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International Wood Chip Trade: Past Developments and Future Trends with Special Emphasis on Japan

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Summary

Initial world trade in pulpwood had been confined to trade in pulp logs, which for the most part were regional flows such as between European and Scandinavian countries. However, beginning in the early 1960s a market began to develop for pulpwood, not in the round wood form but rather in the form of wood chips. Beginning in 1965, with the introduction of specialized chip carriers by the Japanese, the international market for wood chips began to increase substantially. During the period 1961-1965, before the advent of the specialized wood-chip carriers, world trade in wood chips amounted to only 523 thousand cubic meters (FAO 1984). However, in 1966, following the introduction of chip vessels, wood chip trade had increased to 1.8 million cubic meters and by 1970 the volume traded had reached 7.4 million cubic meters. By 1980 world imports of wood chips had increased to 19.2 million cubic meters and a record setting 1.1 billion U.S. dollars (CIF), (FAO f1984). since 1980 these figures have declined, but it is clear that the international wood chip trade plays a very important role for both importers and exporters of forest products.

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