

Print and Paper The Facts

Forest Certification Systems are Effective Tools to Demonstrate Sustainable Forestry

While a number of uniquely different forest certification systems are used around the world they: 1- have much in common; 2- share many basic objectives; 3- provide an additional measure of commitment to sustainable forestry; and, 4- are effective tools for supporting a responsible marketplace.

The following facts from a variety of sources illustrate these points.

What is Forest Certification?

- “Certification is a market-based, non-regulatory forest conservation tool designed to recognize and promote environmentally-responsible forestry and sustainability of forest resources. The certification process involves an evaluation of management planning and forestry practices by a third-party according to an agreed-upon set of standards. Certification standards address social and economic welfare as well as environmental protection.”¹

What is Chain-of-Custody (COC)?

- A chain of custody relies on a control system to track and handle wood and wood based products throughout a supply chain including transportation, receipt, production, sale, resale and declaration.²
- The COC process can be used to show that wood as a whole is more environmentally friendly than certain alternatives by demonstrating that the entire process is monitored, verifiable, and transparent.”³

About Forest Certification Systems

- There are dozens of forest certification programs around the world. Two programs – the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) -account for the vast majority of certified forests and chain-of-custody certificates. These two programs operate around the world.
- Other forest certification programs operate at a national or regional level. An important mission of PEFC is to evaluate and endorse national and regional programs, such as the Canadian Standards Association (CSA); the American Tree Farm System (ATFS); and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) that serves the United States and Canada.
- The PEFC program has recognized about 263 million hectares (650 million acres) managed in compliance with their internationally accepted Sustainability Benchmarks. Two-thirds of all certified forests globally are certified to PEFC standards. Approximately 16,000 companies and organizations have

achieved PEFC chain-of-custody certification. PEFC has 39 national members and 36 endorsed national certification systems around the world.⁴

- The FSC program has recognized about 182 million hectares (450 million acres) as meeting FSC standards, including over 1,300 forest management areas. Approximately 29,000 FSC chain-of-custody certificates have been issued. The FSC program has issued certificates in 81 countries.⁵



Global Certification Status

- The global area of certified forests is nearly 11% of the world’s total forest area. It is estimated that about 30% of total global roundwood production originates from certified forest areas. Nearly 90% of the globally certified area is located in the northern hemisphere.⁶
- Those regions most likely to be the focus of increasing harvest pressures (Southeast Asia, Russia and Eastern Europe, and the southern hemisphere) currently have only minuscule areas of certified forests, and the bulk of these [certified lands] are plantations.⁷

Environmental Campaigns

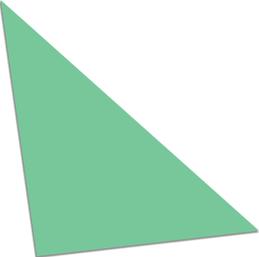
- “Organizations that are openly hostile to industry and often ignorant of basic business practices demand payoffs from companies who usually fork over their “dues” in fear of being the target of highly public smear campaigns. It’s greenmail—blackmail at the hands of so-called green campaigners. That’s why it’s so important that there are choices when it comes to

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eco-labels, particularly in the forestry management area.”⁸

- The following “survival tips” were outlined by Elm⁹ for product and retail brand-owners who are trying to manage misinformation campaigns related to forest certification:
 - Understand that you are not the target, it’s your visible brand which is being used to promote an agenda.
 - Understand that “environmental” campaign groups are not organizations with any scientific standing.
 - Use your “Ethical Code of Business Conduct” as a touchstone for identifying legitimate stakeholders.
 - If you have not already done so, begin your sustainability journey.
 - Understand that done right, business sustainability is a gateway to becoming an even better company (more profitable, less risk, etc...)
- “Policies regarding the procurement of timber, use of building codes and what businesses can sell to their customers should be informed by facts and science, not scare tactics ...With a majority of forests lacking certification, we need common-sense incentives and more certification options to achieve sustainable forestry management goals. Consumers and the general public deserve much better than the disinformation campaigns that have shadowed this debate.”¹⁰

Differences and Variability

- “To a certain extent, their very origins forced these two programs (FSC and SFI) to start at opposite ends of the spectrum. In defining the ideal and being international in scope, it was important that FSC take into consideration the worst case scenario and develop extensive control mechanisms that addressed the need for strong monitoring and enforcement. To accomplish this level of quality assurance FSC felt it was necessary to build most of the systems, processes, and procedures from scratch. The SFI, on the other hand, exclusively represented U.S. industrial forestland, which is some of the best-managed forestland in the world. SFI’s originators sought to incorporate as much of the existing regulatory requirements, business systems, processes and procedures into the process as possible, viewing third-party oversight as unnecessary. For both, the goal was to increase the opportunity for the

marketplace to support, and fund, good forestry practices.”¹¹

- “The two schemes [SFI and FSC] have different roots and practices but converging philosophies.”¹²
- “Independent observers see a convergence of standards as pressure for transparency on both groups has grown. Canada’s EcoLogo and TerraChoice, part of Underwriters Laboratories Global Network, each rate SFI and FSC identically.”¹³
- “Whereas the original impetus to establish the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) was concern about tropical forest management, this was not the motivation for the establishment of SFI, CSA, PEFC or American Tree Farm System certification. These programs were established to support and promote locally produced timber in their constituent countries. Their success should not be judged on whether they succeed in promoting sustainable management in the tropics - that was not their objective.”¹⁴
- “A great deal of careful work has been done comparing the strengths and weaknesses of the FSC and SFI forest management standard. The conclusion? They really aren’t all that different...the inescapable truth is that the on-the-ground results aren’t worth arguing about.”¹⁵

Competition Benefits All Standards

- “No certification program can credibly claim to be ‘best’, and no certification program that promotes itself as the only certification option can maintain credibility. Forest ecosystems are complex and a simplistic ‘one size fits all’ approach to certification cannot address all sustainability needs.”¹⁶
- “A win, win, win for consumers, the environment, and the economy is to promote competition among all credible certification programs.”¹⁷
- To support the diversity of effective approaches to sustainable forestry, public and private organizations – including Time Inc., JC Penney, National Geographic, Ducks Unlimited-Canada, and many others, have adopted policies that are inclusive of multiple certification systems. Examples of these policies are available at: http://www.twosidesna.org/includes/files/upload/files/Responsible_Paper_Proc_Ex-July-31-2015.pdf

¹ [Pinchot Institute for Conservation](#)

² [International Standardization Organization](#)

³ [Dovetail Partners, Inc. 2005](#)

⁴ [Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification, 2015](#)

⁵ [Forest Stewardship Council, 2015](#)

⁶ [UNECE/FAO, 2013-2014](#)

⁷ [Dovetail Partners, Inc. 2004](#)

⁸ [Forbes, 2013](#)

⁹ [Elm, Tyler. 2015](#)

¹⁰ [Forbes, 2013](#)

¹¹ [Dovetail Partners, Inc. 2004](#)

¹² [Forbes, 2013](#)

¹³ [Forbes, 2013](#)

¹⁴ [Dovetail Partners, Inc. 2007](#)

¹⁵ [Dan Simonds, 2013 \(Senior SFI and FSC auditor, Mixedwood Consulting\)](#)

¹⁶ [National Association of State Foresters, 2008](#)

¹⁷ [The American Consumer Institute Center for Citizen Research, 2013](#)

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