Ghana, in negotiating the voluntary partnership agreement with the European Union, decided to include timber supply to the domestic market. Since 2007, considerable efforts have been made by Civil Society Organisations under different initiatives, in most cases in collaboration with the government. At some point, the country seemed very close to bringing an end to the supply of illegal timber to the domestic market (DM). Now the country is close to issuing the FLEGT license to cover the export trade in timber and wood products, and the expectation was that sooner than later, attention would be focused on the DM to bring finality to that aspect of the trade as well.

Recent developments however, suggest that the country is back-pedaling regarding sanitizing the DM: the DM policy developed in 2012 has still not been promulgated; the public procurement policy for wood products (an aspect of the broader domestic timber policy) which was teased out for cabinet consideration, could not be approved; ‘de-commissioned’ illegal chainsaw operators are now disenchanted, after strong sensitization and capacity building for their transformation to artisanal millers. In fact, some of them are reverting to illegal chainsaw milling.

This paper examines the proposals for restructuring the domestic timber market, the progress made, the status and factors that militate against the restructuring process. It is based on key informant interviews and field observations. The main finding is the need to rehash the proposed DM policy for urgent promulgation and holistic implementation. Specifically, the need to first ensure regular supply of legal timber to the DM and the putting in place of a framework for training and registering artisanal mills/millers, were highlighted. The paper ends with a strong recommendation of a multi-stakeholder process to develop a roadmap for regularizing the DM. The wider lessons for integrating DM into the FLEGT/VPA generally are discussed.