

Five Sarawak forest management units obtain certification

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KUCHING: Five forest management units (FMUs) in Sarawak obtained the Forest Management Certification (FMC) in 2018 as the state government was aggressively pushing for long-term timber licence holders to be certified by 2022.

Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Abang Johari Tun Openg said the Ravenscourt, Kapit, Linau, Bahau-Kahei and Ulu Trusan were the five FMUs which possessed the certification while the Anap Muput FMU maintained its certification for more than 10 years.

“We appreciate the efforts of the forest managers to obtain the certification for their respective concessions,” he said when officiating the Stakeholders Consultation on the Proposed Forestry Policies here yesterday. The consultation would review, among others, proposals to impose fees on the export of timber products, forest revenue and other potential forest-related income.

Abang Johari said growing local and global environmental concerns made the FMC a main requirement by global buyers who would be assured that the timber and timber-based products were produced from sustainably managed forests. “In the beginning of this journey (on sustainable forest management), shortcomings and challenges are inevitable, which we would need to address together,” he said.

Abang Johari believed that with strong cooperation and collaboration from all relevant ministries and agencies, timber industries, governmental organisations and local community, a balance between environment, economy and socio-economic development could be achieved through the certification effort. He said the total area of natural forests certified as of today stood at 561,703 hectares (ha), of which 347,862 ha were within the permanent forest estates while the remaining 213,841 ha were state land.

Abang Johari, who is also the State Minister of Urban Development and Natural Resources, said the certification initiative not only widen market access and acceptance for Sarawak’s timber products but also enhance the state’s image as a sustainable forest manager. “Enforcement will be intensified to ensure compliance and to curb illegal activities by beefing up the implementation of the Sarawak Timber Legality Verification System,” he said.

Abang Johari said timber from the state’s forest had contributed to the development of the timber-based industry in Sarawak as one of the major economic sectors, along with natural gas, petroleum and palm oil. He said the export value of timber and timber products in 2017 was about RM6.13 billion. “The main contributors were plywood and veneer, with an export value of RM3.4 billion, followed by logs (RM1.2 billion), sawn timber (RM802 million) and fibreboard (RM308 million). “These are mainly primary products contributing about RM5.7 billion or 93 per cent of the total export value for this sector,” he added. — Bernama