



Japan’s regulations on timber and timber products imported from Vietnam

Japan represents one of the most significant markets for Vietnam’s timber industry. Key products exported by Vietnam to this market include wood chips, wood pellets, seating furniture, and more. The potential for market expansion remains substantial, particularly for wood pellets. Understanding and adhering to the requirements of the Japanese market is of paramount importance for Vietnamese export enterprises. This newsletter provides foundational insights into the Japanese market, encompassing the primary products Vietnam has exported to Japan in recent years, alongside an overview of the Japanese government’s regulations governing imported timber and timber products .

1. Japan’s timber and timber products market

Japan ranks third globally in forest cover, with a rate of 68.4%, trailing only Finland and Sweden (FAO, 2020). In 2023, Japan imported timber and timber products valued at \$17.95 billion¹, categorized as follows:

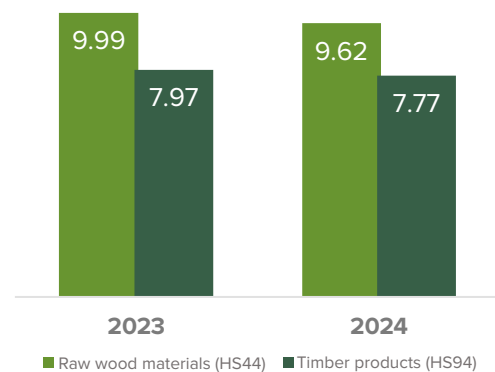
- Raw wood materials (HS 44): \$9.99 billion
- Timber products (HS 94): \$7.97 billion

In 2024, the import value of timber and timber products reached approximately \$17.39 billion, comprising²:

- Raw wood materials (HS 44): \$9.62 billion
- Timber products (HS 94): \$7.77 billion

Figure 1 illustrates the import value of timber into Japan from all markets during 2023–2024.

Figure 1. Import value of timber and timber products into Japan, 2023 – 2024 (billion USD)



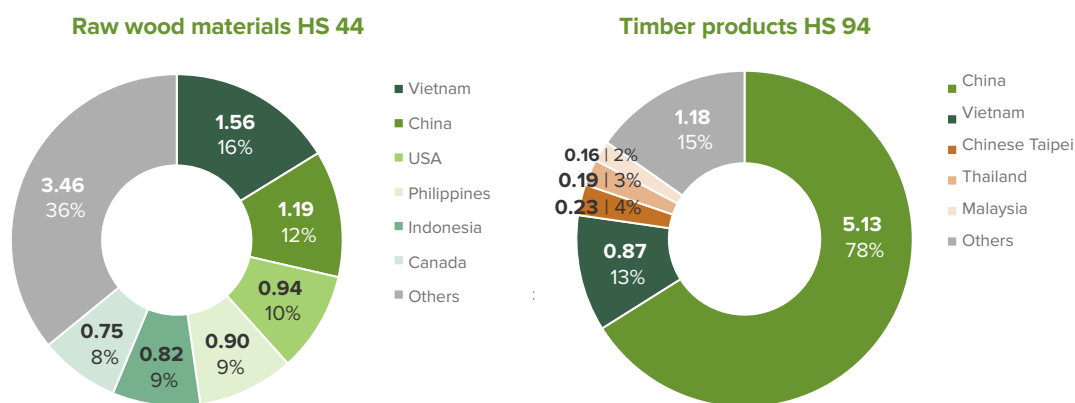
Source: Calculated by the International Trade Centre (ITC) based on statistics from the Japan Finance Ministry.

¹ Trade Performance HS : Imports of wood and articles of wood, wood charcoal (2023, in USD thousands) [\(link\)](#)

² Trade Map: Trade statistics for international business development [\(link\)](#)

In 2024, the leading suppliers of raw wood materials to Japan were: Vietnam (\$1.56 billion), China (\$1.19 billion), the United States (\$0.94 billion), the Philippines (\$0.9 billion), Indonesia (\$0.82 billion), and Canada (\$0.75 billion). For timber products in the same year, the top suppliers included: China (\$5.13 billion), Vietnam (\$0.87 billion), Chinese Taipei (\$0.23 billion), Thailand (\$0.19 billion), and Malaysia (\$0.16 billion). *Figure 2 depicts the markets supplying timber and timber products to Japan in 2024.*

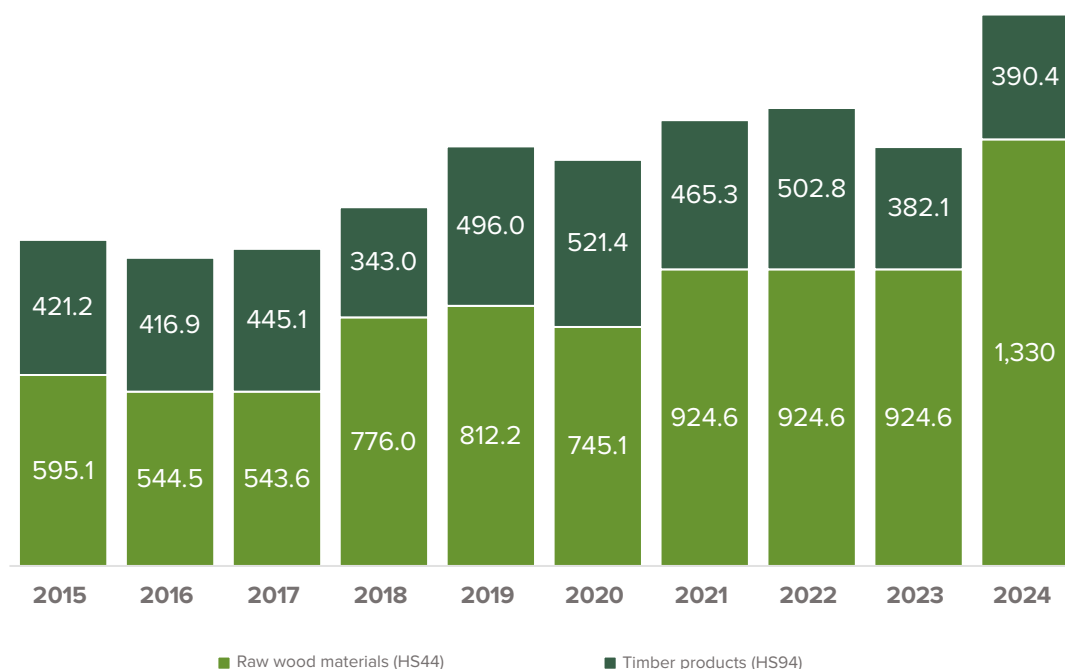
Figure 2. Markets supplying timber and timber products to Japan in 2024. (billion USD)



Source: Calculated by the International Trade Centre (ITC) based on statistics from the Japan

According to data compiled by the Vietnam Timber and Forest Product Association (Viforest) from Vietnam Customs, the value of timber and wood product imports from Vietnam to Japan between 2015 and 2024 exhibited rapid growth in 2024, surpassing \$1.72 billion, compared to relatively stable levels in prior years (see *Figure 3*).

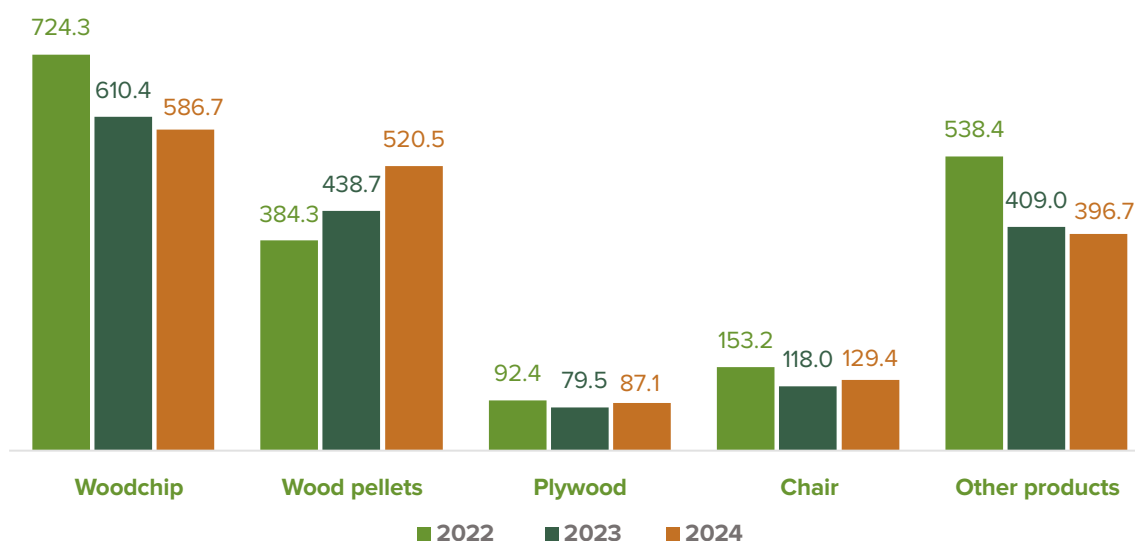
Figure 3. Export turnover of timber and timber products from Vietnam to Japan, 2015-2024 (million USD)



Source: Viforest, compiled from Vietnam Customs data

Export-import statistics for 2022–2024 indicate that wood pellets, plywood, laminated wood, and furniture constitute the highest-value exports, with wood pellets maintaining relatively consistent export values (*Figure 4 and Appendix 1*).

Figure 4. Export value of Vietnam's categorized products to Japan, 2022-2024 (million USD)



Source: Viforest, compiled from Vietnam Customs data

2. Key Japanese laws in the forestry sector

2.1. Act on Promotion of Use and Distribution of Legally-Harvested Timber and timber products (Clean Wood Act)

Enacted in 2016 and effective from May 2017, the Clean Wood Act seeks to promote the distribution and utilization of legally harvested wood, strengthen oversight of imported wood products, and underscore the importance of verifying the legality of wood sourced from supplying countries. The 2016 Clean Wood Act classifies businesses into two categories:

- Type 1: Importers, wood processing facilities, and manufacturers.
- Type 2: Retailers, distributors, and construction companies.

However, compliance with the Act's provisions is mandatory only for businesses seeking certification as "Registered Timber and timber products Businesses." As of 2020, merely 397 of Japan's 20,000 wood-related businesses had obtained this certification. Notably, the 2016 Act imposes no penalties on unregistered businesses or those engaged in trading illegally harvested wood (Momii & Saunders, 2020). Key provisions of the 2016 Clean Wood Act include:

- Encouraging all purchasers of timber and timber products to verify the legality of their acquisitions.
- Classifying wood-related businesses into Type 1 and Type 2.
- Requiring Type 1 businesses (e.g., importers) to independently verify the legality of harvesting and conduct self-assessments, beyond reliance on supplier assurances, following appropriate procedures.
- Introducing a voluntary registration system.
- Enabling the Japanese government to compile and disseminate information on production, trade, and legality frameworks of major wood-supplying countries via the "Clean Wood Navi" platform for importers and stakeholders. (Note: Clean Wood Navi does not provide self-assessment standards for businesses.)

In May 2023, the Clean Wood Act was amended, with enforcement scheduled for April 1, 2025. The amendments emphasize three core enhancements:

- **Increased Obligations for Type 1 Businesses:** These entities must gather information and evidence substantiating wood legality and bear accountability for both the wood and supporting documentation.
- **Enhanced Governmental Oversight:** Businesses are required to submit accountability reports to competent state agencies, which are tasked with ensuring the propriety of business evaluation processes.
- **Stricter Penalties:** Violations, such as misuse of certification or non-compliance with reporting obligations, incur fines up to \$2,800, while failure to fully meet due diligence requirements may result in revocation of operating licenses.

2.2. Basic Act on Forestry and Forests of 1964

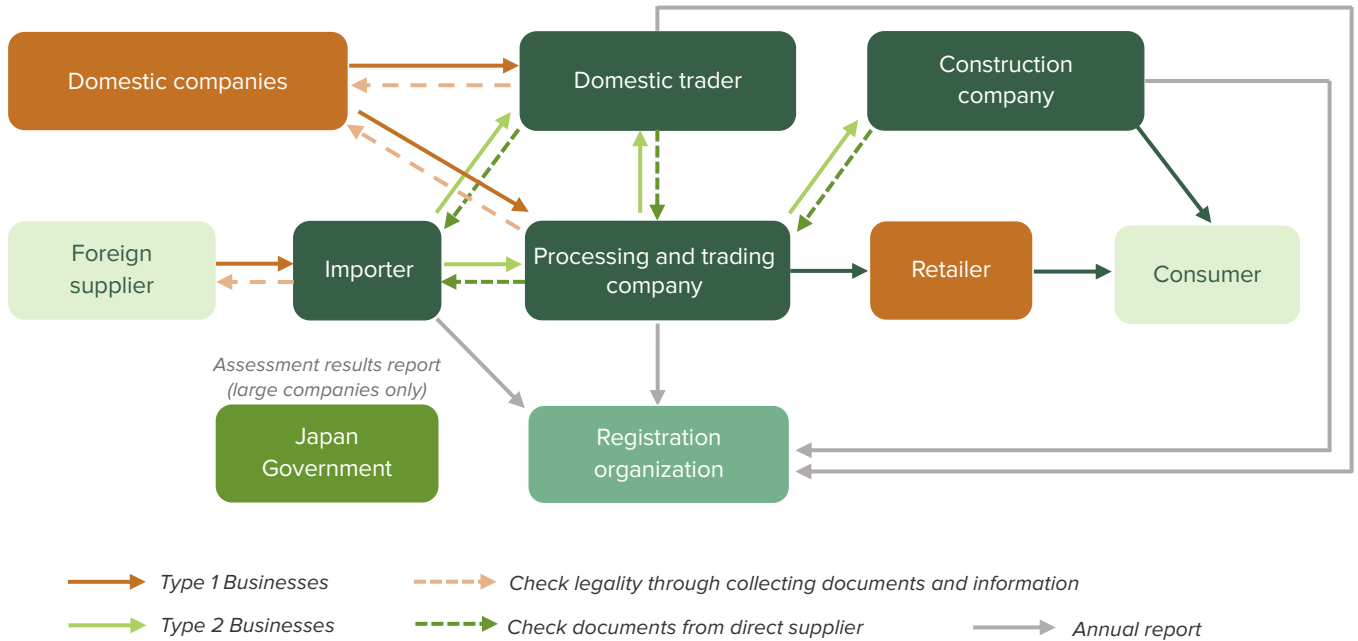
- This Act aims to establish forestry policies that enhance forest resources and promote national land conservation. It encompasses:
 - General provisions;
 - Basic forestry plans;
 - Policies to fulfill the multifunctional roles of forestry;
 - Policies for sustainable and robust forestry development;
 - Policies to ensure the supply and use of forest products;
 - Administrative agencies and related organizations;
 - The Forestry Policy Council.
- The Act mandates the formulation of comprehensive forestry plans to systematically implement policies, with the state undertaking measures such as systematic afforestation, forest road development, forest conservation, and technology dissemination. It also establishes the Forestry Policy Council and delineates its composition.

2.3. Forest Management Act

- This Act seeks to optimize forest management efficiency by consolidating business management rights, acquiring such rights from forest owners, and implementing measures like self-management or licensing private operators. It aims to foster sustainable forestry development and realize forests' diverse functions. Its provisions include:
 - General provisions;
 - Consolidation of management rights in municipalities;
 - Municipal forest management;
 - Licensing for private operators;
 - Disaster prevention directives;
 - Support measures for forestry operators;
 - Additional regulations and penalties.
- For forests under local government management, compliance with ordinances from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is required when issuing management licenses to private enterprises, alongside the establishment of allocation plans.
- Municipalities may also mandate forestry operators to report on management status and related matters for licensed forests..

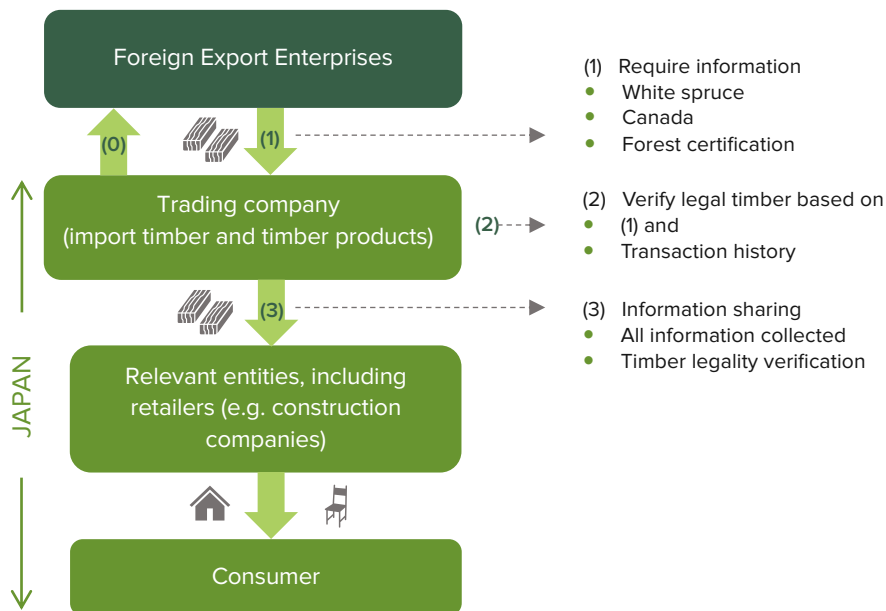
3. Standards and regulations for timber and timber products imported into Japan

Figure 5. Value chain and reporting requirement under Clean Wood Act 2023



Source: Samejima, 2023

Figure 6. A trading company importing timber from an exporter outside Japan



Source: Takahata, 2024

Obligations for Type 1 Businesses:

These entities must collect information and documentation to verify the legality of timber harvesting, ensuring compliance with anti-illegal logging regulations (see Box 1), and evaluate all procurement activities.

Box 1: Information required for imported wood

- Types of timber and timber products (e.g., logs, sawn timber, plywood);
- Tree species name;
- Country of planting and harvesting;
- Wood volume;
- Name of the wood owner and/or exporter;
- Documentation proving legal harvesting per the laws of the country of origin:
 - Government-issued licenses (e.g., export or logging permits);
 - Forest management and chain-of-custody certifications (e.g., FSC, PEFC).

Importers and related businesses must perform due diligence on legality and report findings to the Japanese government (see *Box 2*).

Box 2: Due Diligence process

Describes the measures a company implements in its business operations to mitigate risks associated with procuring illegally harvested timber and timber products:

1. Supply chain information collection
2. Risk assessment
3. Risk mitigation measures

If Step (2) confirms a low risk level, Step (3) is not required. If the risk cannot be mitigated in Step (3), the company should cease procurement of the product.

Key changes in the amended 2023 Clean Wood Act compared to the Clean Wood Act 2016:

- Governmental Oversight and Penalties: The government ensures assessments are conducted appropriately but does not validate their accuracy.
- Domestic logging companies must supply legal harvesting information to buyers
- The law also applies to retailers.

4. Recommendations

The amended 2023 Clean Wood Act takes effect on April 1, 2025, yet guidance for suppliers remains incomplete. Given Japan's importance as an export market for Vietnam's wood industry, proactive preparation by the Vietnamese government, associations, and enterprises is essential to meet Japanese regulatory and importer expectations.

Vietnam Government agency

- Engage directly with Japanese authorities overseeing forestry and legal wood to clarify legal requirements and guidelines for imported wood products;
- Disseminate Japan's legal requirements to timber associations and enterprises;
- Instruct local agencies to certify legally harvested wood per Vietnamese law for forest owners and businesses.

Timber Associations

- Facilitate forums for information exchange between Vietnamese exporters and Japanese wood associations/businesses to elucidate governmental and commercial requirements;
- Develop a compliance handbook for Japanese wood regulations to support domestic enterprises, particularly exporters.

Export Enterprises

- Proactively gather evidence of legal harvesting per Vietnamese law (*refer to Box 1*).
- Create supply chain diagrams and manage risks to minimize legality-related issues;
- Maintain regular communication with Japanese partner importers to stay updated on legal requirements.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Main Products Exported from Vietnam to Japan, 2020–2024 (USD)

Product	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Wood chips	402,092,879	500,154,133	724,312,112	610,435,811	586,737,161
Wood pellets	157,569,776	200,113,784	384,296,452	438,671,980	520,544,434
Seating furniture	129,546,529	124,553,619	153,202,559	118,048,054	129,436,281
Plywood	45,964,552	80,011,981	92,372,015	79,451,435	87,067,674
Other wooden furniture	107,297,023	94,862,723	109,606,409	73,580,587	82,080,903
Bedroom furniture	112,705,336	86,114,580	85,224,894	77,790,262	78,354,163
Kitchen furniture	64,493,845	66,039,796	64,537,838	51,935,821	47,770,625
Office furniture	84,735,958	70,187,115	63,556,172	43,675,851	31,546,463
Wooden parts	22,658,045	23,502,758	26,665,394	17,046,045	21,215,272
Other products	139,495,464	144,347,686	188,790,690	144,968,993	135,692,337
Total Export Value	1,266,559,407	1,389,888,175	1,892,564,535	1,655,604,839	1,720,445,313

Source: Viforest, compiled from Vietnam Customs data

Appendix 2: List of Japanese Laws and Decrees in the Forestry Sector³

Content	Original Date	Ngày của văn bản sửa đổi gần nhất
Basic Act on Forestry and Forests of 1964 (Law No. 161)	7/9/1964	7/16/2003
Forest Management Act (Law No. 35 of 2018)	6/1/2018	3/31/2021
Act on Promotion of Use and Distribution of Legally-Harvested Wood (Law No. 48)	5/20/2016	
Act on Promotion of Wood Use in Public Buildings (Law No. 36)	7/2/1905	
Act on Special Measures for Stable Wood Supply (Law No. 47)	6/18/1905	
Act on Special Measures for Forest Reduction (Law No. 32)	6/30/1905	
Act on Business Collaboration Between SMEs and Forestry (Law No. 38)	6/30/1905	
Act on Promoting Forestry Labor (Law No. 45 of 1996)	5/24/1996	3/31/2020
Forestry and Wood Industry Improvement Subsidy Act (Law No. 42)	5/29/1905	
National Forest Management Act (Law No. 246 of 1951)	5/4/1905	6/27/2014
Forest Pest Control Act (No. 53 of 1950)	3/31/1950	8/30/2011
Enforcement Ordinance No. 1 for the Clean Wood Act	5/1/2017	
Forest Pest Control Enforcement Ordinance (Cabinet Ordinance No. 87)	3/28/1997	6/21/1905
JAS Enforcement Ordinance (Cabinet Ordinance No. 291)	8/31/1951	7/12/1905
Forest Pest Control Enforcement Ordinance (No. 35 of 1950)	4/1/1950	8/1/2011
Wood Statistical Survey Regulations (Ordinance No. 124)	7/2/1905	
Guidelines for Verifying Legality and Sustainability of Wood Products	2/1/2006	

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Samejima, H. (2023). Update of Clean Wood Act of Japan (Amended in May 2023).

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With support from David and Lucile Packard Foundation



³ FAOLEX Database: Japan Forestry ([link](#))