

Forest products



South Asia or **Southern Asia** is a term used to represent the Southern Region of the Asian Continent. The current territories in the South Asian Region are the Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. In addition, with deviating definitions based on often substantially different reasons, the British Indian Ocean Territory, Mauritius, and the Tibet Autonomous Region are included as well. South Asia is home to well over one fifth of the world's population, making it both the most populous and the most densely populated geographical region in the world. And also the South Asian region holds a vast arena of natural resources.

South Asia's forests contain diverse resources that are used to generate income for many levels of society, as well as foreign currency and tax revenue when those resources are exported. Many rural communities depend on a variety of forest products for their food, medicines and livelihoods.

The harvesting of natural resources is basic to every day human life. The global exchange of wild plants and animals provides us with food, pharmaceuticals, building materials, decorative objects, clothing, cultural and religious items, and pets.

Unfortunately, in many cases the need to conserve forest ecosystems is being overlooked in the rush to supply global markets with timber and other forest products. Illegal logging and timber smuggling is a growing problem, due to an inexhaustible demand, particularly for high-value species. The illegal trade of Sandalwood and Ebony are pertinent examples of such plants from South Asia that illustrates the full spectrum of challenges to regulate and enforce harvest, export and re-export controls.

Sandalwood and *Walla Patta* (*Gyrinops walla* Gaertn) are the highly prized fragrant heartwood produced in forests, are used primarily for medicinal, religious and aromatic purposes in the Europe, American and the Asian cultures.

The great majority of ornamental plants in trade, including most orchids and pitcher plants, have been artificially cultivated in nurseries, but large numbers are still taken directly from the wild with specialist collectors actively seeking out rare, exotic and often endangered species to add to their collection.

