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New report shines light on the link between forest destruction and the EU Ecolabel for copy paper

“EU Ecolabel allows forest destruction – the case of Pindo Deli” a new FERN report launched today adds weight to the argument that the EU Ecolabel for forest products has proven itself unworthy, been bypassed by Member States’ purchasing policies and is at the mercy of companies wishing to greenwash their practices whilst changing nothing.

The report is based on a new investigation into two photocopy paper brands, Golden Plus and Lucky Boss. Both have been awarded the EU Ecolabel, despite being manufactured by the Indonesian company Pindo Deli, part of Asia Pulp and Paper (APP). APP is one of the world’s most controversial pulp and paper companies, and has a long standing record of forest destruction. The report reveals that there is insufficient information publicly available to verify the awarding of the Ecolabel and that it is likely that timber used in these products comes from forest destruction. This is despite the EU assuring consumers that ‘the environmental criteria behind the EU Ecolabel are tough, and that only the very best products, which are kindest to the environment, are entitled to carry the EU Ecolabel.’

The report concludes that Pindo Deli’s pulp comes, in part, from two APP pulp mills¹ in Sumatra. APP has destroyed vast areas to feed its massive pulp mills in Sumatra. These mills have agreements with related companies to provide wood for the pulp. One of these² may not even be operating within the law and its forestry areas are extremely socially and environmentally destructive. Veerle Dossche from FERN said: “The EU Ecolabel award process is clearly non-transparent, and the criteria for copy and graphic paper are weak and unable to exclude the most egregious forest operations. The EU Ecolabel should therefore be withdrawn for Pindo Deli’s brands of photocopy paper.” Even though the report focuses on one case, with a weak system and a weak set of criteria, there is nothing to stop this happening again.

Previous research by FERN’s Saskia Ozinga concurs with the report’s finding. “Where forest products are concerned, the EU Ecolabel is at best useless, and at worst misleading. It does not provide a sufficient guarantee to consumers that the products come from well managed forests. The EU Ecolabel is also lagging behind many Member States’ timber procurement policies... for a purely voluntary standard to be so much lower than mandatory government criteria is ludicrous.”

The full report is available from www.fern.org.

¹ Both mills are based in Sumatra, Indah Kiat and Lontar Papyrus.

² PT Wirakarya Sakti (PT WKS).

Note to editors:

FERN is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) created in 1995 to keep track of the European Union's involvement in forests and coordinate NGO activities at the European level. Our work centres on forests and forest peoples' rights and the issues that affect them such as trade and investment and climate change. All of our work is done in close collaboration with social and environmental organisations and movements across the world. The name FERN was chosen because ferns are one of the few species that grow in all forests.