

The government is currently revising a 2005 presidential instruction on illegal logging.

The draft expanded the definition of violations including illegal mining and illicit forest encroachment.

“They are the main causes of forest losses and the players are easy to detect because most are large companies,” Hadi Daryanto, director general of production forest development at Forestry Ministry told The Jakarta Post recently.

He said the regulation revision also aimed to fulfill pledges made in the carbon trade deal between Indonesia and Norway.

Forestry Minister Zulkifli Hasan said that some 2 million hectares of forest land had been illegally converted into oil palm plantations, mostly in Kalimantan and Sumatra.

The ministry said it found around 800 mining and palm oil companies operating without legal permits.

The new presidential instruction is expected to be implemented early next year, in line with the carbon deal preparation phase.

The government in 2011 plans to stop issuing new permits on activities in natural forests and peat lands to help slow rates of deforestation and degradation, which currently stand at more than 1 million hectares per year.

The US\$1-billion Indonesia-Norway deal stipulates Indonesia’s obligation to enforce existing laws against illegal logging, timber trading and other forest-related crimes and set up a special unit to tackle the problem.

Hadi said the government aimed to curb larger companies rather than local residents, who sometimes enter forested areas to run small-scale operations like rice farms or small oil palm plantations.

The government has long been under pressure to enforce laws on rampant illegal logging and the unlawful expansion of mining and oil plantations in forests.

Minister Hasan took an unscheduled visit to Kalimantan and Sumatra to inspect forest losses and said he found a number of mining companies operating in forests illegally without licenses on hand.

The director general of forest protection and conservation at the Forestry Ministry, Darori, earlier said the revision also meant to strengthen coordination between sectors to make combating illegal business more effective.