



Rosewood harvesting unsustainable

Hardwood trees should be left alone

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The commercial harvesting of rosewood and other hardwood species is unsustainable and should not be allowed in Namibia, says the executive director in the ministry of environment, Teofilus Nghitila.

“Our perspective as the ministry of environment is that we do not support commercial timber harvesting activities. Commercial timber harvesting should not be allowed in Namibia,” Nghitila told participants at a workshop on forest resource management this week. But he pointed out that the ministry of agriculture, water and forestry was responsible for providing guidance on the commercial harvesting of timber.

The commercial harvesting of rosewood could lead to the extinction of the species in Namibia, he said.

“Imagine if we clean out these forests; they will not be able to regenerate,” he said.

“Rosewood regeneration is so slow. There are values that you cannot quantify if rosewood is commercially harvested. It is better for it to be preserved for biodiversity.”

According to him, the local rosewood that had been commercially harvested was sold for a song.

“We were exporting them literally for free,” said Nghitila. He suggested that any rosewood already harvested, but not yet exported, should undergo local value-adding.

“Why don't we process them locally? We think that there are doable ways,” Nghitila said.

A presentation prepared by the Namibia University of Science and Technology's faculty of natural resources, stated that the time it takes for rosewood trees in Namibia to reach full maturity is unknown. The same study found that in areas where commercial harvesting had taken place, the regeneration of hardwoods like rosewood did not occur for more than 25 years.

The CEO of the Namibia Chamber of Environment, Dr Chris Brown, said Namibia was too marginal for rosewood to be commercially harvested.

“Namibia is too marginal for commercial harvesting of rosewood ... unless there is a verifiable assessment for harvest,” Brown said.

He, like Nghitila, suggested that rosewood already harvested but not exported should be processed locally. “The small off-take should be kept in Namibia.”

He also suggested that stronger laws be introduced to prohibit the commercial harvesting of timber.

According to the Nust study, about 30 000 cubic metres of timber - as many as 60 000 trees - have been harvested in recent years.



(<https://d3rp5jatm3eyn.cloudfront.net/asset/harvesting-unsustainable2019-07-120.jpg>)

PROTECT OUR TREES: Environmentalists attend a workshop on resource management in the chamber of the National Assembly. Photo: OZONE TLHAGE

OGONE TLHAGE