

Commodity Report: Bamboo (2026)

Bamboo is reportedly produced with forced labor (FL) and/or child labor (CL) in the following countries:¹

- Burma (FL, CL)

Top ten countries that export bamboo worldwide:²

- | | |
|----------------|-------------|
| 1. China | 6. Burma |
| 2. Netherlands | 7. Spain |
| 3. Vietnam | 8. Poland |
| 4. Thailand | 9. Germany |
| 5. Portugal | 10. Belgium |

Where is bamboo reportedly produced with human trafficking, including forced labor, and/or child labor?

According to the U.S. Department of Labor's *2024 List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor* and the U.S. Department of State's *2025 Trafficking in Persons Report*, bamboo is produced with forced labor and child labor in Burma.³

Burma is listed as a Tier 3 country in the U.S. Department of State's *2025 Trafficking in Persons Report*.⁴

¹ This list is based solely on findings from the [U.S. Department of State's 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report](#) and the [U.S. Department of Labor's 2024 List of Goods Produced by Child Labor and Forced Labor](#).

² International Trade Center. Trade Map. [\(ITC Calculations based on UNCOMTRADE Statistics\)](#). **Note:** The country list is ordered by value exported.

³ U.S. Department of Labor. [2024 List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor. 2024](#). U.S. Department of State. [2025 Trafficking in Persons Report. 2025](#).

⁴ [For the 2025 Trafficking in Person Report's tier ranking methodology, see "A Guide to the Tiers."](#)

What does human trafficking, including forced labor, and/or child labor in bamboo production look like?

This section includes countries with publicly available research and reporting on forced labor and child labor, in addition to the countries listed in the above-mentioned government reports.

Since 2012, the practice of forced labor in bamboo harvesting has persisted in **Burma's** Rakhine State, largely due to violence perpetrated by the Arakan Army, a paramilitary group that controls much of southwestern Burma. According to a 2025 study, the Arakan Army targets ethnic minorities such as Rohingya and Hindus and forces them into armed service or labor, including bamboo harvesting, "under the threat of beatings, detention, and execution."⁵ One person described being forced to harvest bamboo for 21 days without pay and with very little food. The Arakan Army reportedly sells farmed bamboo and uses the profits to purchase weapons.⁶ The same farmed bamboo is also used to construct simple bamboo enclosures and rudimentary shelters, which are used to hold the paramilitary group's detainees.⁷ Children are also subjected to forced labor in bamboo production.⁸ Approximately 58 percent of all child labor in Burma occurs in the agriculture sector.⁹

Bamboo Production and Supply Chain:

Bamboo is a quick-growing, woody member of the grass family. With more than 1,400 species, bamboo is found in tropical and subtropical-to-mild temperate regions. The largest number of species and heaviest concentration can be found in East and Southeast Asia and on islands in the Indian and Pacific oceans.¹⁰

Bamboo's woody, ringed stems are known as culms and are typically hollow between the rings. Culms grow in branching clusters from a thick underground stem called a rhizome. Culms can grow anywhere from four inches to 130 feet tall. Young culms grow narrow leaves directly from stem rings while mature

⁵ Human Rights Watch. ["Myanmar: Arakan Army Oppresses Rohingya Muslims." 28 July 2025.](#)

⁶ Fortify Rights. ["Myanmar: Arakan Army Subjecting Ethnic Minorities to Forced Labor." 22 October 2025.](#)

⁷ Fortify Rights. ["Myanmar: Arakan Army Subjecting Ethnic Minorities to Forced Labor." 22 October 2025.](#)

⁸ [Child Labor in Burma: Findings from the U.S. Department of Labor.](#) 2024.

⁹ [Child Labor in Myanmar. Ballard Brief.](#) 2022.

¹⁰ Encyclopedia Britannica. ["Bamboo."](#)

culms sprout horizontal leaf-bearing branches.¹¹ After four to five years, when the color of the bamboo is no longer clear and shiny green and the white bands have disappeared, bamboo stems are ready for harvest. The ideal time for harvest is before sunrise, between 12 a.m. and 6 a.m., as this is when most of the starch is still in the roots and the bamboo will be less attractive to insects and will dry faster. To harvest, the culms must be cut just above the first or second node at the base.¹² After cutting down the bamboo, it must be heat-treated and cured to protect against mold and insects. The stems are then split lengthwise into strips, and the outer bark is removed.¹³ Bamboo can then be cut, bent, or straightened through heating and clamping to create special shapes or effects. By nature, the strips of bamboo are a light-yellow color, but they can be steamed to create a deeper caramel color.¹⁴

When making bamboo fabric, bamboo is cut into strips and steamed into pulp. The pulp is then soaked in chemicals to extract cellulose and run through a filter to produce fiber. The fiber is soaked again before it is spun into thread and woven into fabric.¹⁵

Once established, bamboo plantations can harvest culms annually for the life of the plant, which is typically around 30 years.¹⁶ Additionally, bamboo does not require replanting as it sprouts via rhizomes, and the act of harvesting bamboo stimulates the growth of new shoots. The rapid renewal of bamboo and its efficiency at removing carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere makes it a more sustainable and environmentally friendly option compared to hardwood trees.¹⁷

¹¹ Encyclopedia Britannica. ["Bamboo."](#)

¹² Schroder, Stephane. ["When and How to Harvest Bamboo." *Guadua Bamboo*.](#)

¹³ Bowles, Sara. ["How to Harvest Bamboo?" *Farm & Animals*. 15 Aug 2021.](#)

¹⁴ MOSO Mastering Bamboo. ["How Bamboo Products are Made."](#)

¹⁵ Amjad, Akhtarul Islam. ["Bamboo fibre: A sustainable solution for textile manufacturing." *Advances in Bamboo Science*, Vol. 7, May 2024.](#)

¹⁶ Bowles, Sara. ["How to Harvest Bamboo?" *Farm & Animals*. 15 Aug 2021.](#)

¹⁷ Ahmad, Zishan, et al. ["Bamboo for the Future: From Traditional Use to Industry 5.0 Applications." *Plants*. 29 September 2025.](#)

How consumers are linked to human trafficking, including forced labor, and/or child labor in bamboo production:

Top ten countries that import bamboo:¹⁸

- | | |
|------------------|------------|
| 1. India | 6. Italy |
| 2. Netherlands | 7. Poland |
| 3. United States | 8. Germany |
| 4. Spain | 9. France |
| 5. Portugal | 10. China |

Bamboo is consumed by humans and animals and has a wide variety of material uses. The seeds of some bamboo species can be eaten as grain, young shoots can be eaten as vegetables, raw bamboo leaves can be used as fodder for livestock, and pulped fibers of some species are often used to make paper. The jointed stems of bamboo can be used as planks for houses, rafts, and scaffoldings. The stems can also be split to make buckets, pipes, furniture, flooring, walking sticks, fishing poles, garden stakes, and other tools. Bamboo is also used ornamentally in landscaping¹⁹ and as a renewable, sustainable material to make furniture, biofuel, fabrics, cloth, and charcoal.²⁰

¹⁸ International Trade Center. Trade Map. ([ITC Calculations based on UNCOMTRADE Statistics](#)). **Note:** The country list is ordered by value imported.

¹⁹ Encyclopedia Britannica. "[Bamboo.](#)"

²⁰ Emamverdian, Abolghassem, Yulong Ding, Fatemeh Ranaei, and Zishan Ahmad. "[Application of Bamboo Plants in Nine Aspects.](#)" *The Scientific World Journal*. 30 September 2020.

Examples of what governments, corporations, and others are doing:

The International Bamboo and Rattan Organization

The International Bamboo and Rattan Organization (INBAR) is an intergovernmental development organization based in China with 48 member states. According to its website, INBAR is dedicated to promoting environmentally sustainable development using bamboo and rattan with a mission to “improve the wellbeing of producers and users of bamboo and rattan.” INBAR works to do this by consolidating, coordinating, and supporting strategic and adaptive research and development. Though the primary focus is on environmental sustainability, INBAR states that it also supports programming aimed at promoting livelihoods for rural communities and producers.²¹ INBAR has two ongoing initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region: one focused on enterprise development in Northeast India and the other focused on measuring carbon sequestration in bamboo forests in China.²² In 2022, INBAR concluded a project with the International Climate Initiative aimed at fostering private sector-community partnerships for forest landscape restoration in Asia, which culminated with a national policy brief showcasing how bamboo can benefit indigenous and forest-adjacent communities.²³

BambooBoost Initiative

The BambooBoost Initiative was launched in 2024, at the 29th United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties summit in Baku, Azerbaijan. While still in its implementation phase, it describes this collaboration between INBAR and the UNFCCC as working specifically to leverage bamboo as a resource in accelerating climate action, enhancing biodiversity conservation, and strengthening ecosystem and community resilience. The partnership also aims to equip countries with tools and knowledge networks to integrate bamboo into broader national climate and development strategy, as well as foster more inclusive business models that benefit local communities.²⁴

²¹ INBAR Official. [“Sustainable development using bamboo and rattan since 1997.”](#) 25 March 2026.

²² INBAR. [“Inbar Projects.”](#) 2026.

²³ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. [“Members' Voices: International Network for Bamboo and Rattan.”](#) 11 February 2023.

²⁴ UNFCCC. [“BambooBoost Initiative: Empowering climate ambition through bamboo innovation, ecosystem restoration, and sustainable development.”](#)

Where can I learn more?

- [Read Human Rights Watch's report on oppression of Rohingya in Myanmar.](#)
- [Read an in-depth report from Grand View Research on the projected expansion of the bamboo market.](#)