



ALLIANCE FOR SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION

Post Office Box GP 435, Accra | Tel: +233 (0) 57 000 2571

Email: info@asec-earth.org | www.asec-earth.org

August 18, 2025

PRESS RELEASE

THE BATTLE AGAINST GALAMSEY IS VITAL, BUT THE QUIET OVERHARVESTING OF NATURAL TIMBER DEMANDS URGENT ATTENTION.

1. The 2024 National Annual Report on Ghana's forests presents a critical juncture in the country's forest management narrative—one that demands urgent and comprehensive reflection beyond the well-known battle against Galamsey. While tackling illegal artisanal mining remains vital, a parallel and pressing challenge is unfolding in the natural forests through timber harvesting that significantly exceeds sustainable limits. In 2024, Ghana's natural forest timber harvest reached nearly 1.9 million cubic meters, representing 189 percent of the scientifically established annual allowable cut of 1 million cubic meters. This overharvesting trend is not merely a statistic but a profound threat to ecological stability, biodiversity, and the forest's capacity for carbon sequestration.
2. The persistent deforestation rate of 21.8% in 2024, which far outpaces previous years, highlights the intensifying strain on Ghana's forest resources. This rate reflects decades-long pressure that has led to significant primary forest loss, exacerbated by the soaring timber harvest volumes that have increased by over 15% from 2021 to 2024. The natural timber cut largely feeds diverse international markets including countries in Asia, Europe, and Africa, with high-value hardwoods such as Teak, Wawa, and Eucalyptus dominating exports. This international demand, while economically beneficial, is unfortunately driving harvests well beyond sustainable thresholds.
3. The consequences of this overexploitation extend beyond the immediate loss of biomass. Trees take between 15 and 30 years to mature to commercial size, with carbon sequestration starting after 5 to 8 years, depending on the species. Over-harvesting undermines this natural carbon cycle, turning forests from carbon sinks into net carbon emitters. The knock-on effect is evident in Ghana's rising greenhouse gas emissions, which surged by 7.8% between 2022 and 2024, reaching 55.5 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent. This upward emissions trajectory threatens the country's commitments under its Nationally



Determined Contributions (NDCs), casting doubt on the feasibility of meeting ambitious climate targets without swiftly addressing forest over-extraction.

4. Despite these sobering realities, there is a welcome increase in forest restoration with 19,125 hectares rehabilitated in 2024—a 17% rise from the previous year—with the public sector providing over 60% of the effort. While this signals progress, restoration must vastly accelerate and be integrated with stricter enforcement of sustainable harvest limits to prevent further degradation. Additionally, Ghana’s participation in international carbon markets, pivotal for climate finance, is jeopardized by the inability to hold harvests within sustainable bounds and maintain healthy forest carbon stocks. The credibility of carbon credits and the potential revenues they attract hinge on genuine, verifiable reductions in emissions linked directly to forest conservation and sustainable management.
5. The Alliance for Sustainability Education (ASEC) stresses that Ghana’s forest governance must evolve beyond the singular focus on Galamsey to meet the broader challenge of unsustainable timber harvesting. A holistic, science-driven approach that balances economic gains with ecological integrity is essential. This includes rigorous monitoring, transparent reporting, community engagement, and incentivizing sustainable practices. Protecting Ghana’s natural forests is not only an environmental imperative but a socioeconomic necessity that supports biodiversity, climate resilience, and livelihoods dependent on these forests.
6. ASEC is committed to advancing this discourse and advocating for integrated, sustainable forest management policies through its platforms. It is critical that policymakers, industry stakeholders, and civil society unite to safeguard Ghana’s forest heritage, aligning conservation efforts with national and global climate ambitions. The forests of Ghana are national treasures—only through responsible stewardship can their benefits endure for generations to come.

SIGNED

ANDREWS AIBI JUNIOR

Executive Director

In a world where climate change awareness and education are often neglected despite their severe impacts, our mission is to inspire, educate, and empower individuals and communities. ASEC promotes small, practical, and immediate actions to combat climate change and build a greener, more sustainable future for all.