

## **The Impact of National Forest and Timber Policies on Rural Wood-based Manufacturing Sector**

**H. M. U. Iranjani<sup>1\*</sup>**

*<sup>1</sup>Postgraduate Institute of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya,  
Sri Lanka*

*\*umudalige@gmail.com*

The forest and timber policies of Sri Lanka attempt at striking a balance between forest conservation and economic development. The Forest Department and the State Timber Corporation collaborate to achieve this expectation where the former addresses the environmental objectives while the latter focuses on the economic and social objectives. However, the legal complexity of this administrative structure has resulted in a corrupt forest and timber management in Sri Lanka. Consequently, not only the forest but also the industries based on timber resources become collapsed. This research examines the negative impact of forest and timber policies of Sri Lanka on the rural wood-based furniture manufacturing sector. The investigation was conducted as a case study in which a sample of 17 carpenters from Maho forest division in Kurunegala district was studied using the snowball strategy. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were utilised as the method of data collection. The major findings of the research revealed that the complex administrative structure of the issuance of timber permits benefits the large-scale timber traders with political influence and governmental contacts as opposed to the small-scale carpenters. The uniformity in the timber species classification which does not cater to the regional variations has caused an immense scarcity of raw materials among rural carpenters. As a result, most carpenters rely on illegally felled timber to continue their livelihoods. The outcome of this mismanaged system is a degraded forest resource as well as a declined rural economy. This issue can be addressed with a sustainable forest management strategy which focuses on both the forest ecosystem and the livelihoods of rural people in Sri Lanka.

**Key words:** Forest and timber policies, Forest conservation, Wood-based manufacturing, Sustainable forest management, Forest ecosystem