

Timber-Legality Rules by Country for Importing Wood Products

SourcingFrom

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What the EU deforestation regulation, the US Lacey Act, Australia's illegal logging law, the UK Timber Regulation and New Zealand's coming rules ask of an importer of wood products. It explains the four questions every timber law asks, why Indian trade names for species are loose, the sheesham permit route, and how a Jodhpur furniture order plays out in each market.

The Short Version

- Every timber law wants the species, the country of harvest, the chain of handlers and documents that prove each.
- The duty sits with the importer, and every wood part counts, including plywood backs and MDF shelves.
- Sheesham is CITES-listed, and handicraft exports need a VRIKSH shipment certificate from an EPCH member.
- EUDR applies from 30 December 2026 for large and medium operators and 30 June 2027 for micro and small ones.
- An FSC, PEFC or VRIKSH certificate is evidence for your risk assessment, not a substitute for the legal declaration.

In August 2011 US federal agents walked into Gibson Guitar's factories in Nashville and Memphis and took away rosewood and ebony, some of it from India. The problem wasn't the wood itself. According to the search warrant affidavit, sawn wood had left India under a tariff code for musical instrument parts, which dodged India's ban on exporting sawn wood, and then arrived in the US declared as veneer ([EIA summary of the affidavit](#), 2011). A year later Gibson signed a criminal enforcement agreement with the Department of Justice that resolved allegations over "rosewood and ebony from India" and

ebony from Madagascar, paid a penalty and gave up its claim to the seized Madagascar wood ([US Department of Justice](#), 6 August 2012).



Gibson was a big, experienced importer with lawyers on call, and a paperwork mismatch at the Indian end still turned into a raid on its own factory floor. That's the whole point of this guide. Every big import market now makes you, the importer, answer for where the wood in your goods came from, and the rules reach furniture, decor, toys and the pallet underneath. We'll walk through what every one of these laws asks for, then each market's rule, then how it plays out on an Indian order. One honest caveat - a few of these rules are still moving (Australia, the UK and New Zealand all have changes queued), so we date every one of them and tell you where we couldn't read the official page ourselves.

1. Every Timber Law Asks the Same Four Questions

The laws carry different names in Brussels, Washington, Canberra, London and Wellington, but they all want the same four facts from you. What species is it (in Latin, genus and species)? Which country, and ideally which region, was it harvested in? Who handled it between the forest and your supplier? And what documents prove each of those answers?

Then they want the same three steps. You collect that information, you assess the risk that the wood was cut or traded illegally, and you bring any risk you find down to negligible or you don't buy. The [UK guidance](#) spells it out almost word for word - "gather information on timber, including its species, quantity, supplier, country of harvest and compliance with applicable legislation", assess the risk, and "mitigate any identified risk to negligible" (GOV.UK, updated August 2025). Australia and the EU are built the same way.

Look at the Gibson story through those four questions and you'll see where it broke. The species was known. The country was known. What failed was the fourth question, because the documents described a product (instrument parts, then veneer) that wasn't what was in the crate. Legality laws don't only punish logging in the wrong forest. They also punish a trail of paper that doesn't match the goods, including the exporting country's own export rules.

Two things importers get wrong right at the start. The duty sits with you, not with the supplier. Your supplier hands you the evidence, but the law names whoever first places the goods on the market or imports them, and that's you. And every wood part counts. A chest of drawers with a solid mango carcass, a plywood back and MDF drawer bottoms has three wood inputs, and the strict regimes want species and origin for each. So the first thing to ask an Indian workshop for isn't a certificate. It's a bill of materials by wood component.

2. Get the Species Right, Because India's Trade Names Are Loose

Every declaration starts with a species name, and in Indian furniture the names are slippery. A US buyer says "sheesham" and "acacia" get used "as a catch all" for similar-looking hardwoods, and a supplier-side voice in India who says they made furniture for big brands wrote that "much of what's sold as "teak" today is actually mixed wood. Teak where it's visible, something else where it isn't" ([r/woodworking, 2023](#) and [r/IndiaBusiness, 2026](#), both forum voices). Another reply in the same thread says most teak on the Indian market is Nigerian or Ghanaian plantation teak, which would change the country of harvest as well as the name (one voice, 2026).

None of that makes the workshop dishonest. Trade names are how the domestic market talks, and a maker buying from a timber depot often doesn't know more than the depot told them. It does matter to you, though, because a declaration with the wrong species is a false declaration whatever anyone meant, and one common Indian species comes with its own permit regime.

Sheesham is *Dalbergia sissoo*. The whole *Dalbergia* genus went into CITES Appendix II in 2017, which puts sheesham and Indian rosewood (*Dalbergia latifolia*) under export permits. India's handicraft council says plainly that sheesham products "are not banned from exports", and that for handicrafts India has made the Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH) the body that issues a "comparable document in lieu of the CITES permit", called the VRIKSH shipment certificate. It's issued per shipment and only to an EPCH member that already holds a VRIKSH legality certificate ([EPCH note and FAQ](#), Supported, the FAQ is from 2017 and we haven't seen a newer version).



The 2022 CITES meeting eased this for small pieces, and here's where it gets murky. India's reading, reported at the time, is that a consignment can hold any number of sheesham items "each weighing under 10 kg" without a permit, counting only the wood and not the metal or glass ([Down To Earth](#), November 2022). Other readings of the same annotation count 10 kg of the listed wood per shipment. We couldn't read the CITES site to settle it (it blocked us), and India also asked CITES to drop sheesham from the list at the 2025 meeting, and we couldn't confirm the outcome from an official text. So here's the practical line – a sheesham dining table is over 10 kg on any reading and needs the permit, and for small sheesham decor you ask your own country's CITES authority before you ship, not the supplier.

Our rule for every wood order is simple. Write the Latin name of every wood part into the PO, ask for the supplier's timber purchase invoices, and check the end grain on the sample against the name you were given. If a supplier can't tell you the species then it can't tell you the forest, and every law below fails at the first question.

3. The Rule in Each Market

European Union: EUDR. The deforestation regulation (Regulation (EU) 2023/1115, amended by Regulation (EU) 2025/2650) applies to large and medium operators from 30 December 2026 and to micro and small operators from 30 June 2027 ([European Commission](#) and [Access2Markets](#)). Wood is one of the covered commodities and the Commission names furniture among the products in scope. You must show the goods don't come from land deforested after the cut-off date and were legally produced, and the information you collect includes the geolocation of the plots where the wood was harvested. After the 2025 amendment the due diligence statement sits "exclusively with the operators who first place the product on the market", which is you as importer. India is classed low risk, so due diligence is simplified, but it isn't skipped (Implementing Regulation 2025/1093, read by our research on 23 September 2026). The Commission's [July 2026 scope update](#) changed nothing for wood.

Geolocation is the hard part with India, and it's worth being blunt about it. Sheesham and mango mostly grow on farms, canal banks and old orchards, and the wood reaches a Jodhpur or Saharanpur workshop through a depot or a state forest corporation auction. Getting a plot coordinate for that is slow, and it has to start before production, not at the port.

United States: the Lacey Act. This is the law Gibson ran into. Since 1 December 2024, Phase VII of the Lacey Act declaration covers "furniture, additional essential oils, sporting goods, housewares, tools, boats and vehicles, and cork" ([USDA APHIS](#)). For each plant component you declare the scientific name, the country of harvest, the quantity and the value. If the species or country varies, you list "each species of plant that may have been used" and "each country from which the plant may have been taken" ([APHIS requirements](#)). Plant material at 5% of the product's weight or less, and no more than 2.9 kg per line, is exempt, unless the species is protected. The declaration is the visible bit. The law underneath it is broader, and it makes it

an offence to import plants taken or exported in breach of another country's law, which is exactly how an Indian export rule ended up in a Tennessee factory.

Australia: the Illegal Logging Prohibition Act. The amended Act and the Illegal Logging Prohibition Rules 2024 took effect on 3 March 2025, with an education period to September 2025. If you import regulated timber products, including wooden furniture, you need a written due diligence system before import. The department has said a new notice with species and harvest location will replace the old customs question, but section 18B(3) of the Act starts it only on a day the rules prescribe, and the Rules 2024 prescribe none (both read by us, 25 September 2026). So due diligence applies now and the notice is still to come. Timber, bamboo and cane goods also carry biosecurity conditions per component, and an Australian broker lists photo frames, bamboo mats and musical instruments as things "subject to strict oversight" (a customs broker on LinkedIn, 2026, a vendor voice).



United Kingdom: UKTR. The UK Timber Regulation keeps the old EU timber rules for Great Britain. If you place timber or "a broad range of timber products, including composites such as furniture" on the GB market, you run the three-step due diligence, and OPSS enforces it ([GOV.UK](#)). CITES permits for species like sheesham come from APHA, and "you must apply for a permit if you're moving a CITES specimen either into or out of Great Britain" ([GOV.UK](#)). In June 2026 the government said it would strengthen UKTR and bring in forest-risk commodity rules, with legislation expected in 2027 (GOV.UK news, read only as a search extract). Northern Ireland follows the EUDR.

New Zealand: legal harvest assurance, from 2027. The Forests (Legal Harvest Assurance) Amendment Act 2023 sets up registration and due diligence for timber importers. MPI's material puts the system in force by 1 August 2027 with a further twelve months to comply (read only as search extracts, because MPI's pages served us an empty shell). Until then, imported wooden goods meet MPI's import health standards and no legality declaration.

United Arab Emirates. We found no timber legality due diligence rule for UAE importers. That's "we didn't find one", not "there isn't one".

If you're weighing markets side by side, this is where they stand as of 28 September 2026 –

Market	Rule	Applies from
EU	EUDR due diligence statement, with harvest-plot geolocation (simplified for India)	30 Dec 2026 (large, medium), 30 Jun 2027 (micro, small)
US	Lacey Act declaration per plant component	In force, furniture since 1 Dec 2024
Australia	Written due diligence system. Species and harvest-location notice to come	In force since 3 Mar 2025. Notice date not set
UK	UKTR due diligence, CITES permit via APHA for listed species	In force. New rules expected 2027
New Zealand	Importer registration and due diligence	By 1 Aug 2027, then 12 months to comply
UAE	None found	n/a

4. The Pallet Is Timber Too

Everyone remembers the table and forgets what it sits on. Wood packaging, dunnage included, has to be treated and carry the ISPM 15 mark in every one of these markets ([IPPC](#)). A UK logistics voice says certified pallets "are not standard in India and considered an unnecessary added cost for the shipper" ([r/logistics, 2026](#)), and Australian clearance firms say an unmarked pallet can stop a container after customs has already cleared it (two vendor voices on LinkedIn, 2026). The mark, the treatments and the PO clause live on [wood packaging rules \(ISPM 15\)](#).

5. How It Plays Out on an Indian Order

Say you're buying 200 dining tables from a Jodhpur workshop. The line sheet says "solid sheesham" for one model and "mango wood" for the

other. Mango is *Mangifera indica*, listed nowhere, and mostly comes from orchards felled when they stop fruiting. Sheesham is *Dalbergia sissoo*, CITES-listed, grown on farms and roadsides across north India.

Before you pay the deposit, ask for the Latin name of every wood part (the plywood in the drawers too), the workshop's timber purchase invoices, the state and district the wood was bought in, and for the sheesham model, whether the workshop is an EPCH member holding VRIKSH, because without that it can't get the shipment certificate at all. Ask early. A workshop that buys from a depot on the day it needs wood may not have last month's invoice to hand, and that's normal small-business life, not a warning sign. It just means the file takes time.

Into the EU after 30 December 2026, you file the due diligence statement with the harvest geolocation before the goods go on the market. For the sheesham model you also need the Indian export document and an import permit from your member state's CITES authority before arrival. The mango model needs no permit. The plywood back is its own line either way, and if it's Chinese or Malaysian ply then a second country goes into your file. The rest of the EU border checklist is on the [EU page](#).

Into Australia, the due diligence file has the same contents plus biosecurity conditions per component, and when the import notice starts you'll give species and harvest location at entry, so build the file that way now. The border table is on the [Australia page](#).

Into the US, the Lacey declaration takes the species and country for the sheesham, the mango and the ply. Separate from legality, upholstered wooden furniture carries a 25% Section 232 rate that rises to 30% on 1 January 2027, and kitchen cabinets and vanities go from 25% to 50% the same day ([Proclamation 11000](#)). A plain dining table isn't on that list as far as we can see, but check your line against [working out the real import duty](#) and the [US page](#). In Australia, chests of drawers and similar units need the [toppling furniture](#) warning labels (ACCC, in force since 4 May 2025).

Collecting timber invoices, species evidence and export documents from a workshop that's never been asked for them is slow, on-the-ground work. If you'd rather not chase it yourself then [SourcingSync](#) does exactly this at the Indian end. For how to check who you're really buying from, see [how to check an Indian supplier](#), and for putting a moisture check into the pre-shipment inspection, see [quality control in India](#).

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- 01 **The paper trail fails before the forest does.** In the Gibson case the Indian wood's problem, per the affidavit, was an export code and an import description that didn't match the goods. Your file has to match what's in the crate. (*[US Department of Justice, 2012](#), [EIA, 2011](#).*)
- 02 **Sheesham needs an EPCH document, not a normal CITES permit.** India issues a VRIKSH shipment certificate in lieu of the CITES permit, only to EPCH members holding VRIKSH. Ask about VRIKSH before you order sheesham. (*[EPCH FAQ, 2017](#).*)
- 03 **Species names on Indian line sheets are trade names.** "Sheesham", "acacia" and "teak" are used loosely, so put the Latin name in the PO and check the end grain. (*[r/woodworking, 2023](#), [r/IndiaBusiness, 2026](#).*)
- 04 **Uncertified pallets are common from India.** An unmarked pallet can stop a cleared container in Australia. (*[r/logistics, 2026](#), [Australian clearance firms on LinkedIn, 2026](#).*)

What we don't know yet

- ☐ Whether the 10 kg sheesham exemption counts per item or per shipment at your border, and what CITES decided on India's 2025 delisting request.
- ☐ When Australia's species and harvest-location notice will start.

6. Where Importers Slip

A loose species name next to a confident "kiln-dried". Buyers report mango tops cracking after delivery, and woodworkers replying put it down to wood finished while still too wet ([r/woodworking, 2024](#), forum voices). A supplier that's vague on species is often vague on drying too. Both belong in the PO as numbers and Latin names.

Treating a certificate as the file. An FSC, PEFC or VRIKSH legality certificate is good evidence in your risk assessment. It isn't the EUDR statement, the Lacey declaration or a CITES document, and no law accepts it as one.

Forgetting the ply. The plywood back or MDF shelf is the part most often missing from a declaration and the one most likely to come from a third country.

FAQ

Does EUDR apply to my small business? ^

From 30 June 2027 if you're micro or small, unless you were already an operator under the old EU Timber Regulation, in which case from 30 December 2026. Medium and large businesses start on 30 December 2026.

India is low risk under EUDR. Does that mean no due diligence? v

Do I need a Lacey Act declaration for a wooden toy? v

Do these rules cover the pallets under non-wood goods? v

7. Next Steps

Gibson had a whole legal team and still found out the hard way that the file has to match the goods at both ends of the voyage. You don't need a legal team. You need a bill of materials with Latin names, the timber invoices and, for sheesham, a supplier who holds VRIKSH, all collected before the deposit.

- Read the border page for your market: [EU](#), [US](#), [Australia](#), [UK](#), [New Zealand](#), [UAE](#).
- Related guides: [import duty](#), [sea freight routes](#), [certificate of origin](#).
- If you want someone on the ground to gather the wood evidence, [SourcingSync](#) can.