

**For Immediate Release**

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## **W.J. Cowee Pledges Sustainable Forestry Practices**

### *Company Launches 'Save the Forests' Awareness Campaign*

**Berlin, NY (September 2, 2008)** W.J. Cowee, LLC, one of the oldest companies in the professional floral industry, has launched a "Save The Forests" campaign to heighten awareness about the rapid destruction of the world's forests and its devastating effects upon the global environment.

As the world's largest manufacturer of wooden floral picks and plant stakes, W.J. Cowee is dedicated to spreading the word within the floral industry that wooden products imported from China may be manufactured using illegally harvested timber that is procured without regard to sustainable, sound and legal forestry practices.

The consequences of these conditions are profound. Research indicates that Asian and Pacific nations, including Russia, supply China with approximately 70 percent of its timber resource needs. Approximately half of those countries will lose more than 70 percent of their forests to satisfy China's enormous demand for timber resources to make wooden products destined for export markets. It is believed that if current logging practices continue, the Siberian forests north of the Chinese border will disappear within two decades, while Indonesian forests may perish within 10 years.

Brian E. Suslak, President and CEO of W.J. Cowee, has pledged his company to take an active role to educate florists, wholesalers and retailers about the impact that illegal timber harvesting is having upon the earth's environment, including massive soil erosion, global changes to the earth's atmosphere, and other critical problems of enormous magnitude.

To commence the program, W J Cowee has launched a "Save the Forests" awareness initiative throughout the floral industry. As part of the program, the company will provide information packets to floral wholesalers, students in floral design schools and trade association functions, as well as trumpet the message through a "Save the Forests" promotional campaign during the fall 2008 season. Additionally, the company has adopted a *W.J. Cowee Sustainability Pledge* that requires all of its log suppliers, as a condition to doing business with the company, to agree in writing to practice legal, sustainable forestry practices, follow proper environmental conduct, protect and respect the natural habitat of the wildlife on the logged sites, and adhere to worker safety programs.

Suslak's viewpoint will be published in the September 2008 issue of *Floral Management*, the publication of the Society of American Florists. He also plans to participate as a panelist on the topic of sustainability at the SAF annual convention in Palm Beach. "Once I became aware of the scope and devastating impact of the destruction of the world's forests, I wanted our nation's florists to fully understand where their wood floral picks come from, and educate the professional floral community about the consequences of illegal timber harvesting," said Suslak. "Our goal is to have the floral industry, be they professional florists, wholesalers or retailers, become aware of the consequences of illegal timber harvesting and its effect on our ecosystems. I feel confident that once the facts are made known, people will insist that all wood floral picks used in the industry be certified sustainable," said Suslak. "Hopefully, this message will carry over to other industries, both here and abroad, so that illegal timber harvesting and its consequences upon our environment will end before it is too late."

Suslak will conduct his outreach program by asking for the assistance of leading floral industry groups to help spread the message, as well as the assistance of conservation-minded organizations and environmental action groups.

#### **ABOUT W.J. COWEE, LLC**

W.J. Cowee, LLC is the nation's leading manufacturer of wooden floral picks, plant stakes and other products for the professional floral industry. Located in Berlin, New York, the manufacturing company has been in continuous operation for more than a century. W.J. Cowee uses North American hardwoods in the manufacture of its products, and has been recognized for its commitment to sustainable forestry, environmental responsibility and community service. The company is a proud member of WFFSA, AIFD, SAF and other industry trade associations. The company's website can be accessed at <http://www.wjcowee.com>.

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