

## **US to impose new plant import declaration rules starting April 1**

**The United States will enforce new import declaration requirements starting April 1 this year which will initially cover plants and plant products most closely linked to illegal logging.**

**Such requirements are part of the 2008 amendments to the US' Lacey Act which make it unlawful to import certain plants and plant products to the US without an import declaration, said Caron de Mars, Environment, Science and Technology Officer of the US Embassy Manila in a letter to Forest Management Bureau director Romeo Acosta.**

**De Mars said the US Congress amended the Act to include a broader range of timber, plants, and wood and plant products derived from illegally harvested plants.**

**“In addition to protecting wildlife, the Lacey Act, as amended is an important new tool to combat illegal logging,” he said.**

**De Mars said the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and other Federal agencies involved in enforcing the provisions of the Act are now working together to phase-in enforcement of the new declaration requirements beginning April or as soon as an electronic data collection system is established.**

**When enforced, the declaration will require information on the species of plant, the name of the country where the plant material was harvested and the value and quantity of importation, he added.**

**Other goods that contain covered plant products like lumber and wood pulp; furniture and sporting goods; printed matter; musical instruments; products manufactured from plant-based resins; boats, cars, trains and planes; pharmaceuticals; and textiles are now covered by the Lacey Act.**

**Excluded from the Act coverage are common cultivars (except trees) and food crops, scientific specimens for research and plants to remain planted or be replanted, and plants used exclusively as packaging material for another item.**

**If the declaration is inaccurate, the Lacey Act subjects a product covered to seizure and forfeiture to the US. It also provides for both civil and criminal penalties for failure to comply.**

**The Lacey Act, the US' oldest wildlife protection statute enacted in 1900, was amended in 1981 and more recently on May 22, 2008.**

**The Act, as amended, is an important new tool that will help the US to support the efforts of other countries and its own States, to combat illegal logging.**

**Its recent amendments make it “unlawful to import, export, transport, sell, receive, acquire or purchase in interstate or foreign commerce any plant, with some limited exceptions, taken or traded in violation of the laws of a U.S. State and most foreign laws.” -- Danielle Venz, *PHILEXPORT News and Features***