

Malaysia licenses Hong Kong Agroforestry Group permitting timber export activities

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Hong Kong's Agroforestry Group has inked a agreement with Malaysian Timber Industry Board (MTIB) to obtain permit license for an export exercise at *Aquilaria* plantations in Johor, Malaysia. The permit allows Agroforestry Group to export timber directly to international buyers.

The MTIB visit was on the pretext essential prerequisite for the issuance of a CITES permit by license by MTIB. It is of vital importance as *Aquilaria* can only be legally traded with a permit from CITES.

Representatives from MTIB, a federal statutory body responsible for the development of the Malaysia timber industry, conducted an on-site physical inspection of all Agroforestry Groups *Aquilaria* plantations. This inspection reviewed the company's operations to ensure traceability of any harvested timber.

Mr. Paul Martin, MD of Agroforestry Group stated, "We take a scientific approach coupled with professional care to create a wood product that we hope the MTIB found both inspiring and appealing."

Regulation and licensing of *Aquilaria* plantations is essential as high demand for its precious agarwood resin has led to the near extinction of *Aquilaria* trees. The United Nations has placed these trees on its list of critically endangered species. As a result, only agarwood with a permit from CITES is allowed for international trade.

The dark fragrant agarwood resin found within the *Aquilaria* tree has become one of the rarest and most valuable commercial commodities in the world. Agarwood, which occurs naturally in less than 2% of *Aquilaria* trees in the wild has been sold for as much as \$50,000-100,000 per KG.

Agarwood is exceptionally valuable and is mainly used for the production of luxury perfumes, incense and medicine. In the last decade, demand has increased tremendously, and agarwood is now used in makeup, skin and hair care, diffusers, candles, and much more.