



Background

The concept of forest certification was spawned by the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) where a number of Forest Principles aimed at halting the deforestation of tropical rainforests were agreed. This was the first global attempt to define (by awarding equal status to environmental, social and economic criteria) and to achieve sustainable forest management.

Environmental groups were very active at the conference and afterwards they championed forest certification as a means of counteracting the plethora of unsubstantiated environmental claims that had begun to appear on timber based products. They argued that self praise was no recommendation and that independent third party audits were the only way to provide assurance of well managed forest practices. Chain-of-Custody certification was then added. This tracks the end product back through its production chain to the forest source and enables verified on-product claims to be made. Environmental groups focused their campaigns on retailers rather than the end consumer and they were rewarded for their efforts by the establishment of the UK based 1995 Group. This buyers group made a public commitment that by 1995 its members would only purchase timber products from certified forests. The 1995 target proved to be over-ambitious and, as the deadline approached, the Group re-launched itself as the 1995+ Group. The UK has the 6th largest paper market in the world, but it imports 65% of its paper requirements from a number of different countries. The 1995+ Group was therefore able to exert considerable global market pressure and this model has subsequently been adopted in a number of other countries.

Initially the paper industry took a negative stance towards certification believing that the complexity of the papermaking chain would make product tracking impossible and prohibitively costly. But over time it realised that customers and consumers did want, and were entitled, to know the provenance

of the products they were buying and for several years now the UK paper industry has used forest certification to provide independent validation of its commitment to use responsibly sourced raw material.

There are two international forestry certification schemes, FSC and PEFC.

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

(www.fsc.org)



FSC is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation (NGO). It was founded in 1993 with the aim of establishing a single global forest certification

body. It had the support of the 1995+ Group, a number of international environmental organisations (most particularly WWF) and social non-governmental organisations. Following the principles established at Rio, FSC is controlled by three equally weighted chambers: economic, social and environmental.

FSC does not certify forests; its role is to evaluate, accredit auditors and monitor its overriding international principles and criteria. National standards are developed by FSC working groups which include representatives from all the relevant stakeholder groups.

Nearly 116 million hectares of forest in 82 countries have now been certified by FSC accredited auditors and nearly 14,000 Chain-of-Custody certificates have been issued across 96 countries.

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FSC has developed a range of on-product logos for products with Chain of Custody certification.

It has also introduced a Controlled Wood Standard that enables companies that mix certified and non-certified wood to be sure that the non certified element comes from acceptable sources.



Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC)

(www.pefc.org)

PEFC is a forest industry initiative that was launched in June 1999 and has now become the largest forest certification umbrella organisation. Its membership comprises 35 individual certification schemes, 24 of which have been endorsed. PEFC is primarily supported by owners of small forests who collectively supply a substantial amount of timber to the paper industry.

PEFC facilitates the mutual recognition of national forest certification initiatives that deliver a similar level of assurance. It enables countries, or regions, to develop schemes that cater for their own particular forest types, conditions and ownership structures. The PEFC model is based on independent third party auditing and regional certification. All member countries and their stakeholders can vote on whether, or not, to mutually recognise applicant schemes. Certification schemes that seek to be recognised by the PEFC council and use the logo must fulfil all PEFC's requirements.

Over 200 million hectares have been certified and more than 5,500 chain of custody certificates have been issued.

Most national certification schemes are derivatives of either the FSC or PEFC. The following are the three major bespoke exceptions:

I UK Woodlands Assurance Scheme – UKWAS

(www.ukwas.org.uk)

UKWAS is a certification standard, not a certification scheme, and it can be used to certify to either FSC or PEFC criteria. It was launched in 1999 after a consensus driven process that involved forestry, environmental and social, as well as FSC and PEFC, representation.

The Standard was revised in 2006 and it has played a key role in improving forestry management practices

in the UK. It is currently undergoing a second review and the 3rd edition of the Standard will be available in November 2011.

Nearly 50% of all UK woodland has been certified to the UKWAS Standard.

II Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) – USA

(www.sfiprogram.org)

SFI was adopted by the American Forest and Paper Association (AF&PA) in 1994 and launched in 1995. Participation in the programme became a condition of AF&PA membership from 1st January 1996. A number of members were subsequently asked to leave the association because they were unable to meet the SFI standard.

SFI became a fully independent not-for-profit organisation on 1 January 2007. It is governed by an equally weighted board of directors representing social, environmental and economic interests. The SFI programme involves a number of elements including forest principles, responsible practices and measurement. Participants in the programme must also be able to demonstrate that any uncertified timber comes from known and legal sources. SFI has a variety of labels which conform the ISO's 14020 nine principles for environmental labelling for the retailers, printers, publishers, merchants and others that have Chain-of-Custody certification.

By the end of 2008, 65 million hectares of forest in America and Canada had been certified under the SFI standard and 407 Chain-of-Custody certificates had been issued.

SFI is a PEFC member.

III Canada's National Standard on Sustainable Forest Management CAN/CSA – Z809

(www.csa-international.org)

Because Canada's forests are publicly owned this standard underwent a lengthy multi-stakeholder consultation process before it was published in 1996. A similar process was undertaken when it was updated in 2002.

The standard was developed in accordance with internationally recognised and accredited standards development procedures and is based on the Helsinki and Montreal processes. It also incorporates the

Canadian sustainable forest management criteria developed by the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers. Products that have met Chain-of-Custody criteria can carry one of 3 CSA SFM (Sustainable Forest Management) marks.

By the end of June 2007, 78 million hectares (approximately 60%) of Canadian forests had been certified against the standard.

The CSA Sustainable Forest Management Program is a PEFC member.

Spreading the Message

Forest certification is now being used by the UK Government as part of its timber procurement policy and Government departments can only buy timber related products that have been independently verified as coming from legal and sustainable sources. The process for ensuring that the government's policy is met was developed, and is monitored, by the Central Point of Expertise on Timber Procurement (CPET: www.proforest.net/cpet). Five forest certification schemes have been audited. Initially only two schemes were endorsed as meeting the Government's criteria for sustainability as well as legality; CSA and FSC.

In August 2005 it was announced that two more certification schemes, PEFC and SFI had adopted new standards and would be added to the list of endorsed schemes.

This UK development was important and was warmly welcomed by the paper industry because it operates in a global market where it needs to be able to meet the demands of a plethora of retailers and paper specifiers. There has been ongoing competition for supremacy between FSC and PEFC which shows no signs of abating, and which many believe has been a distraction from the original objective of protecting vulnerable forests. The reality is that neither FSC nor PEFC has been able to harness the support of all the major stakeholder groups and, as long as this is the case, papermakers and buyers will need to be certified under more than one scheme if the demand for certified products is to be met.

Governments in Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Germany now have timber procurement policies in place and others are being developed in Italy, Spain, Sweden and Finland. Forest certification is recognised as having a key role but countries have recognised different certification schemes and

introduced different criteria. It is important both for clarity, and indeed cost, that criteria, especially throughout Europe are harmonised and this has now been recognised.

Eight per cent of the world's forests have now been certified, 90% of which are located in temperate forests in the northern hemisphere. Progress in the areas over which there is most concern has been slow but there are positive developments, for example the Tropical Forest Trust (TFT - www.tropicalforesttrust.com) a UK registered charity was founded in 1999 (it is now known as The Forest Trust) to conserve threatened tropical forests through sustainable management. Its member companies source wood from TFT forest projects and forests certified by FSC. The TFT label is recognised by a number of major retailers and is increasingly being displayed on DIY timber goods. FSC too is making inroads into tropical and subtropical areas and in April 2009 PEFC approved the scheme in Gabon which houses some of Africa's most diverse rainforests.

Despite this progress, illegal logging is still a major global problem and new government initiatives are emerging to try to tackle this issue. In Europe the Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan has been introduced to ensure that only legally logged timber enters the EU (please see CPI's Paper and the Forest Fact Sheet) and the Lacey Act in America has been strengthened to cover timber and its products. Discussions are now focusing on how, and indeed if, forest certification can fit in with these initiatives and on its long term relevance.

