

Assessing the High Rate of Deforestation Caused by the Operations of Timber Industries in Ghana

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Abstract : Forests are very vital for human survival and our well-being. During the past years, the world has taken an increasingly significant role in the modification of the global environment. The high rate of deforestation in Ghana is of primary national concern as the forests provide many ecosystem services and functions that support the country's predominantly agrarian economy and foreign earnings. Ghana forest is currently major source of carbon sink that helps to mitigate climate change. Ghana forests, both the reserves and off-reserves, are under pressure of deforestation. The causes of deforestation are varied but can broadly be categorized into anthropogenic and natural factors. For the anthropogenic factors, increased wood fuel collection, clearing of forests for agriculture, illegal and poorly regulated timber extraction, social and environmental conflicts, increasing urbanization and industrialization are the primary known causes for the loss of forests and woodlands. Mineral exploitation in the forest areas is considered as one of the major causes of deforestation in Ghana. Mining activities especially mining of gold by both the licensed mining companies and illegal mining groups who are locally known as "gallantly mining" also cause damage to the nation's forest reserves. Several works have been conducted regarding the causes of the high rate of deforestation in Ghana, major attention has been placed on illegal logging and using forest lands for illegal farming and mining activities. Less emphasis has been placed on the timber production companies on their harvesting methods in the forests in Ghana and other activities that are carried out in the forest. The main objective of the work is to find out the harvesting methods and the activities of the timber production companies and their effects on the forests in Ghana. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were engaged in the research work. The study population comprised of 20 Timber industries (Sawmills) forest areas of Ghana. These companies were selected randomly. The cluster sampling technique was engaged in selecting the respondents. Both primary and secondary data were employed. In the study, it was observed that most of the timber production companies do not know the age, the weight, the distance covered from the harvesting to the loading site in the forest. It was also observed that old and heavy machines are used by timber production companies in their operations in the forest, which makes the soil compact prevents regeneration and enhances soil erosion. It was observed that timber production companies do not abide by the rules and regulations governing their operations in the forest. The high rate of corruption on the side of the officials of the Ghana forestry commission makes the officials relax and do not embark on proper monitoring on the operations of the timber production companies which makes the timber companies to cause more harm to the forest. In other to curb this situation the Ghana forestry commission with the ministry of lands and natural resources should monitor the activities of the timber production companies and sanction all the companies that make foul play in their activities in the forest. The commission should also pay more attention to the policy "fell one plant 10" to enhance regeneration in both reserves and off-reserves forest.

Keywords : companies, deforestation, forest, Ghana, timber

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