
Vocabulary related to rattan materials and products

Vocabulaire relatif aux matériaux et produits en rotin

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Foreword

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This document is prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 296, Bamboo and rattan.

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Introduction

Rattan, a term derived from the Malay word for climbing palms, 'rotan', is a specialised group of scaly-fruited, spiny, climbing palms which belong to the family Palmae or Arecaceae^{[1][2][3][4]}. Rattans are monocotyledons with flexible stem and are generally found in tropical humid forest. The slender stem of the rattan is often winding like a rope and armed with thorns or bristle. It has a diameter of less than 10 cm and reaches a length of about 30 m after ten years of growth. In rare cases some species can grow up to 200 m long.

About 620 species of rattan occur in the tropical and subtropical rainforest ecosystems of Australia (Queensland), India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, Philippines, Laos, and Vietnam among others), the moist tropical forests of West and Central Africa (most especially Central Africa, Ghana, Cameroon, and Nigeria) and the Pacific (e.g., Fiji). However, South East Asian nations primarily the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia are the top producers of rattan products and raw materials. Though a few species of rattan have been cultivated in Indonesia and a few other countries, the greatest proportion of production originates from natural forests.

Rattan is harvested for its cane, a versatile renewable material that has been used for making various products such as furniture, baskets, mats, walking sticks, handbags and crafts. Rattan cultivation, processing and utilisation constitute a major topic of interest in many parts of the globe in view of its role in poverty alleviation, employment generation and foreign exchange earnings. According to UN comtrade 2013, imports of rattan products globally neared USD 745 million. Global demand for rattan products is strong and new designs for rattan furniture and basketry products continue to appeal to modern consumers. Indonesia remains the major rattan product exporter, but China and Vietnam are increasing their share of the global rattan trade despite being short of raw rattan, whilst the Philippines, Myanmar, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos have plentiful resources but export is only relatively limited quantities.

Currently, the global trade of rattan and its products is hampered by presence of a confusing terminology in the rattan sector. Rattan materials and products trade names are often developed by rattan merchants and bear little or no relation to botanical origin. They differ from country to country and even regions to regions and thus it is impossible to ensure any degree of standardization. Usually commercial names are derived from the locality the cane comes from.

This document aims to standardize rattan materials and products terminologies as to improve the trading activities. Standardized terminologies of rattan will also allow for the standardized grading practices that will further improve international trade of rattan materials and the products.

