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## Monitoring system LesEGAIS for timber trade in Russia

Yedinaya gosudarstvennaya avtomatizirovannaya informatsionnaya  
sistema uchyota drevesiny i sdelok s ney – LesEGAIS

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**RUOKAVIRASTO**

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# Summary

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Illegal logging is a recognized problem in the Russian forest sector. Experts have estimated that the volume of illegal logging amounts to 10–35 per cent of total logging volume, while official reports claim that the share is less than a per cent. In 2013, the Russian Forest Act was amended and an electronic timber trade monitoring system, “Yedinaya gosudarstvennaya avtomatizirovannaya informatsionnaya sistema uchyota drevesiny i sdelok s ney” (LesEGAIS), was established. The goal was to entirely eliminate illegal timber from the Russian market. In addition, new requirements for measuring and transporting timber were laid down. Sawn timber was added to the list of monitored goods in 2017.

In accordance with the new requirements specified in the Forest Act, all timber has to be measured before transporting it away from the forest. Valuable hardwood that is exported abroad has to be labelled by the piece, and a mandatory cargo record book has to be kept for timber transports. All timber trade has to be reported by filling out a timber trade notification in the LesEGAIS system. Also the actual delivery volumes are entered there.

LesEGAIS system includes information on companies who perform logging and timber trade in Russia. Authorities enter information on logging rights, such as forest lease agreements and stumpage sale agreements, in the system. Companies fill out forest use declarations and reports, which are then approved by authorities in the system. In addition, the companies enter information on their timber trade and valuable hardwood export in LesEGAIS.

When users are logged in to LesEGAIS, they can view all of the agreements, reports and notifications entered by their company. The section that is open to all users includes information on logging rights and approved felled volumes, timber trade agreements and labelled hardwood units. The data available in the system can be used to verify logging rights and ownership rights. The system does not include cargo record books of timber transports or information on timber storages, so currently, it cannot be used for monitoring individual lots of timber.

The aim is to adopt tighter control on timber trade monitoring over the next few years. Plans are in place to complement the LesEGAIS system with electronic cargo record books for timber transports and with timber storage registers. Additional plans include monitoring the movements of timber trucks and forest machines via a satellite tracking system.

Keywords: illegal logging, forest use, Russia, EGAIS, timber trade, monitoring systems

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# 1. Background

## 1.1. Organizing forest use in Russia

In Russia, the state owns the forest resources (forest fund) and grants companies and entrepreneurs rights of use for a fixed term. In addition, forest areas can be released to state-owned facilities and municipal institutions, for example, for long-term use. Logging rights are primarily granted as forest lease agreements or as stumpage sale agreements. In leased forests, a prerequisite for logging is a forest management plan (Figure 1) approved by the authority. The forest leaser notifies the authorities in advance of planned felling via a forest use declaration and of realized felling via a forest use report. (Lesnoj kodeks)

Documents verifying the rights to use forest resources:

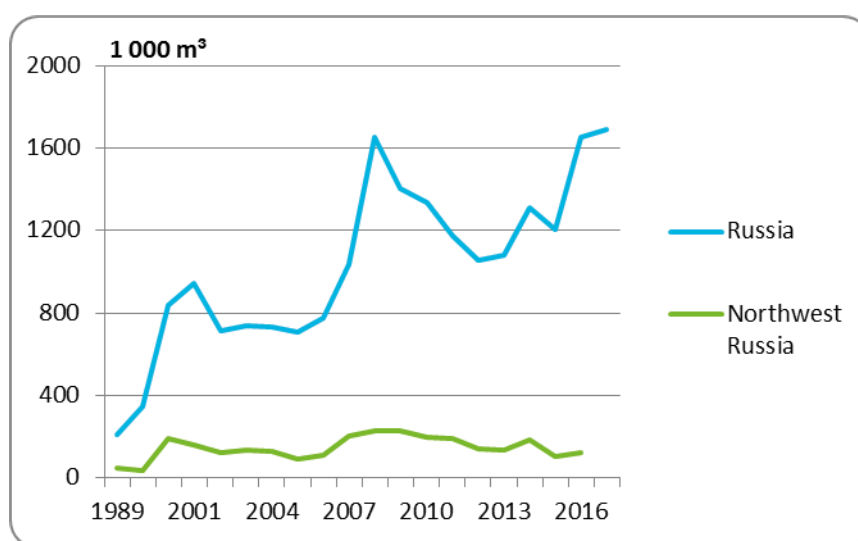
- Forest lease agreement (договор аренды лесного участка)
- Stumpage sale agreement (договор купли-продажи лесных насаждений)
- Decision to release a forest for long-term use (решение о предоставлении лесного участка)
- State or municipal service agreement on forest protection and regeneration (контракт на выполнение работ по охране, защите, воспроизводству лесов)



**Figure 1.** Forest planning at the regional level in Russia.

## 1.2. Illegal logging

Since the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, Russia has focused on halting illegal logging. The matter has been under active discussion especially at the turn of the year 2018/2019. Estimates on the amount of illegal logging vary greatly depending on the source. Experts have estimated that the volume of illegal logging amounts to 10–35 per cent of all logging in Russia (Ottitsch et. al. 2005; Russian Federation... 2019; WWF Russia 2010). According to official estimates, less than two million cubic metres of timber is illegally felled in Russia (Figure 2). This is less than a per cent of the total felling volume. In 2017, the volume of illegal logging was reported to be 1.69 million cubic metres, which is equivalent to 0.8 per cent of the total felling volume of 212.4 million cubic metres (EMISS 2018; Minprirody 2018b). The problem concentrates on Siberia, as the share of Irkutsk region alone was 65 per cent of illegal logging in 2017 (Minprirody 2018b).



**Figure 2.** Development of illegal felling in Russia and in Northwest Russia in 1989–2017. (References: Gosudarstvennyj sovet 2013; Minprirody 2017, 2017a, 2018b; the media)

The forest authorities in Russia began to develop monitoring systems for illegal logging in 2004, as they started monitoring forest use based on satellite images. In 2018, the satellite monitoring covered an area of 110 million hectares, which is a quarter of the area of exploitable forests (Isaev 2018). In 2013, an electronic timber trade monitoring system, “Yedinaya gosudarstvennaya avtomatizirovannaya informatsionnaya sistema uchyota drevesiny i sdelok s ney” (later referred to as LesEGAIS), was established. The goal was to entirely eliminate illegal timber from the Russian market. At the same time, the sanctions for illegal logging were made stricter. LesEGAIS system was supposed to comply with the requirements laid down in EU’s Timber Regulation, but its implementation was delayed by several years from the date of the entry into force of the Timber Regulation. Finnish companies that buy timber from Russia have been developing their own systems for monitoring the origin of timber since 1990s.

In accordance with EU’s Timber Regulation, the timber must not be harvested or sold in breach of the laws of the country of origin. The forest legislation in Russia does not define what constitutes illegal logging, but a ruling of the Russian Supreme Court includes a definition according to which a breach of the requirements laid down in legislation makes the felling illegal (Postanovlenije Plenuma...2012). When it comes to the documents relating to verifying the legality, especially the documents that verify the rights to use forest resources are mentioned. In the guidelines, special atten-

tion is given to a forest management plan approved by authorities, as well as to its observation. The sanctions for illegal logging and infringement of the laws are specified in the Russian Penal Code and the code of administrative offences (Kuzmichev et. al. 2018).

The report published by WWF Russia specifies the most common offences in logging and timber trade (WWF Russia 2010):

- Felling of rare and endangered tree species
- Felling in nature reserves
- Commercial felling under the pretence of promoting forest health and forest management
- Breach of felling regulations and technological instructions
- Trading of illegally felled timber and corruption
- Smuggling and converting illegal timber to legal
- Commercial felling under the pretence of cutting for household use

In an analysis commissioned by the World Bank, the most common sources for timber of suspicious origin or for illegal timber in Russia include the following (NEPCon 2014):

- Felling without rights to use forest resources. The timber that is illegally felled by local residents is mainly used as firewood.
- Felling performed within the forest leaser's own lease area, where timber is felled outside the stands marked for cutting.
- The volume of timber felled within the stands marked for cutting is greater than planned. Due to outdated forest resource data, the stand characteristics do not match with the reality. To avoid additional bureaucracy, the felling volume is reported as being as planned.
- Stealing legally felled timber.
- Selling timber felled for household use.

According to a recent analysis by the Russian Federal Assembly, the most common sources for illegal timber include unnecessary forest health felling, timber approved for household use and unauthorized felling performed in order to gain illegal income (Russian Federal...2019).

### **Definition of illegal felling in Russia**

The felling is illegal, if the requirements laid down in legislation are breached. These situations include the following:

- Felling without having the required documents
  - ✓ Forest lease agreement or other agreement verifying the rights to use forest resources
  - ✓ Forest use plan approved by authorities
- Exceeding the approved felling volume
- Not observing the restrictions relating to tree species and felling age
- Felling outside the stands marked for cutting
- Felling outside the forest management plan
- Not observing the time restrictions set for felling (storage of timber and its transportation)

[The Russian Supreme Court](#)



## 2. Requirements laid down in the Forest Act and LesEGAIS

Traditionally, the Russian Forest Act and the standards for its implementation regulate operations in forests. The regulations were extended for the first time to cover operations outside the forests as the LesEGAIS system and further requirements on timber measurements and transport came about (FZ-415). The new requirements laid down in the Forest Act entered into force gradually during the years 2014 and 2015. In 2017, sawn timber was also added to the list of monitored goods in order to improve the coverage of monitoring the origin of timber. The targets were especially those companies who had been sawing illegally felled timber after a short transport, and, by doing so, converted the timber to legal (Roslesvesti 2017).

### 2.1. Measuring timber

In accordance with the requirement added to the Forest Act, all timber has to be measured before transporting it away from the forest. The measurement is done by the company or entrepreneur harvesting the timber (Figure 3).

In addition, the timber harvested during forest management operations performed by forest authorities has to be measured in the forest (e.g. forest health felling). The timber intended for household use is measured by a local forest authority.



**Figure 3.** Timber measurement point organised by a forest leaser in the Republic of Karelia. (Sari Karvinen)

### 2.2. Timber transport

In timber transport, a mandatory cargo record book (сопроводительный документ) must be filled out by the owner of the timber. The record book includes the following information (Figure 4):

- Owner of the timber
- Sender, receiver and transporter of the cargo
- Timber volume, tree species and timber assortments
- Place of departure and destination
- Number of the notification of timber trade
- Registration number of the vehicle in vehicle transport



## 2.3. Notification of timber trade

(декларация о сделках с древесиной)

Companies and entrepreneurs must submit an electronically signed notification of timber trade to the authorities via the LesEGAIS system. The notification includes the following information:

- Owner of the timber and the contracting parties in the timber trade
- Timber volume, tree species and timber assortments
- A document verifying the right to harvest timber (forest lease agreement, stumpage sale agreement)
- Trade agreement or another transfer of ownership
- Location of a possible timber storage

Both the timber seller (or dealer) and the buyer fill out the notification in the system. In addition, realized deliveries are entered in the system at least once a month (Postanovlenije Pravitelstva...11). When timber is exported abroad, the number of the notification of timber trade has to be entered in the Russian customs declaration form (Rešenie...35).

The requirement to submit notification of timber trade via the LesEGAIS system was expanded to cover also sawn timber trade in 2017 (Rasporjaženie Pravitelstva 911-r). The owners of sawn timber are required to notify of trade agreements for sawn timber, logs and timber sleepers, as well as of realized deliveries.

## 2.4. Labelling valuable hardwood

The valuable hardwood timber (oak, beech, ash) exported abroad from Russia has to be labelled by the piece. The label has to be electronically readable, and it includes the unit number, information on the owner and the number of the notification in the LesEGAIS system (Postanovlenije Pravitelstva...1611). The label is then registered to the LesEGAIS system at least a day before exporting the timber abroad.

Annually, approximately 800,000 timber units from oak, beech or ash are exported abroad from Russia. All of these units have to be labelled by the piece. According to the notice in LesEGAIS, this labelling requirement is also applied to sawn timber from 1 July 2017 onward. The labels can be placed on individual logs, boards and sawn timber packages. (LesEGAIS 2017)

As interpreted by the customs administration in the Far East, the labelling requirement of valuable hardwood does not apply to sawn timber, because it cannot be labelled by the piece (Far East Customs, 2017). As for the customs declaration in Northwest Russia, it has been required that both the sawn timber packages and the individual sawn timber units have to be labelled by the piece (Regional Court in Leningrad, 2018).

## 2.5. Timber trade monitoring system LesEGAIS

LesEGAIS is an electronic system owned and maintained by the authorities in the Russian Federation. Regional forest authorities who are responsible for granting rights to use forest resources, as well as companies and entrepreneurs, are required to submit information via this system. The system includes the following documented information:

- Companies and entrepreneurs in the field of logging
- Forest lease agreements (parties, location of the forest area, date of signature, approved felling volume)
- Stumpage sale agreements (parties, location of the stands marked for cutting, approved felling volume, date of the agreement, validity)
- Long-term right to use forest resources (number and date of the release document, grantor of the rights and the right holder, location of the forest area, approved felling volume)
- Forest use declarations (company/entrepreneur, number of the forest lease agreement, timber volume to be felled, location of the stands marked for cutting)
- Forest use reports (company/entrepreneur, number of the forest lease agreement, volume of felled timber, tree species, timber assortments, location of the stands marked for cutting)
- Notifications of timber trade (number and date of the notification, notifier, timber volume, tree species and timber assortments, buyer of the timber)
- Actual volume of received timber
- Labelling valuable hardwood

Regional forest authorities fill in information about agreements related to rights to use forest resources to the LesEGAIS system as soon as they have been signed. Until 2017, the authorities were also responsible for forest use declarations and reports. From 2018 onward, the forest users have been able to submit their declarations and reports themselves into LesEGAIS, where the authorities approve them (LesEGAIS 2018a). The companies submit notifications of timber trade and the labelling of valuable hardwood.

LesEGAIS is used in regulatory supervision of illegal logging and timber trade at both regional and federal levels. The Federal Forestry Agency in Russia uses the system in establishing risk ratings for companies. These ratings assess the indications of administrative breaches and offences. (Mariev 2018)

### 3. LesEGAIS in controlling the origin

#### 3.1. Registered users

Companies registered in Russia that operate in the field of timber or sawn timber trade or that are obligated to label hardwood can login to LesEGAIS system. Private persons and foreign companies cannot login to the system. (Rosleshoz 2017)

In LesEGAIS, the users can view all of the agreements, forest use declarations and reports, timber trade and hardwood labels relating to their company (Figure 5). Printouts can be used to verify the logging right and the ownership right of timber and sawn timber for the buyer of the timber, for example. The forest use reports verify the felling volumes that the company has reported to the authorities. Documents relating to timber transport are not included in the system.

Номер договора	Дата заключения	Дата ввода данных	Арендатор	ИНН	Срок действия, мес.	Источник
1011	01.03.2015	31.03.2015			0	ЕГАИС
1012	01.03.2015	31.03.2015			0	ЕГАИС
1013	01.03.2015	31.03.2015			0	ЕГАИС
256	24.11.2014				120	ЕГАИС

**Figure 5.** Starting page of the LesEGAIS system for registered user. (LesEGAIS 2018)

#### 3.2. Public information

The LesEGAIS system includes a public section that can be used without logging-in to support the monitoring of the origin of the timber. Anyone can access the system to check the timber seller's right to harvest timber or the ownership of the timber. As for the logging rights, users can view the location of leased forests or stands marked for cutting. It is also possible to view the felling right volume specified in the agreement, but not the volume of realized felling. The origin of individual lots of timber cannot be verified in the system.

The public section includes the following information (Rasporjaženije Pravitelstva 2320-r):

Logging:

- The fiscal code INN of the logging company (идентификационный номер налогоплательщика ИНН)
- Date of the agreement verifying the logging right (lease agreement, stumpage sale agreement, etc.)
- Location of the leased forest area or stands marked for cutting at a compartment (kvartal) level
- Approved felling volume specified in the agreement

Timber trade:

- Name of the company or entrepreneur entering into the trade agreement
- Timber volume traded
- Date on which the timber trade agreement has been entered in the monitoring system

Export of valuable hardwood (oak, beech, ash):

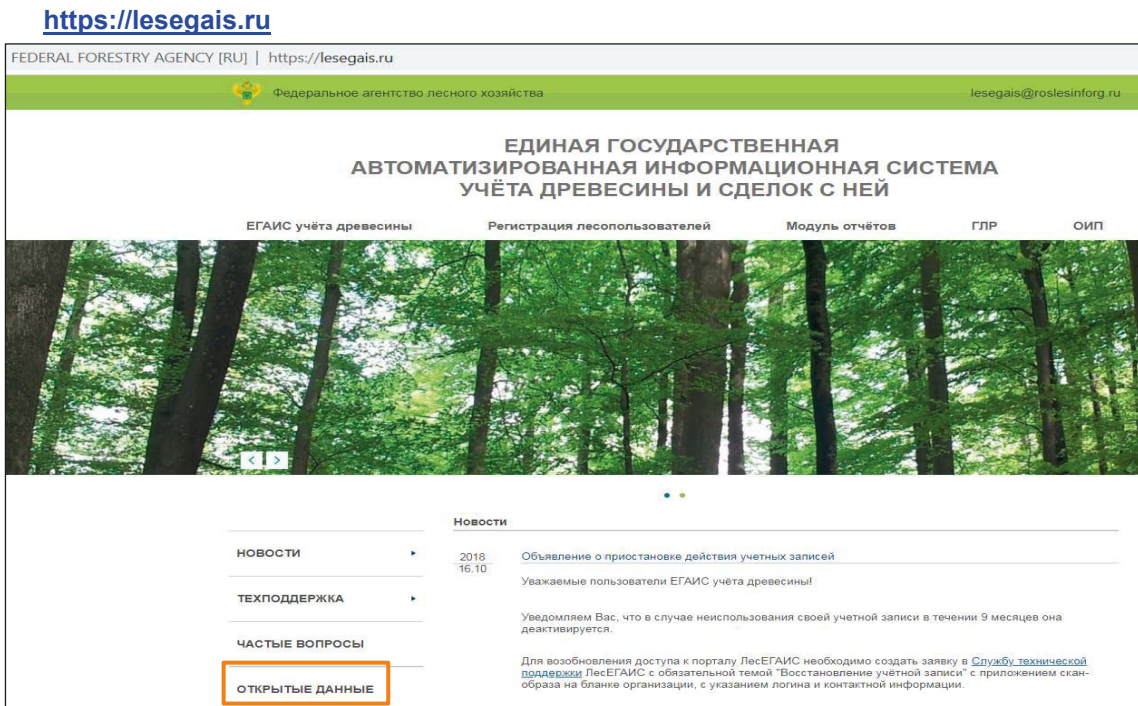
- Fiscal code of the company or entrepreneur exporting timber abroad
- Date on which the information about the labelling of the exported hardwood units has been entered in the timber trade monitoring system
- Exported timber volume

Address to LesEGAIS: <https://lesegais.ru>

Public section (открытие данные): <https://lesegais.ru/open-area>

Contents of the public section in 12.12.2018 (Figures 6 and 7):

Document	Timber volume, mill. m <sup>3</sup>
State contracts and assignments	7,48
Forest lease agreements	500,32
Stumpage sale agreements	39,35
Other forest use right	0,84
Timber trades	buyers 310,73 sellers 259,73
Labelling of valuable hardwood	0,97



Public section: <https://lesegais.ru/open-area>

Figure 6. Starting page of the LesEGAIS system.

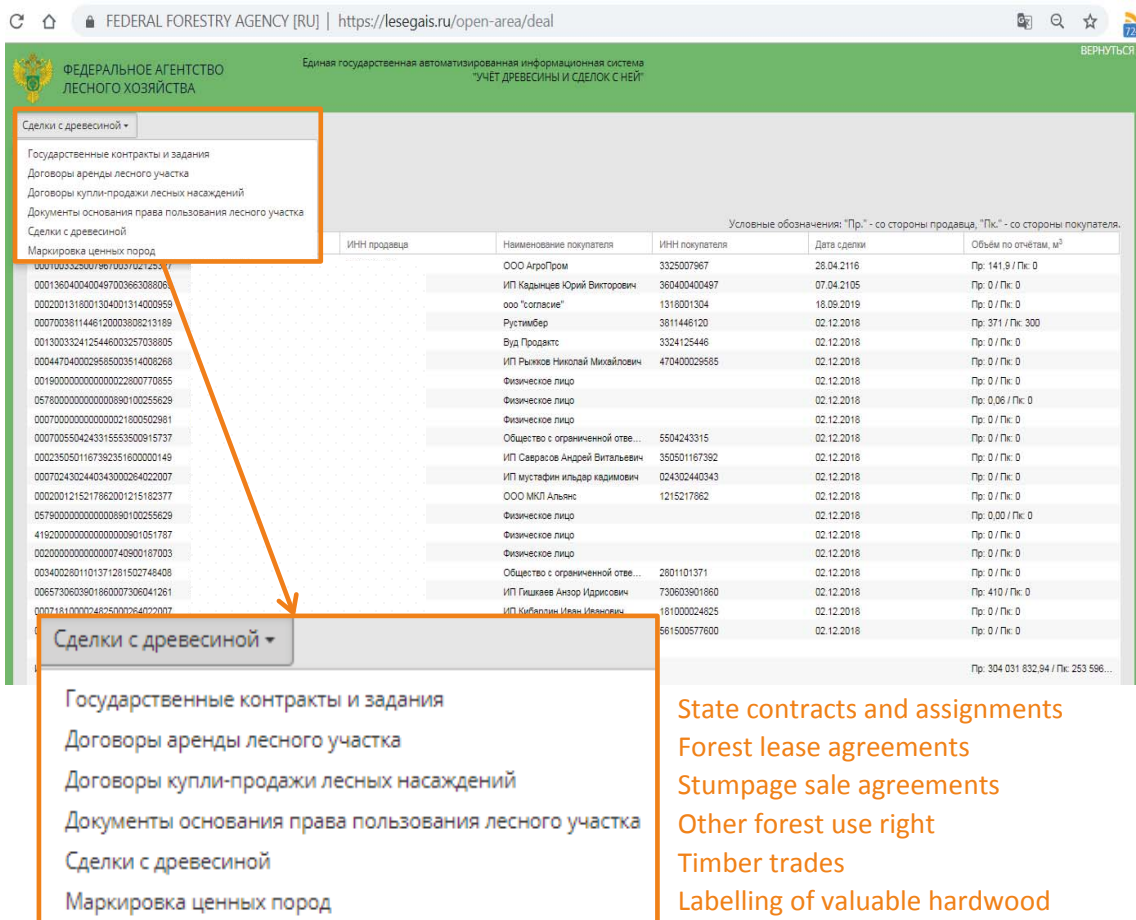


Figure 7. Contents of the public section of LesEGAIS.

## Examples of the public information

### Forest lease agreements

Договоры аренды лесного участка ▾

Поиск

Выгрузить в xls

Company's name	INN	Date	Region	Information on forest district			Kvartals	Allowable cut, m <sup>3</sup>
Наименование компании	ИНН комп...	Дата под...	Субъект РФ ▾	Лесничество	Участковое ле...	Уроч...	Лесные ква...	Объём по договору, м <sup>3</sup>
		03.12.2008	Республика Каре...	Пудожское	Авдеевское, Вод...	ВОДЛО...	1; 10; 100; 101...	1 010 300
		17.12.2008	Республика Каре...	Суоярское	Вегарусское; Ве...	ЛОЙМ...	1; 10; 100; 101...	594 300
		03.12.2008	Республика Каре...	Пудожское	Пудожское; Пял...	ТАМБИ...	1; 10; 100; 101...	332 900
		19.12.2008	Республика Каре...	Сеgezское	Выгозерское; Ку...	ВОЖМ...	1; 10; 100; 101...	307 070
		17.11.2008	Республика Каре...	Кондопожское	Гирвасское; Кон...	БЕРЕЗ...	1; 10; 100; 101...	289 800
		26.12.2008	Республика Каре...	Пряжинское	Ведлозерское; К...	ВЕДЛО...	1; 10; 100; 101...	276 500
		29.01.2009	Республика Каре...	Медвежьего...	Даниловское; Ку...	ДАНИЛ...	1; 10; 100; 101...	271 200
		30.04.2009	Республика Каре...	Медвежьего...	Даниловское; Ку...	ДАНИЛ...	1; 10; 100; 101...	253 400
		24.12.2014	Республика Каре...	Олонеецкое	Верхне-Олонеецк...	ВЕРХН...	1; 10; 100; 101...	249 600

### Timber trades

Сделки с древесиной ▾

Поиск

Notification number	Name of seller	Seller's INN	Name of buyer	Buyer's INN	Date	Reported volume, m <sup>3</sup>
Номер декларации	Наименование продавца	ИНН продавца	Наименование покупателя	ИНН покупателя	Дата сделки	Объём по отчётам, м <sup>3</sup>
0002086000019726002245004912					16.10.2018	Пр: 0 / Пк: 0 <b>Seller/Buyer</b>
0002086000019726002245004038					23.11.2018	Пр: 0 / Пк: 0
00020860000168873002454022640					18.06.2018	Пр: 0 / Пк: 0
0003003604017517360100049359					27.11.2018	Пр: 0 / Пк: 25,2
0002007718788158007729601235					28.08.2018	Пр: 0,18 / Пк: 0
0002005262250328523501581100					19.09.2018	Пр: 24,82 / Пк: 24,82
0003005262250328521202293340					04.07.2018	Пр: 56,01 / Пк: 0
0003005262250328524808306145					06.11.2018	Пр: 0 / Пк: 0

Условные обозначения: "Пр." - со стороны продавца, "Пк." - со стороны покупателя.

### Search functions

The database can be searched by region, forestry district (lesnichestvo) or company name and tax identification number using a search form or a quick filter. All data can be downloaded as an excel file.

Договоры аренды лесного участка ▾

Поиск **Search form**

Субъект РФ: Республика Карелия ▾      Название компании:

Лесничество: Выберите значение ▾      ИНН компании:

Участковое лесничество: Выберите значение ▾

**Excel download**

**Quick filter**

Наименовани...	ИНН компании	Дата подписа...	Субъект РФ ▾	Лесничество	Участковое ле...	Урочище	Лесные кварт...	Объём по д... ↓
ОАО		03.12.2008	Республика Кар...	Содержит карелия	Авдеевское, Во...	ВОДЛОЗЕРСКО...	1; 10; 100; 101; ...	1 010 300
Акции		17.12.2008	Республика Кар...		Вегарусское; Ве...	ЛОЙМОЛЬСКО...	1; 10; 100; 101; ...	594 300
ПАО		03.12.2008	Республика Кар...	Пудожское	Пудожское; Пял...	ТАМБИЧОЗЕРС...	1; 10; 100; 101; ...	332 900
АО "С		19.12.2008	Республика Кар...	Сеgezское	Выгозерское; Ку...	ВОЖМОГОРСК...	1; 10; 100; 101; ...	307 070



## 4. Assessment and development plans

The administrators of LesEGAIS have determined two of the most important deficiencies in monitoring the movements of timber and sawn timber. The mandatory cargo record book for transports does not have to be registered in LesEGAIS, and it does not have to be stored for later. Also timber storage locations are not registered, and the volumes of inbound and outbound timber to and from these storages are not calculated. In order to correct these deficiencies, amendments to the forest legislation have been suggested. The goal is to implement these amendments during 2019 and 2020. (Mariev 2018)

The abovementioned draft law on stricter timber trade monitoring was published in October 2018. The draft contains amendments that would require an electronic cargo record book for timber transport which is granted by a local forest authority (lesnichestvo). The cargo record book would be tied to location and to the actual stands marked for cutting, and the timber volume would match the forest use declaration completed by the forest leaser. Lesnichestvo would be responsible for importing the data into the LesEGAIS system. For timber storage monitoring, it is suggested that LesEGAIS system would be expanded with a monthly updated register for the locations of timber and sawn timber storages, from temporary forest storages up to retail storages for sawn timber. (Rosleshoz 2018)

Apart from the cargo record books and timber storages, a register of forest users who have neglected their duties is planned to be included in the LesEGAIS (Mariev 2018). Currently, the Federal Forestry Agency maintains a register on their website at:

[http://rosleshoz.gov.ru/activity/forest\\_use/registry](http://rosleshoz.gov.ru/activity/forest_use/registry).

In addition, the Federal Forestry Agency publishes a list of forest leasers who have unpaid forest fees at: [http://rosleshoz.gov.ru/activity/economy\\_and\\_finance/stat](http://rosleshoz.gov.ru/activity/economy_and_finance/stat)

### **A draft law on tighter timber trade monitoring**

Electronic cargo record book:

- Granted by a forest authority, imported into the LesEGAIS system
- Tied to the actual stands marked for cutting – matches with the felling permit
- Implementing terms “starting the use” and “ending the use” in relation to the cargo record book
- The entrepreneur enters the data into the cargo record book (+ location data)
- The police inspects the cargo record books
- Private persons are obligated to keep the cargo record book in timber transports

Timber storages:

- Timber storages are areas in which operations relating to unloading and loading of cargo take place
- The location of the timber storage is included in the location data of the electronic cargo record book
- A register of timber storages in the Russian Federation is created
- Operations which the owner of the timber can carry out at timber storages are clearly specified

[Federal Forestry Agency in Russia](#)

The LesEGAIS system has proven functional in controlling timber measurement and origin. In the early 2019, the system was integrated into a common information system used by all of the authorities in Russia, which means that all of the information is automatically available for the Customs Service, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Tax Administration (Rosleshoz 2019). This enhances the use of the system in timber export, for example.

Analyses done by the Russian Federal Assembly and the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation have highlighted the need for developing the LesEGAIS system further in terms of monitoring individual lots of timber, timber storage locations and transports, as well as of the implementation periods of timber trade agreements (Stšjotnaja palata 2018, Russian Federal...2019).

The WWF Russia estimates that the LesEGAIS system has increased the transparency in timber trade and simplified the gathering of information. However, one problem with the system is that the public section only covers information on the right to use forest resources (allowable cut) and that the information on actual felling volumes is not publicly available. As allowable cut normally involve significantly larger volumes than the actual felling volume verified in the forest use declarations, this opens possibilities for illegal timber trade. In order for the system to become an effective way to prevent illegal logging, the public information should include the actual felling volumes specified in the forest use declarations, as well as the volume of timber that has been transported away from the forest and reported to authorities. (WWF 2014)

In 2018, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation submitted a proposal for monitoring timber transports via GLONASS satellite tracking system (Globalnaya navigatsionnaya sputnikovaya sistema GLONASS). The equipment installed in timber trucks and forest machines could be used to monitor routes, working times and locations. This would then enhance the actions against illegal logging. In order to implement this proposal, technical regulations would have to be altered by 2021. The installation of a satellite tracking device would be mandatory when new forest machines are put to operation. In November 2018, the Federal Forestry Agency and AO "GLONASS", the company managing the state-owned tracking system, signed a cooperative agreement on the implementation of a monitoring system in timber transport. (Minprirody 2018, 2018a)

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