



WWF *for a living planet*

WWF-UK

Panda House, Weyside Park
Godalming, Surrey GU7 1XR
Britdoc DX 58352 Godalming 2
t: +44 (0)1483 426444
f: +44 (0)1483 426409
www.wwf.org.uk

Press release

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Kenya carves its place in forests' history

An innovative WWF project promoting sustainable Kenyan woodcarvings from 'good woods' has achieved Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)¹ certification – a first for Kenya. This project encourages the use of farm-grown trees instead of threatened hardwoods for carving, thereby securing carvers' livelihoods and providing a new income source for farmers.

Woodcarvings made from neem rather than over-harvested hardwoods, such as ebony, can now carry the FSC logo, giving consumers peace of mind that the carvings have not contributed to the destruction of wildlife-rich Eastern African forests. This certification is unusual in that it certifies wood from small farms for the production of carvings by Kenyan craftsmen, instead of the most common FSC certifications of large-scale, commercial timber production to supply the timber trade and well-known DIY stores.

Dr Susanne Schmitt, International Plants Conservation Officer for WWF, said: "It is a huge achievement that 'good woods' have now been FSC certified. It is a win-win situation where the purchase of a certified carving helps to conserve threatened Eastern African forests whilst securing carvers' livelihoods and providing income to coastal farmers.

"Although it gives consumers an ethical choice when choosing a Kenyan carving, the challenge is now to develop a large enough market for certified carvings to generate sufficient returns for the farmers and carvers to continue producing wood and carvings in compliance with FSC standards."

In Kenya the woodcarving industry supports up to 60,000 carvers, generating an income of over US \$10 million per year. Yet, the economic success of the industry has undermined the resource on which it has been based – threatened hardwoods. The WWF project helped to introduce a new income source to around 1000 farmers supplying neem wood for carving, which has secured the livelihood of 3,000 carvers on the coast of Kenya. As a result, one of the threats to Eastern African Coastal Forest (EACF), which are of global conservation priority due to their richness in unique plant and animal species such as the African violet and the Sokoke Scops Owl, has been diminished.

Farmer Patience Kahonzi from Kenya explained how the project has benefited her: "For a long time neem grew like a weed on our land but we never attached any value to it. Then this project started, and we realized that neem could be sold to the woodcarvers for some income."

The project's success is largely due to an innovative partnership of WWF with Oxfam, Kenya Gatsby Trust, Kwetu and the National Museums of Kenya. The partnership has brought together the necessary skills in conservation, business development, marketing, quality assurance and capacity building.



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Editor's notes

WWF is now known simply by its initials and the panda logo.

¹ FSC certification is an independent, globally recognised verification of responsible forest management; supported by WWF. The FSC accredited certifier Soil Association – Woodmark carried out the certification assessment

For further information, please contact:

Kellie Rollings, t: 01483 412383, e: krollings@wwf.org.uk