

Dear colleague,

You may have heard through your branch organisation that our umbrella organisation, the Netherlands Timber Trade Association (NTTA), has drawn up a Policy Plan which was recently ratified by its members. We too have expressed our agreement with the Policy Plan and intend to subscribe to the code of conduct contained in this plan. With this letter we wish to inform you about the underlying motives and the consequences for our activities.

The discussion on the necessity of bringing forest world-wide under sustainable forestry management in The Netherlands and other European countries is undeniably continuing. Since the Biodiversity Conference held in The Netherlands in April 2002, the accent of the discussion has shifted from sustainable forestry management to the prevention and combating of illegal tree-felling and the trade in illegal timber. The reports published by the World Wildlife Fund and other NGO's mention alarming tree-felling and commercial practices. Whether the mentioned percentages are accurate or not is not relevant any more. The fact that illegal tree-felling and illegal commercial practices in timber take place – in any volume whatsoever – has made this issue an important item in Dutch political and public agenda.

We, as well as the NTTA, have frequently pointed out that illegal tree-felling and timber trade practices should be banished, because of their disastrous effect on the environment and because of the damage directly caused to the bona fide timber trade. Notwithstanding our attitude our company can be called to account for our efforts to help ending the illegal practices pointed out.

All Sakol members have committed themselves to buy and sell exclusively timber that is in compliance with the current laws and regulations agreed nationally as well as internationally. We can only demonstrate this obligation to critical clients if you and the other suppliers furnish us with a declaration guaranteeing the legal origin and trade of the timber purchased by us. Our relationship is good and we wish to keep it that way. We therefore request you to sign the enclosed statement and return it to us by post, e-mail or fax.