the local community for its losses.<sup>7</sup>

Before this case, Wijma had been caught in the act of committing fraud at least three times.<sup>8</sup>

On February 3, 2003, the Minister of MINEF suspended all Wijma activities in its concession UFA 11-002. The reason for the suspension was the fact that Wijma said it had a local sawmill, a requirement for attaining a concession. However, at the time Wijma applied for the concession, it had already sold its sawmill.<sup>9</sup>

#### notes

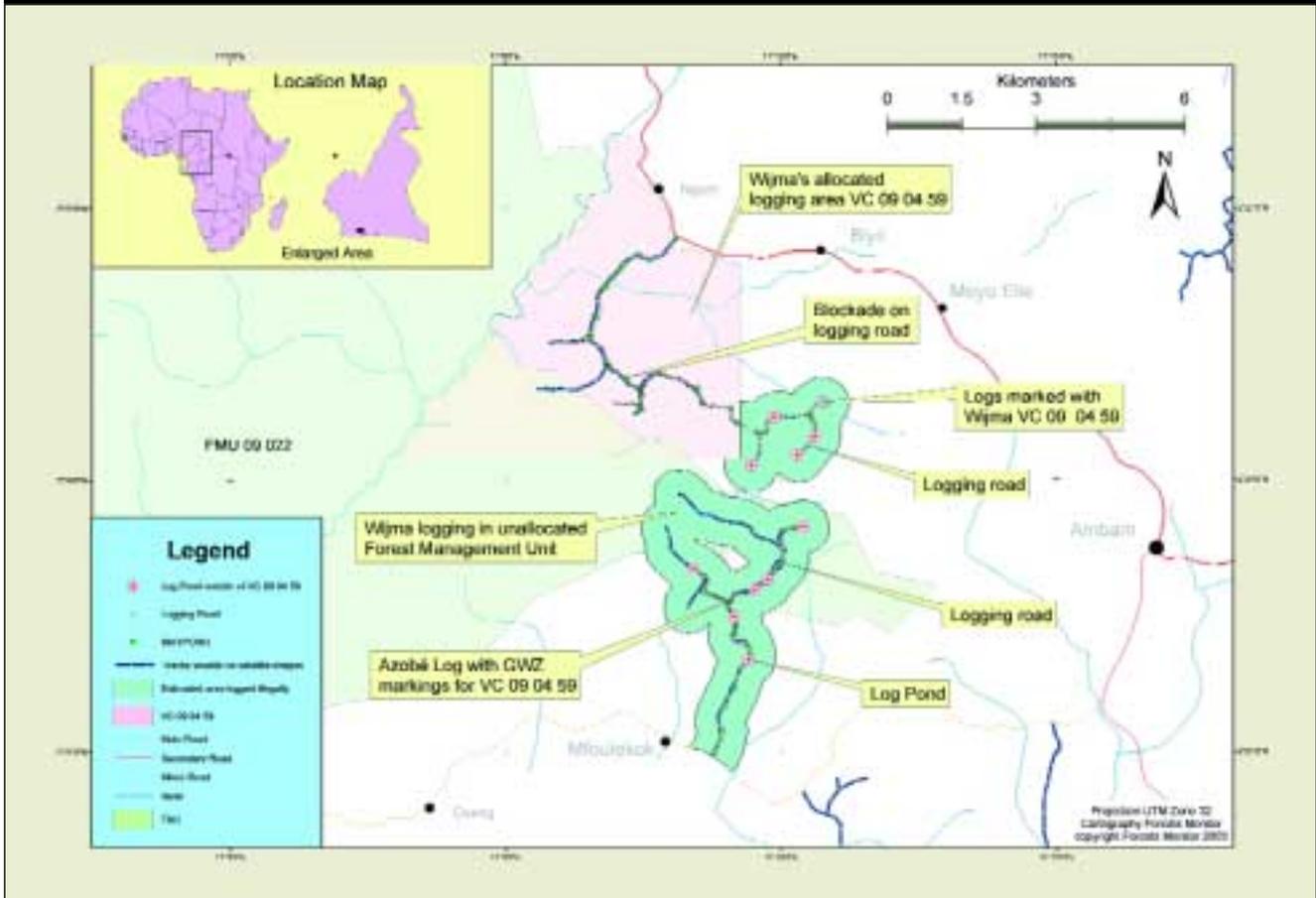
<sup>6</sup> See: Greenpeace, March 2002. Hazim: plundering Cameroon's ancient forests.

<sup>7</sup> See: Forests Monitor and Greenpeace (August 2002) Wijma: logging illegally in Cameroon's rainforest.

<sup>8</sup> In January 2002, Wijma was fined FCFA 1,836,415 (+/- € 2.750) for cutting protected trees without authorization and for cutting undersized trees. In addition, the provincial control brigade of Cameroon's Ministry of Environment and Forests (MINEF) proposed that local Wijma director Mr. Bertein should pay FCFA 2,500,000 (€ 3.750) for transporting timber without legal documents. Also in January 2002, MINEF notified Wijma's subsidiary STIK that all its activities were to be suspended due to the company's complicity in fraudulent logging practices carried out in a forest reserve by the company Helena Bois. See: Greenpeace (April 2002) Wijma: Destroying Cameroon's rainforests.

<sup>9</sup> Indices nr. 59, 25-02-2003.

**Map 1: Wijma's illegal logging activities**



## WIJMA LOGS ILLEGALLY AGAIN

In March 2003, researchers from Centre pour l'Environnement et le Developpement (CED), Forests Monitor and Greenpeace documented further evidence of the Wijma's illegal activities. The joint field investigations have revealed that Wijma has seriously abused its legally allocated logging title *vente de coupe* 09-04-59 to log a much larger area. The illegal logging has caused substantial ecological damage.

Wijma was awarded the cutting permit VC 09-04-59 on 21-03-2000.<sup>10</sup> The logging area is located in the department of the Ntem valley (Ambam district) in the South province of Cameroon. Using a GPS receiver<sup>11</sup> to record geographic co-ordinates, CED, Forests Monitor and Greenpeace documented two extensive road networks, 11 log ponds, abandoned logs and stumps over an area of about 14 km<sup>2</sup> outside Wijma's legal VC boundaries (see Map 1).

East of its *vente de coupe*, Wijma continued its logging road outside the legal logging area. The illegal portion of the road, composed of several branches to the north and south, had been hidden by an enormous blockade of abandoned logs. The investigation showed five illegal log ponds and a large number of abandoned logs, indicating Wijma logged in the forest surrounding this illegal road. Moreover, south of its *vente de coupe*, Wijma built a whole illegal road network, starting about 6 km to the south of the VC. Here, the investigation showed six illegal log ponds. Only a small river separates the two parts of the illegal logging operation.

### notes

<sup>10</sup>Source: Arrête nr. 0292/D/MINEF/DF/SDAFF/SAG

<sup>11</sup>GPS (Global Positioning System) receivers allow users to accurately pinpoint their location on the surface on the earth to within 30 meters.

<sup>12</sup>Azobé (*Lophira alata*), Iroko (*Milicia excelsa*), Moabi (*Baillonella toxisperma*), Sapelli (*Entandrophragma cylindricum*), all classified as vulnerable by the IUCN. [www.redlist.org](http://www.redlist.org).

# Forest crime file: Chainsaw criminal Wijma



*Caught on the spot in Cameroon's rainforest: abandoned Wijma (GWZ) log illegally cut outside Wijma's valid cutting permit. The log has been fraudulently marked using the code of Wijma's valid cutting permit VC 09-04-59.*

Abandoned logs carrying the markings of Wijma's vente de coupe 09-04-59 and the company's markings (GWZ) were found in log ponds along tracks in both parts of the illegal logging operation, indicating that Wijma had been operating illegally well outside their official limits.

Interviews with inhabitants of the villages surrounding the logging area further indicated Wijma hired the Cameroon logging company CUF to do the logging. Villagers further revealed that Wijma had cut a range of valuable species such as Azobé, Moabi, Sapelli, and Iroko<sup>12</sup>. Villagers said the wood was taken to Kribi, where Wijma has a sawmill. In the whole area of the logging operation, large numbers of abandoned logs were found.

These field investigations additionally reveal that Wijma logged inside the unallocated forest management unit UFA 09-022<sup>13</sup>

(see Map 1). These findings indicate that Wijma has illegally logged significant amounts of timber from this unallocated forest management unit. Wijma's illegal activities are likely to have seriously undermined the potential for sustainable forestry in this area.

Based on the road network, the log ponds and the abandoned logs that this investigation uncovered, it is clear that Wijma has carried out an extensive illegal logging operation in this area. Calculations, based on Geographic Information System (GIS) analysis and the identification of illegal logging roads on satellite images, indicate that the area harvested in this illegal operation by Wijma could be as large as 14 km<sup>2</sup> – an additional area about two thirds the size of their existing legal cutting permit.

## Economic losses to the Government of Cameroon

Initial estimates indicate that the volume of Wijma's timber logged illegally – and laundered into the marketplace using fraudulent markings – may total around 9,800 cubic metres, with an estimated FOB value of nearly 1 billion FCFA (€ 1,5 million)<sup>14</sup>. On top of the lost timber value, there are additional losses worth tens of thousands of euro's in tax revenues that the Cameroon government has not received. For example, stumpage fees at 2.5% of the FOB value of cut timber are among a number of taxes that are due on legally cut timber.

These calculations have been based on the following assumptions:

- that Wijma has logged illegally at least 14 km<sup>2</sup> (1400 hectares) of rainforest;
- that on average, one hectare of forest yielded seven cubic metres of timber<sup>15</sup>;
- that the average FOB value of Cameroon timber is 100,000 FCFA (€ 150) per cubic meter.

### notes

<sup>13</sup> UFA – Unité Forestière d'Aménagement (FMU, Forest Management Unit in English). A defined area of forest exploitation for which a management plan is required.

<sup>14</sup> These are only estimates of damages. A further, more detailed assessment by Cameroon forestry officials will be necessary in order to estimate the real value of the stolen timber.

<sup>15</sup> On average the production in a Cameroon forest is between 7 and 15 cubic metres per hectare.

# Forest crime file: Chainsaw criminal Wijma

## Increased poverty of rural people in Cameroon

In addition to its ecological damage and economic implications for the Cameroonian government, Wijma's illegal logging operation has also caused severe economic damage locally, and many farmers interviewed expressed great anger regarding the destruction Wijma and its subcontractor CUF have caused to the forest and to their agricultural crops.

In areas where Wijma was cutting illegally, the road construction and logging have destroyed numerous agricultural crops and the small-scale plantations owned by the local farmers. At least 27 farmers in three different villages (Ngom, Biyii, and Meyo-Elie, See Map 1) have become victims of Wijma's logging operation, losing both food crops such as manioc and plantains, and small scale cash crops such as cocoa. The direct damage to people's livelihoods caused by the destruction of local farmers' fields was considerable, since the farmers depend upon their plantations for food and cash incomes. The son of one local farmer said he had not been able to go to school in the year his father's plantation was destroyed, because his father was not able to pay the school.

### Box 3 - The importance of Azobé

Dutch forestry companies in Cameroon, including Wijma, have specialised in the production of Azobé, a species highly prized in the Netherlands for marine construction, and, throughout Europe, for the fabrication of railroad ties. With markets world-wide, Wijma is an extremely important player.

*Azobé tree in the Cameroon rainforest  
© Greenpeace/Oosterveld*



The, for a vente de coupe required, 10% of the annual forestry fee was never paid to the villages. Farmers who had their crops destroyed by Wijma's logging operation have received no compensation at all. Also, Wijma promised the local people a school and wells for drinking water. The school was not built to the promised standard and the wells were never built at all. The fourth village, Mfoulekok, where the illegal logging road entered the forest, never received the money promised.

In Europe, Wijma presents its African logging operations as a positive contribution towards development and poverty alleviation for the local population. However, this case study clearly illustrates that Wijma's illegal logging operation is, in fact, impoverishing the livelihoods of the local people. CED, Forests Monitor and Greenpeace are calling on Wijma's European management to accept full responsibility for the damage caused to the livelihoods of the local farmers, and to organise full and fair compensation for the victims.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **CED, Forests Monitor and Greenpeace recommend that:**

- MINEF<sup>16</sup> urgently conducts an official investigation into this case, assessing the ecological, social and fiscal damages;
- MINEF holds the company fully accountable for the ecological, economic and social impacts of its illegal logging operations and ensures payment of all fines and taxes to the government and full compensation for the local communities;
- MINEF prohibits Wijma from receiving further logging permits until they can demonstrate they are willing to operate within their legal obligations;
- Wijma provides immediate and adequate compensation to the local communities for the damages caused to their livelihoods by this and earlier operations;
- The Dutch government and other Wijma customers stop buying from Wijma until Wijma stops its involvement in illegal logging operations, stops buying from known criminals and commits to moving towards certification at least to the standards demanded by the Forest Stewardship Council;
- Governments adopt green procurement policies. Governments should only buy timber from legal forestry operations, which are certified at least to the standards demanded by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC);
- The Cameroon government establishes a clear procedure for processing and acting upon third party findings of illegalities in the forestry sector in a rigorous and transparent manner;
- The Cameroon and Dutch governments and the European Union strengthen legislation against illegal logging and the trade in illegal timber, and make sure these laws are fully enforced.

#### notes

<sup>16</sup> MINEF is Cameroon's Ministry of Environment and Forests

# Forest crime file: Chainsaw criminal Wijma

## Appendix 1: GPS co-ordinates for illegal logging surrounding VC 09-04-59

Waypoint description	Co-ordinates
Covered logs	N2.35379 E11.18931
Covered logs	N2.35830 E11.18978
Farm	N2.36160 E11.19142
Log pond	N2.36693 E11.19411
Tali log	N2.36695 E11.19430
Junction	N2.36818 E11.19437
Ayous stump	N2.36901 E11.19413
Ayous stump	N2.37149 E11.19125
Ayous stump	N2.37170 E11.19127
Farm	N2.37222 E11.19156
Log pond	N2.37479 E11.19142
Sapelli stump	N2.37485 E11.19127
Junction & log pond	N2.37683 E11.19037
Azobé log	N2.37733 E11.19017
Eyoung stump	N2.37877 E11.18727
Junction	N2.37920 E11.18629
Log pond	N2.37982 E11.19526
Azobé stump	N2.38022 E11.18605
Log pond	N2.38169 E11.19763
Iroko log	N2.38171 E11.19755
Tali log	N2.38236 E11.18598
Sapelli log	N2.38374 E11.18400
Log pond	N2.38375 E11.18408
Sapelli stump	N2.38419 E11.19991
Junction	N2.38747 E11.20008
Azobé stump	N2.39077 E11.20061
Padouk stump	N2.39118 E11.20226
Log pond	N2.39135 E11.20408
Log	N2.40244 E11.19463
Azobé log	N2.40244 E11.19475
Log pond	N2.40264 E11.19457
Log	N2.40264 E11.19474
Log pond	N2.40458 E11.20295
Log pond	N2.40798 E11.20609
Junction	N2.40870 E11.19563
Bridge	N2.41117 E11.20556
Log pond	N2.41158 E11.19871
Logs	N2.41165 E11.19884
Junction	N2.41206 E11.20522
Pile of logs	N2.41416 E11.20785
Log pond	N2.41435 E11.20746
Azobé log	N2.41445 E11.20746

### Greenpeace International

Keizersgracht 176, 1016 DW Amsterdam, The Netherlands ☎ +31 20 626 18 77 [www.greenpeace.org](http://www.greenpeace.org)

### Forests Monitor Ltd

69A Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1 EN, England ☎ +44 1223 360975 [www.forestsmonitor.org](http://www.forestsmonitor.org)

### CED

B.P. 3430, Yaoundé, Cameroon ☎ +2372223857 [www.cedcameroun.org](http://www.cedcameroun.org)