

Certification:

A future for the world's forests

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WWF - World Wide Fund For Nature is the world’s largest and most experienced conservation organisation. It has more than 4.7 million supporters and a global network active in over 96 countries. WWF is known as World Wildlife Fund in Canada and the United States of America.

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Introduction

Many of the world's forests are being flattened by the footsteps of human activity. Poor forest practice is unacceptable to an increasing number of people yet some areas of forests are being well managed in ways which benefit the environment and people. But how do you tell whether a piece of wood comes from a well-managed forest, or an over-exploited forest?

The world's ancient forests - those which are still rich in wildlife - are rapidly losing their great wealth of biodiversity. In many countries, the forest industry is the main driving force behind this loss, either by harvesting the most valuable trees with little regard for the forests or the people that depend upon them, or by clear-felling vast areas leaving behind nothing but stumps, brushwood and bare earth. Elsewhere, clearance for agriculture is the main motive, either to grow food for rural people's subsistence or to create farms, ranches and plantations, for the profit of companies and land-speculators.

But, whilst the forest industry often plays a key role in forest destruction and degradation, logging need not destroy forests. If timber is removed in an environmentally sensitive way that mimics the natural dynamics of a forest, there may be little adverse impact.

So, what can wood consumers do - and we are all wood consumers - to make sure that our purchases help to preserve, not destroy, forests? We can turn to timber certification and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

What is certification?

To create a future for the world's forests, one key step is to ensure that the wood products we buy come either from forests managed for long-term ecological health for forest-dwelling people, plants and animals, or from well-managed plantations. If enough people and companies apply these criteria to their timber purchases and to their forestry investments, this will encourage sustainable forestry.

In the early 1990s many concerned consumers chose to avoid buying tropical hardwoods - if they could recognise them - because of the destruction of tropical rainforests and threats to indigenous people who lived in them. But that was not enough. The softwood they were buying in its place could easily have come from a destructive source in its own right, such as clear-felled temperate rainforest in British Columbia or old-growth "snow forest" in Finland. Buying temperate, rather than tropical, timbers did nothing to encourage foresters in tropical countries to manage their forests well.

So, how can you tell which type of forest a piece of wood or paper comes from?

A certification system was needed for identifying wood and wood products that come from well-managed sources anywhere in the world backed up by a label that would be clear, unambiguous

and easily recognised. Then consumers could make a well-informed choice that would allow them to support good forestry through their wood and paper purchases and their investments.

The idea of certification was simple enough but making it a reality was not. International criteria for good forest management had to be set and these then had to be translated into national and regional contexts. A system of independent forest inspection and certification then had to be established, together with a means of tracking timber through a “chain of custody” from an inspected forest, across the world through sawmills, factories, warehouses and shops until it reached the customer. Perhaps most crucial of all, the traditionally conservative timber industry had to be persuaded that it really wanted to open up its supply chain to outside inspection and to revolutionise its way of doing business.

Certification and the Forest Stewardship Council

In the early 1990s, a coalition of business, environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs), social organisations and individuals dedicated to raising the level of forest management and creating openness in timber supply chains came together - and the timber certification movement was launched.

The idea of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) - an independent non-profit, non-governmental organisation - evolved during a series of meetings in 1991 and 1992. Participants in these meetings included representatives from NGOs including WWF, the New York-based Rainforest Alliance (which was already running its SmartWood timber certification scheme), foresters, Woodworkers’ Alliance for Rainforest Protection (WARP), US foundations and several retailers including B&Q - the UK’s biggest home improvement retail chain. Their idea was to establish the FSC as an independent body that would set the standards for well-managed forestry worldwide, award accreditation to independent certifiers and regulate the use of its name and logo on product labels.

The FSC was formally founded in Toronto in October 1993 to support environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable management of the world’s forests. Its main activity is to accredit organisations which certify the quality of forest management. Forest products derived from forests certified within the framework provided by the FSC are allowed to carry the FSC registered trademark. The FSC logo then enables consumers to identify timber products from well-managed forests. As a democratic organisation, membership is open to NGOs, companies and individuals. Members are divided into three “chambers” representing social, environmental and commercial interests, which jointly elect a Board of Directors.

Certification, then, is the process of inspecting forests to see if they are being managed according to an agreed set of principles and criteria. For the Forest Stewardship Council these include recognition of indigenous people’s rights, long-term economic viability, protection of biodiversity, conservation of ancient natural woodland, long-term responsible management, and regular monitoring.

The FSC is born

The FSC's first step was to establish the principles underlying good forestry and to set the criteria by which these principles should be measured. Its next task was to create a global network of stakeholders to force the pace of change.

An enormous amount of work was needed in stakeholder consultation and negotiation. A first need was to define good forest management which was closely followed by establishing a set of guiding principles accompanied by criteria that would allow certifiers to judge whether these principles had been applied. Then the principles and criteria had to be interpreted in national contexts - a process that is still underway in many countries. National Working Groups are now being established in several countries around the world to agree national standards which are then sent to the FSC for formal approval.

WWF widens the appeal: Forests for Life Campaign, and Forest and Trade Networks

WWF - World Wide Fund For Nature has been at the forefront of promoting links with industry aimed at supporting the certification of good forest management. Through its global Forests for Life Campaign, WWF has been working towards the independent certification of at least 25 million hectares of well-managed forests by June 2001 focusing on key timber producing countries. As well as supporting certification and the FSC, the Forests for Life Campaign also promotes greater protection for the world's forests and the livelihoods of people who depend upon them.

To help reach its certification goal, WWF established the Global Forest and Trade Initiative which encourages the formation of Forest and Trade Networks. Formerly known as Buyers' Groups, these Forest and Trade Networks are partnerships between environmental groups and industry whose members are committed to producing and purchasing forest products from well-managed forests and to supporting independent certification.

The first Forest and Trade Network was the WWF 95+ Group which began with its first member, home improvement retail giant, B&Q. It was soon joined by another large UK retailer - Homebase - and mainstream companies including WH Smith, Boots the Chemists, BBC Magazines, Railtrack, Tarmac and, more recently, Meyer International, owner of the Jewsons building merchants' chain. There are now 14 Forest and Trade Networks operating in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, France, Germany, the Netherlands, the Nordic Countries, North America, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

Forest and Trade Networks are open to any organisation that supports the objective of improved forest management and credible independent certification. There are more than 600 member companies in Forest and Trade Networks around the world ranging from small producers of charcoal, such as the UK's Bioregional Development Group, to world-leading retailers, such as Ikea, and North America's Home Depot. At the current rate of growth, it is estimated that there will

be 1,000 Forest and Trade Network members around the world by the end of 2001. WWF will continue to encourage the formation of new Forest and Trade Networks in several countries including Italy, Japan, and East Asia, as well as encouraging the formation of producer-focussed groups in Central and West Africa, Latin America, South East Asia and Indo-China.

The benefits of certification

FSC certification encompasses environmental, social and economic issues to encourage sustainable forest management worldwide.

Environmental benefits

The main motivation for many of the FSC's members at the start was environmental: to create a certification system that would guarantee to everyone participating in the timber trade that their contribution was helping to conserve, rather than to destroy, forests, people and wildlife. FSC's environmental criteria recognises forest management should:

- Conserve biological diversity and its values: water resources, soils, unique and fragile ecosystems and landscapes;
- Maintain the ecological functions and integrity of the forest;
- Protect threatened and endangered species and their habitats.

However, if a forest is to be managed in a truly sustainable way, it also needs to incorporate social and economic issues - both of which are embraced by the FSC certification system. The FSC's long-term hope is that, as demand for certified timber is strengthened, new sustainable forest management will replace the old "cut and forget" practices.

Social benefits

The FSC's concept of sustainable forest management aims to ensure that human rights are respected. One of its three membership "chambers" is dedicated to social interests and includes representatives from trade unions, indigenous peoples' organisations and human rights campaigners. One of the main features of the FSC system is that it requires multi-stakeholder participation when setting forestry standards, bringing marginalised people to the table which empowers them through knowledge and participation.

To meet the social criteria laid down by the FSC, all certified forestry operations must seek permission from indigenous groups or local communities with rights to the area. Those local people who have traditionally used the forests for collecting fruits, firewood, building materials or medicinal plants, must still have access to the forests which offer them a livelihood.

Economic benefits

If certified forestry is not profitable it will fail and the hoped-for environmental and social benefits may never be realised. But, if certification can be shown to enhance profitability, commercially orientated forest owners and managers will have the incentive to certify their operations.

The FSC's economic criteria state that forest managers should seek to achieve an "optimal use and local processing of the forest's diversity of products," minimise waste in harvesting and on-site processing, and strive to strengthen and diversify the local economy, avoiding dependence on a single forest product. The rate of harvest "shall not exceed levels which cannot be permanently sustained."

Many certified forestry operations are reaping economic rewards, some of which include:

- FSC certified timber achieving a higher price in the market than equivalent uncertified timber;
- FSC certificates facilitating access to new markets;
- FSC certification audits showing up wasteful practices;

"It is very encouraging to see how the market is reacting positively to the FSC. We are confident that rising world demand for timber from well-managed forests will ensure that the FSC has an increasing role to play in encouraging forest protection worldwide."

Dr Timothy Synnott, Executive Director, Forest Stewardship Council

To highlight some of the potential economic gains of FSC certification, WWF has been promoting investment in forest product companies which have high standards of forest management. In 1999, WWF launched two reports which show how investors in the forestry sector can expect enhanced financial returns by focusing on companies with independently certified forests. WWF is now working to form a number of partnerships with financial service companies in Europe and the USA which it hopes will use their power as investors to encourage forest product companies to adopt high environmental standards and to become independently certified.

The costs of certification

All types and sizes of forest are open to FSC certification but it has, until recently, been most easily accessible to the largest and most profitable holdings because the certification process can be expensive.

The potentially high cost of certifying small areas of forest has been a matter of concern to private forest owners and the FSC has worked hard to find ways to limit the cost of certifying small holdings. One successful approach has been through group, or "umbrella," schemes under which the combined forest area of all participants is viewed as a single management unit. In addition, at

its last General Assembly in June 1999, the FSC approved a resolution proposing less complex certification procedures for small individual operations which are not part of a group scheme. Work on this is proceeding. Many stakeholders, however, consider that the costs of certification are outweighed by the benefits, including that of reassuring clients of their commitment to best practice and responsible stewardship.

The UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS) is the first example of an alternative certification system intentionally made compatible with the FSC's audit requirements. Under this scheme, woodland owners who are already in compliance with the UK's National Forestry Standard, (introduced as a result of the certification debate), can enjoy the benefits of FSC certification with only modest additional work and significantly reduced costs and bureaucracy.

Worldwide Success

Close to 18 million hectares of forests worldwide have been independently certified under the auspices of the FSC - currently the only globally-applicable labelling scheme which guarantees that wood and wood products come from well-managed forests.

Over 200 forests in 32 countries around the world have now been independently certified under the FSC certification and labelling scheme. These certified forests range from small-scale community forests in the Solomon Islands to large state-owned forests in the USA. Countries with forests which have been certified through the FSC scheme include Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Namibia, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Poland, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Over 600 "chain of custody" certificates have been awarded to suppliers of FSC certified products and the FSC logo can now be seen on more than 8,000 product lines worldwide.

Africa

Certification is well established in South Africa and Zambia, and the foundations for certification are now being laid in West and Central Africa. FSC certification workshops have also been held in East Africa.

South Africa

Filling the supply gap

In 1992 South Africa's forest service was converted into a public corporation, SAFCOL, tasked with improving its economic, social and environmental performance. Independent certification, it decided, would be a good way to meet all three objectives at once. SAFCOL began to submit its

plantations to an FSC audit in 1996 and all of its five forest regions covering 260,000 hectares have now won FSC certificates. This represents nearly 17 per cent of South Africa's industrial forest area – which is some 1.5 million hectares - and is enough to meet 90 per cent of the country's wood needs and to provide a surplus for export. However, native forest is a rarity in South Africa, extending to just 327,000 hectares nation-wide and most of this is owned by the National Parks Service (NPS).

SAFCOL's entire timber production derives from plantations of exotic species, mostly established in upland grassland areas. The main timber is pine, with some eucalyptus and residual areas of acacia or "wattle" widely planted early in the 20th century as a source of tannin, but now of little value. Any significant areas of natural forest in SAFCOL's holdings are being transferred to conservation organisations, including the NPS.

The most serious environmental issue faced by SAFCOL is that many forest species are invading surviving areas of natural vegetation. Both maritime and radiata pine are a nuisance but "wattle" is by far the greatest problem - it has formed dense thickets in riverbank areas, choking out natural vegetation, increasing soil erosion and reducing water flows in rivers. Adding to the problem, "wattle" coppices vigorously (regrows when cut) and its seeds remain dormant for many years, germinating after burning - the most effective way of clearing the thickets. Remedial work is now in progress and SAFCOL has been monitoring the spread of exotic tree weeds, and taking responsibility for tree weed control in lands being transferred to conservation bodies who typically lack the resources to do so themselves.

Some of the greatest changes in SAFCOL's practices brought about by certification have been in the social sphere. SGS Forestry (a FSC accredited certifier) found evidence of unequal wages with regard to race and gender, and parity has now been imposed within employment grades to exclude the possibility of discrimination. SAFCOL has also had to resolve local water disputes, maintain public access for recreation and hiking, improve the implementation of its employee housing policy, map sites of cultural, historical and traditional importance, and ensure that local communities have at least equal access to employment and contracting opportunities.

Zambia

Muzama Crafts

The vast evergreen dry "miombo" forests of north west Zambia are nothing if not remote. This fact, along with the low population density of three people per km², has contributed to the forests' good ecological condition. In the early 1990s when the UK based certification organisation, the Soil Association, certified its output of forest honey and beeswax (marketed by North Western Bee Products) as organic. The honey is now a popular line at Oxfam charity shops in the UK.

When local people decided to seek high-value international markets for their timber as well, they naturally turned to the Soil Association to certify it to the standards of the FSC. Muzama Crafts Limited, set up in 1989 as a "fair trade" company, spent three years developing the necessary management systems and, in 1998, won an FSC certificate covering over one million hectares of forest.

Amongst the customers for Muzama's timber has been the David Craig Company, a maker of fine garden furniture based near Newcastle in the north of England. So far it has imported two 20ft containers of sawn wood, along with crafted salad spoons and forks.

Asia/Pacific

There have been some key developments towards establishing certification in Asia and there has been excellent collaboration between the FSC, WWF, and the Indonesian Eco-labelling Institute, in addition to the Malaysian National Timber Certification Council.

Indonesia

East meets West

Senior figures in Indonesian public life, among them the ex-environment minister Emil Salim, saw that eco-certification was the way of the future for access to export markets and for raising the standard of natural resource management. In 1993, they founded the Indonesian Eco-Labelling Foundation (LEI) and began to develop standards for forestry.

Rather than simply follow the FSC model, which was still under development, LEI decided to forge an independent path. Instead of a pass/fail system for the various criteria, for example, LEI operates according to an average score, which allows a good result in one area to cancel out a bad score in another. LEI also operate a three-tier system, with bronze, silver and gold certificates. Its stakeholder consultation also allows for feedback throughout the forest certification process.

However, both LEI and the FSC have recognised the benefits of working together: the FSC is an established and internationally recognised system, while LEI is well suited to Indonesian circumstances. As a result, the FSC determined that all future certifications in Indonesia should seek to incorporate all the requirements of the LEI approach; LEI resolved that its certifications should incorporate FSC criteria. So far, 16 companies have applied for LEI certification: three have been field tested, with one failure, one decision pending and one bronze certificate.

Forest certification has already been a powerful stimulus for change in Indonesian forestry at government level.

Japan

Progress on the ground

FSC certification is still a new concept in Japan but interest is growing among business and government leaders. Since Japan is one of the world's biggest timber-consuming countries, importing timber from across the Pacific rim, any moves towards certification will have powerful and far-reaching consequences.

So far, there is only imported FSC timber in Japan, and Catalogue House, one of the country's largest mail order companies, is already importing FSC-labelled products. The company is set to become a founding member of the Japanese Forests and Trade Network, along with several retailers, wholesalers and forest owners.

In February 2000, the first Japanese forest to be certified was the Hayami Forest, a 1,070-hectare site located south east of Osaka. To win certification, Hayami had to meet a range of detailed standards and criteria established by Scientific Certification Systems (SCS), a US based certification body accredited by the FSC.

Japan is the second largest forest product importing country in the world after the United States, relying on imported wood for roughly 80 per cent of its wood consumption. As the demand for certified products increases, certification is expected to rise in those countries which export to Japan. As forests cover approximately 65 per cent of the country (about 25 million hectares), certification also has the potential to play a pivotal role in rejuvenating Japan's domestic forest industry.

Vietnam

Setting right the wrongs

Garden furniture from Vietnam has been in the news for all the wrong reasons. The NGO, Global Witness, made it public knowledge that much of the wood used in Vietnam's fast-growing furniture industries has been imported illegally from Cambodia, encouraging destructive forest exploitation and the theft of timber from wildlife reserves in army-controlled border areas.

Unsustainable logging practices in Vietnam may also be damaging forests that are unique centres of biodiversity, with some species still waiting to be discovered. One such area is Kon Plong, a remote forested area between the Central Highlands and the Annam Lowlands. It is home to Vietnam's largest mammals, the tiger and the gaur (a type of ox), and it holds some of the country's last commercially viable timber resources. It has therefore been designated as "production forest" and faces the certainty of logging in the near future.

To encourage sustainable forest management, the World Bank/WWF Alliance for Forest Conservation and Sustainable Use, (a partnership between the World Bank and WWF formed in 1998), is supporting the design of a forest certification project for Kon Plong, together with the Tropical Forest Trust. The TFT was established in 1999 as a response to the situation in Vietnam. Founded by garden furniture retailers and manufactures, the TFT raises a 2 % levy on the production price of products which is used to fund projects to improve forest management. Scancom, a founder member of the TFT has eliminated illegal Cambodian wood and has sourced a significant proportion of FSC wood. The TFT believes that FSC certification is a powerful mechanism for tracking timber. It has decided to make Kon Plong its first major initiative committing US \$1.2 million to the project.

Malaysia

New National Timber Certification Council

The Malaysian National Timber Certification Council (NTCC) became operational in January 1999. WWF-Malaysia is one of two non-governmental organisations invited to join the eight-member Board of Trustees for this non-profit company which will operate a timber certification scheme as part of the country's efforts to ensure good forest management. The NTCC is now in discussions with the FSC concerning a national standard for forest management. Deramakot in Sabah is the largest FSC certified natural forest in the region and has received significant premiums for its harvest.

China

Government to lead certification

Important first steps towards a full-scale FSC programme were taken at a workshop in Beijing in 1999 co-sponsored by the China State Forestry Administration, the World Bank and WWF's China Programme. Among the 45 participants were senior State Forestry Administration officials, together with forest managers from all over China, civil servants, academics, timber traders and manufacturers - one Shanghai-based company applied for an FSC "chain of custody" certificate within months of the event. Participants were determined to overcome obstacles to sustainable forestry practices and to start pilot certification exercises in managed forests in a number of regions. The consensus was that government should lead certification and that market forces should be used to drive the certification process forward.

Europe

FSC certification has developed rapidly in Europe with progress from Sweden to Slovakia and Forest and Trade Networks are now operating, or in development, in all Western European countries. Every type of forest has been certified including royal lands, public lands, large-scale industrial forests and small private forests.

Germany

In April 1999 a major boost was given to the FSC in Germany with the international Trade Fair and Symposium in Mainz. Currently 124,000 hectares are FSC certified in Germany. The state of Hamburg certified its forests in 1998 and Schleswig-Holstein in 1999. The association of communities and towns in Rheinland-Pfalz, which owns 400,000 hectares of forests, is currently implementing a FSC group certification scheme. The first 5,000 hectares were certified by IMO and SGS and received their certificates in the beginning of 1999. In some states of Germany there are also model projects which are being implemented, such as a group certification project in the state of Brandenburg near Berlin. The German Forest and Trade Network, GRUPPE '98, currently has 58 members (54 companies and 4 associates). There are large mail order houses such as OTTO Versand and Neckermann, four large DIT markets (OBI, Hagebau, Hornabach and Praktiker), two of the largest printing houses in Europe, construction companies, garden furniture companies and others. 45 of these companies have an FSC chain-of-custody certificate. Consumer organisations

in Germany are recommending FSC as a credible label for sustainable and environmentally friendly forestry.

United Kingdom

Giving assurance

Official scepticism and fierce opposition from the timber industry marked the FSC's early days in the UK. But, in 1997, the industry had a change of heart when it realised that certification could be achievable for much of its forests and that UK retailers were demanding FSC timber products. The Forestry Commission Director General, David Bills, proposed that FSC certification audits and the Forestry Commission's regulatory system could be streamlined under a single certification standard, eliminating duplication and minimising costs.

After two years of negotiation, the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS) was finally launched in 1999 with a nation-wide consensus on forest management standards. The UKWAS establishes, for the first time, a fully endorsed national certification standard for British forestry that meets international standards of forestry management and is recognised by the FSC. Major woodland owners and managers, such as Scottish Woodlands and the Forestry Commission, quickly sought certification for their holdings across the UK. The Forestry Commission's 800,000-hectare forest estate received certification in November 1999, amid industry predictions that 75 per cent of UK timber production would be certified by the end of the year 2000.

One result is that manufacturers who had been forced abroad in their search for FSC material - such as UK fencing manufacturers Grange Timber and Forest Fencing - could now source their timber from home, keeping millions of pounds a year within the UK economy. Several other countries are now looking to the UKWAS as a model of how to progress the certification agenda.

Keeping the home fires burning

Just five years ago it would have been hard to find British charcoal anywhere. Now, it is widely available in home improvement stores and supermarkets, most of it approved and carrying the FSC label.

Much credit for this turnaround belongs to the BioRegional Charcoal Company, (BRCC), based in London. Indigenous charcoal, they noted, had largely been displaced by imports which took all but a few per cent of the 60,000 tonne a year domestic market. As a result, some tropical forests were being over-exploited for charcoal production, and the UK's own broadleaf woodlands had fallen into neglect.

The BioRegional Charcoal Company decided to supply charcoal from UK woodlands. BRCC also now supplies a number of Shell's petrol stations and shops, and has now branched out into firewood.

To achieve FSC certification, BRCC worked with UK-based certifier, SGS Forestry, to develop one of the first group, or "umbrella," certifications cutting the cost to roughly a tenth of that of the usual single forest certification price.

The Netherlands

The home of “Good Wood”

The Netherlands is renowned for its high level of environmental awareness so few people should be surprised that its FSC process is well advanced. The certification process began here in 1992 with the “Hearts of Wood” campaign led by WWF, Friends of the Earth and Novib (a development organisation), stimulating local and national government, and some 500 social building corporations, to sign a declaration in favour of FSC timber. WWF and Friends of the Earth then set up a Forest and Trade Network in the Netherlands - “Goed Hout” or “Good Wood” - joined by a number of major companies including one of the country’s largest hardwood traders, A van der Berg (AvdB). “Goed Hout” has since become an independent foundation with an additional campaigning role. It now has some 30 members - forest owners, retailers, home improvement companies, timber traders, wood processing industries, and paper makers.

AvdB began working on certification in 1994 and it is now the country’s main importer and supplier of FSC timber. Its FSC business was boosted in 1997 when it bought the Dutch branch of the Ecological Trading Company, which was importing FSC timber from the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. AvdB’s main supplying country today is Brazil. AvdB Director, Hans Stout:

“The market for FSC timber is much bigger than we can supply at the current level of imports ...So we are working with three more suppliers in Amazonia to certify another 500,000 hectares of forest in 2000. We are also looking for new certified suppliers.”

Switzerland

Certification takes off

In 1999, all of the major stakeholders in Swiss forestry issues agreed a set of interim standards for forest certification and it is hoped that the next step will be an agreed set of national standards endorsed by the FSC. Meanwhile FSC certification is moving ahead on the ground - the first FSC Christmas trees came to market in time for Christmas 1999 from a 1,000-hectare forest just outside Zurich.

The 70,000-strong community of Solothurn in north west Switzerland scored another forestry success when the annual production of 12,600 cubic metres of timber was certified by SGS in April 1998. The FSC-approved management plan for the forest includes numerous environmental benefits and re-stocking is being achieved through natural regeneration which mimicks natural processes. Certification has also paid off financially. The first year’s production of FSC beech, maple and other timbers was sold to regional sawmills at a five to ten per cent premium because the wood was in demand by members of Switzerland’s Forest and Trade Network (the WWF Wood Group). The extra income realised was more than enough to cover all of the certification costs.

The WWF Wood Group - comprising 20 companies committed to using certified timber - includes some of the country’s biggest names in the timber business such as IMS AG, Kronospan AG Holz Zolhaus AG, Graf Parkett + Holz AG, and Migros which launched the first complete FSC-certified indoor furniture line, made from pine from Poland. Four companies have obtained FSC “chain of

custody” certification including WohnGeist, the exclusive furniture maker - by autumn 1999, it was offering its first FSC products: elm dining tables made with wood from the Solothurn forest.

Sweden

FSC advances

The first major timber producing country to respond to the growing demand for FSC timber was Sweden. AssiDomän, one of the world’s largest forest owners, had the first test certification in 1996 and became a member of the FSC in the same year - the first major forest products company in the world to do this. Stora, prompted by demand for certified timber from the Dutch retailer Intergamma, certified its first forest in 1997 which was then followed by certification of 600,000 hectares of forest owned by Korsnäs. By June 1998, AssiDomän had won certification for all of its 3.3 million hectares of productive forestland.

All major Swedish forest companies have now been certified according to FSC criteria and these include Svenska Cellulosa Aktiebolaget (SCA), MoDo and Granninge. More than 40 per cent of Sweden’s productive forest is now certified, covering 9.2 million hectares. The result has been a revolution in forest management.

For example, AssiDomän has put in place ecological landscape plans and conservation policies, which ensure that sensitive zones, or features such as key biotopes and riparian zones, are left intact, in addition to continuous existence of retention trees, dead wood and other key elements to the landscape.

In addition to environmental benefits, FSC certification has also brought direct benefits to Sweden’s indigenous Sami people whose centuries-old way of life is influenced by forestry practices. In winter, the Sami’s reindeer herds feed on tree lichens which are abundant in old forests. Under FSC certification, reindeer herding can exist alongside commercial forestry as forest owners must consult with the Sami people when planning forestry practices and activity.

AssiDomän’s FSC timber is sold to customers in Belgium, Germany, Holland, Italy, Spain, Sweden, and the UK. It also plans to start supplying FSC timber to France and Norway. A major buyer is the UK’s Homebase home improvement chain: rough-sawn pine and spruce are imported by Nottingham wood processors, Mason’s Timber Products, who supply 250 “stick timber” lines, from shelving to architrave and skirting boards to Homebase.

Partnership

WWF and AssiDomän entered into a three-year partnership in 1998 to encourage environmentally sustainable forestry. The partnership seeks to promote a dialogue between all of Europe’s environmentally responsible buyers in order to inform the consumer and to broaden the market for certified products across national boundaries. AssiDomän has been a lead player in moving Sweden towards becoming the first country in the world to agree national, independent certification according to the FSC criteria. The company believes that conservation should be part of its everyday forestry management and is educating all of its workers, from the boardroom to the forest floor, in sound, ecologically responsible forestry.

The market for FSC certified products is also growing in Sweden itself. Sweden-based Tarkett, Europe's largest producer of parquet flooring, believes that the FSC's certificate is the only one with value in the market place. Ultimately, it aims to turn over its entire production to FSC timber. The editors of 35 of Sweden's leading consumer magazines are also calling on paper makers to provide them with FSC-certified paper.

Despite these successes, many of Sweden's private forest owners have resisted FSC certification, partly because of the perceived high cost. To resolve this, several group certification schemes are now on offer at a typical cost of about US \$1/hectare, tax-deductible. The largest group scheme in the world - the Skogssallkapet - is based in Sweden and has 135 owners with 200,000 hectares of forest.

Poland

Democratic practices

Poland has the second largest area of certified forest in the world - an impressive 2,324,013 hectares. The certification process began in Poland in 1995 in response to pressure from retailers and manufacturers. As Polish forests were already well-managed and controlled, little change in forest practice was needed to achieve FSC certification.

During Poland's Communist era, forest management had been over-intensive, leading to relatively young forests with few broadleaf trees and with plants and animals in decline. Poland's new democratic government determined to reverse this trend. Now, on sensitive sites such as regeneration areas and steep slopes, horses are used to extract logs. The forest is also left undisturbed, where necessary, to conserve wildlife. For example, 12.5 hectares of mature trees will typically be left around a white eagle nest. In the case of a black stork nest, a 500-metre buffer zone is mandatory. Biological methods are now used to control pest outbreaks and no herbicides are used.

One of the main companies encouraging Poland in its quest for FSC certification is UK-based Shireclose Homewares, which supplies many of the UK's largest retailers with wooden kitchen utensils. The firm now offers 200 FSC-certified product lines made from Polish pine and beech.

"This is only the beginning," says Shireclose Managing Director, Mike Wall. *"Our operation is expanding rapidly and the certification aspect is paramount. Demand for FSC products is increasing."* Mr Wall is committed to expanding the market by selling FSC products at the same price as uncertified. *"Our experience indicates that there is no need for a premium as the costs can be written off over a few years through easily achievable economies in the supply chain."*

Russia

The Bear and the Panda

The boreal or snow forests of Siberia which lie entirely within the 89 states and provinces of the Russian Federation make up the world's largest single forest area. In all, 763 million hectares of Russia's 1,708 million hectares are forested.

Much of Russia's forest remains remote and inaccessible but the timber resource is too large to be ignored and, foreign logging companies - some with track records of causing gross environmental damage - are moving in fast to exploit it, taking advantage of the collapse of the Soviet Union. As a result, it is now vital to establish new norms of sustainable forest management within Russia using independent certification.

In April 2000 the Soil Association issued the first FSC certificate in Russia for 32,800 hectares of forest in the Altai region stimulated by a sales contract with The Body Shop. The Altai ecoregion is home to a very high density of plants and animals, including the endangered snow leopard. UK trading company, Pricebatch (Altai UK) Ltd is the driving force behind this FSC certification process for the Kosikhinsky Leskhoz Forest and Timber Production, a manufacturing enterprise in the capital of the Altai to build environmental sustainable and fair timber product trade. Its largest customer, The Body shop, continues to increase its orders for Altai products, which are retailed through its worldwide network.

In addition to the Altai certification, several more evaluations are planned and US-based SmartWood has carried out an assessment of the Pechoro-Illych Model Forest in the Komi Republic.

Also in April 2000, the first Association of Environmentally Responsible Timber Producers in Russia was established, bringing together several Russian timber producers with the aim to connect them with Western companies committed to buying products from forests certified under the FSC.

WWF is working to promote certification in Russia's north western region – an area exporting much of its timber to western European markets which are increasingly demanding FSC certification, and in the Russian Far East, an area supplying Japan and China, where certification is beginning to take off.

Latin America

Excellent progress has been made towards FSC certification in a number of Latin American countries, and the forest areas certified now represent eight per cent of the world's total. FSC standards have been approved in Bolivia and are now being developed in Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Peru.

Brazil

Moving down the path

Of all the countries in South America, Brazil has moved furthest down the path of certified forestry.

Brazil now has 30 companies with “chain of custody” certification and there are 20 certified forests belonging to 9 private companies which cover a total of 668,000 hectares.

These include Mil Madeireira, which has 80,500 hectares of certified rainforest at Itacoatiara, Amazonas, a quarter of which has been set aside from timber harvesting. Founded by Precious Woods of Switzerland, Mil Madeireira’s operation has been praised by Greenpeace-Brazil as the best example of sustainable forestry in the Amazon. Instead of using bulldozers and skidders to clear a path to the valuable trees, this company winches trees out of the forest on skid trails that extend as far as 75 metres from main extraction routes. Mil Madeireira is also providing valuable jobs - it employs 230 people in an area where 60 per cent of people are out of work. Indirect job creation pushes the tally up to 1,000 - 10 per cent of all the jobs in the local town.

Duratex in Sao Paulo State is the world’s first producer of FSC-certified medium density fibreboard (from pine) and hardboard (from eucalyptus), cut from the company’s 48,000 hectares of certified plantation. Its products have won access to over-supplied, competitive European markets.

Charcoal maker, Plantar de Curvelo, in Minas Gerais, is unique as the first Brazilian company to make an FSC-certified product mainly for the home market. As the leading supplier of charcoal in Brazil, domestic sales have increased by almost two-thirds since certification of its 7,000-hectare eucalyptus plantation.

Brazil is also home to the “green” pencil, made by A W Faber-Castell, amongst the world’s largest pencil producers, using pine from its 9,000-hectare plantation in Minas Gerais. The company aims to supply all its wood demand from its own FSC plantations by 2004.

A final success story from Brazil involves Klabin, a pulp producer with nearly 220,000 hectares of pine and eucalyptus plantations in Parana and Santa Catarina in the south of Brazil. Following certification, demand for its timber took off among local export-orientated industries, making it more profitable for Klabin to sell its timber rather than to pulp it.

In April 2000, the Brazilian Forest and Trade Network was launched with over 30 companies, giving new hope for the Amazon. The companies include makers of floors and frames, retailers, furniture makers and designers, building, construction and plywood manufacturers. Printing and publishing companies are also involved in this network. The Brazilian Forest and Trade Network is co-ordinated by Friends of the Earth in San Paulo.

[add happy log logo]

Bolivia

An FSC first

Bolivia is the first country in South America to have its own FSC standards in place. It has 660,000 hectares of certified forest in the Guarayos, Bajo Paragua and Chiquitania forest regions and six companies that supply FSC timber. This has enabled Bolivia to win new export markets - for example, garden furniture for the UK-based home improvement chain, B&Q.

The establishment of the FSC in Bolivia is timely as it coincides with a complete restructuring of the country's timber industry. In an effort to reduce corruption, the Bolivian government has moved from charging a royalty on production volume, to a fixed annual "rent" based on concession area. As a result, more than half of the 128 logging companies gave up their concessions and, most of those that remain, have a long-term commitment to forestry consistent with FSC aims. The certified total could rise to five million hectares - 10 per cent of the total forest area.

All together now

La Chonta, a timber company based in Santa Cruz, has a 100,000-hectare concession in the Guarayos Forest Reserve. In 1996, La Chonta began to work with WWF on an ecologically orientated forest management plan but they encountered a problem: the concession overlapped with the Guarayos Indigenous Territory and disputes had arisen over land and resource rights. In order to meet FSC criteria, all indigenous land disputes must be resolved. After negotiations with the Guarayos community, agreement was reached and La Chonta has been able to proceed to FSC certification and is now training the 7,000-strong community in mapping, forest inventory, forest management planning and low impact logging techniques.

North America

North America is the largest single market for forest products in the world. The top 30 companies process 30 per cent of the world's consumption of wood and paper. For certification to be a global market mechanism, success in North America is vital and a critical step forward is that major new players are now backing certification and the FSC.

USA

Largest number of certified forests in the world

The USA has 63 FSC-certified forests - more than any other country in the world. These forests cover a combined area of over 1.5 million hectares reflecting the fact that timber certification began in the USA: the Rainforest Alliance's SmartWood scheme and Scientific Certification Systems' (SCS) Green Cross scheme both pre-date the formation of the FSC.

One of the most inspiring examples of FSC-certified forestry in the USA is the Menominee Forest in Wisconsin, which occupies 89,000 hectares in an Indian Reservation formed in the mid-1800s. This forest was the first to be certified in North America in 1992 reflecting the tribe's long-term commitment to sustainable forestry. Over the last 130 years, the forest has produced vast amounts of the most valuable veneer grade logs and most of the timber is sawn in the tribe's own mills.

The Collins Companies, based in Portland, Oregon, have also played an essential role in advancing certified forestry. This family-owned concern dates from 1855 and now controls 47,000 hectares of the Allegheny Mountains. Across the USA in California's northern Sierra Nevada is the 38,000-hectare Almanor Forest, the first Collins' forest to be certified. It combines efficient timber

production with excellent wildlife values, providing habitat for black bear, mountain lion, coyote, bald eagle, osprey, goshawk and northern spotted owl. Community relations are excellent as there is a liberal access policy and 200 of the 2,400 residents of nearby Chester are employed in the forest. The main changes to follow from the latest audit are improved fire prevention and mitigation, and better training of junior staff in wildlife conservation.

In January 2000, New York State became the first state in the United States to receive National Wildlife Federation/SmartWood certification for all of its “multiple-use” public forest lands that are managed for timber, wildlife, water quality and recreation. More than 320,000 hectares (700,000 acres) of State forest land outside the Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserves were voluntarily certified. The Empire State is also home to Lyons Falls Pulp & Paper which produced the first certified printing paper in the country, working in collaboration with the Wilderness Society. Its printing and writing paper is made from pulpwood from the Haliburton Forest in Ontario, Canada, and the company hopes to bring a wide range of FSC papers to market in 2000.

The State of Pennsylvania is also a major player with over one million hectares independently certified by SCS. Pennsylvania has more certified hardwood forest land than any other state in the United States. Eleven companies have “chain of custody” certification guaranteeing that their products have been manufactured using timber from a certified forest.

While certification is on the rise in the USA’s private forests, there is, so far, little enthusiasm in the USA Forest Service, which runs 78 million hectares of National Forest. Its policy is to “refrain from pursuing any agreements with third-party certifying organisations on national forest lands.” However, the FSC’s USA National Working Group is developing indicators which will address forestry on federal lands.

In late 1998 the FSC Board approved the USA’s first regional forest management standards, for the South west - an area that takes in New Mexico, Arizona and parts of Utah and Colorado.

FSC in showcase buildings

The certified timber business is more advanced and diverse in the USA than in any other country. Amongst the movement’s leaders is the Certified Forest Products Council – the North American Forest and Trade Network - which has over 140 business members including HOK (the world’s largest architectural firm) and Turner Construction (the largest construction company in the USA).

The Certified Forest Products Council (CFPC) has met with great success in promoting the use of FSC timber in major “showcase” buildings across the USA. These include:

- The Adam Joseph Lewis Center for Environmental Studies at Oberlin College, Ohio, winner of a 1999 American Architecture Award. It features Douglas fir from Collins Pine in Portland, Oregon, maple from Kane Hardwood, Pennsylvania, and white fir plywood from Columbia Forest Products, Portland;
- Middlebury College in Vermont, which has just completed the USA’s largest academic building using FSC wood. The 10,000 m² Bicentennial Hall has taken 225,000 board feet of

native New England woods and some 4,500 m² of certified hardwood veneer manufactured in Oregon;

- The new City Hall in Bainbridge Island, Washington, uses FSC hem-fir framing lumber and plywood, from the Collins Companies;
- The US Environmental Protection Agency's newly renovated 10 regional offices near Seattle feature FSC veneers on their doors, wall trims and furniture;
- The main ticket lobby of San Francisco International Airport will include a 200 metre-long, 5,500 m² wooden wall panel made of FSC cherry wood supplied by Kane Hardwood (a Collins-owned company);
- The Hall of Biodiversity at New York's American Museum of Natural History includes a range of lesser-known tropical hardwoods from Mexico and South America, all FSC-certified and supplied by EcoTimber International (ETI);
- GAP Inc.'s new Head Quarters in San Bruno, California, used FSC timbers for their flooring, maple wall panels, and doors;
- The 260-hectare Coffee Creek Center in Chesterton, Indiana, used FSC redwood for decking on the main boardwalk, as well as in trusses and garden features.

Home Depot launches environmental wood purchasing policy

Home Depot, the world's largest home improvement retailer, made a major shift in purchasing policy when President and CEO, Arthur Blank announced that the company would stop selling wood products from endangered areas by the end of 2002 and give preference to certified wood.

Home Depot is encouraging other home improvement retailers to follow its lead and believes the move makes good business sense as consumers value steps taken towards environmental responsibility. [add home depot logo?]

PriceWaterhouse Coopers has recently projected a 100-150 per cent growth in the US market for certified forest products.

Canada

Tourists in the forests

Visitors to the 22,000-hectare Haliburton Forest and Wildlife Reserve in Ontario are greeted not with "Keep Out" notices but with a sign directing them to the Wolf Centre - a six-hectare forest enclosure that is home to a semi-wild pack of timber wolves. Of course, the privately owned forest produces timber too. It is FSC-certified and harvested according to a single tree selective cutting system that leaves substantial areas for landscape-level conservation. The forests were certified by

SmartWood, based on draft standards prepared for the Great Lakes-St Lawrence region developed by the Wildlands League of Ontario.

Most of the forest's income comes from the public taking part in the many recreational and educational opportunities on offer, although substantial timber revenues are also generated. The attractive landscape of mixed hardwood and softwood hill-forest, meandering rivers, wetlands and 50 lakes, makes Haliburton perfect country for hiking, camping and fishing, mountain biking and snow-mobiling.

Fame and the FSC

The CFPC has teamed up with the chat-show hostess, Oprah Winfrey, and Habitat for Humanity to build a green "Habitat House" in Beaverton, Oregon. The house features numerous eco-friendly and energy-saving technologies and is built using donated FSC-certified wood from the Collins Companies, the Harwood Foundation, Colonial Craft, Plaza Hardwoods, and Endura Wood Products.

An advertising campaign promoting the FSC features James Bond 007 (aka Pierce Brosnan) urging consumers to support the FSC. The poster, displayed throughout the UK, gives a clear signal to the public that the FSC is a powerful trademark which can contribute to sustainable forest management. As Pierce Brosnan says: "Words are not enough - buy wood products with the FSC label and help save the world's forests."

Certification: a future for the world's forests?

"Sustainability and the environment have emerged as key issues in the forest industry... expectations demanding sound forest practices from forest owners appear to be permanent... certification may become a primary indicator of those expectations being met. However, considerable controversy surrounds the concept of certification..."

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

The benefits of FSC certification are numerous and diverse. As the examples have shown, beneficiaries include wildlife, the wider environment, local and indigenous communities, timber industry workers, and companies involved at every level of the trade in wood and wood products.

Certification has also proved itself to be highly adaptable to different circumstances, working well in many different forest types and covering many different forms of ownership. The size of certified forests ranges from just a few hectares to millions of hectares, and encompasses both single forests and groups of forests managed under a common "umbrella" approach.

However, although certification plays a key role in sustainable forest management and although the FSC is the international market leader, supply of certified wood is still limited and the area of certified forest (18 million hectares worldwide) is relatively modest. But, as illegal logging, poor forestry practices and deforestation continue unabated in some areas, we must increase our efforts to ensure that good forest management becomes the norm worldwide.

Challenges for the FSC

Progress in forest certification has exceeded most people's expectations but there are still many improvements to be made. Keeping the costs of certification low is a key priority but perhaps the biggest challenge facing the FSC is its own rapid growth and demand for its services. The number of members, certifiers, national working groups and certifications is constantly rising and, as the FSC is taken ever more seriously in official circles, it needs to devote more staff and resources to influencing national and international policy processes. The FSC is currently working to address these issues to ensure that rapid growth leads to increased efficiency and an increasing number of certified forests worldwide.

Policy issues are a considerable challenge for the FSC. Defining the rules for labelling of composite products (paper and board) has proved to be complicated: thresholds for the percentage of certified raw material which qualify a product to carry an FSC label remain too high for some and too low for others. Work on forests which are considered to be of high conservation value (such as primary or old-growth forests) is equally difficult as the FSC aims to strike a balance between conservation and local economic forces. In many areas, land tenure conflicts are highlighted as certification processes begin. All of these are real challenges for the FSC but certification did not invent the issues and it provides a framework for finding solutions.

In spite of the challenges ahead, the FSC's founders can allow themselves a few moments of quiet satisfaction. When the FSC was set up in 1993, few of them could have guessed that it would become such a powerful force within seven years - the focal point of a global movement whose aim to establish high quality forestry as the worldwide norm is suddenly looking achievable.

Other certification schemes

The certification debate in North America no longer centres around whether or not certification is the right approach to sustainable forest management; instead it now revolves around the type of certification which should be implemented. In practice, certification must involve all interest groups; meet environmental, social and economic criteria; be transparent; and operate to similar standards around the world.

As the forest industry will not benefit from a proliferation of labels of varying credibility, it is important that there is one international, independent, credible label which clearly informs consumers and provides a benchmark. Of the numerous certification schemes that have developed, many are now seeking to collaborate with the FSC and are seeking mutual recognition though this has yet to be clearly defined. The FSC is unlikely to agree to any form of mutual recognition unless the other schemes are operating to equally challenging standards which have been developed in an open, participatory way and inspected with the same independence and stringency.

There is no quick fix to a certified world but, if collaboration can be achieved, the results will come much more quickly. The goal of a certified forest industry which has support from royalty to religions and from environmentalists to celebrities should be an incentive.

Quantity, Quality and Diversity

Most of the forests currently certified around the world are in Europe and North America. To some extent, this reflects where forestry is taking place: 60 per cent of timber and fibre is produced in the Northern world. However, the challenge is to make sure that certification really makes a difference in the developing world and WWF is working to promote the quantity, quality and diversity of certified forests.

Quantity is key to ensuring that as much production forest as possible is brought under responsible management and that poor sub-standard practices are eliminated. Quality is vital to ensure that certification delivers the maximum environmental and social benefits. Diversity will mean that certification brings benefits to all forest types, all kinds of owners and in all regions of the world.

It is widely recognised that the general standard of forest management is lower in much, (though not all), of the developing world and achieving certification in this area will inevitably take longer. To help to meet this challenge, WWF is setting up Forest and Trade Networks – to provide guidance and technical support for communities and concessionaires to help them to achieve certification.

The World Bank/WWF Alliance is also working on capacity building and is laying the foundations for responsible forest management and certification in countries where certification may be several years hence. Model forest management projects are underway in countries as diverse as Latvia and Vietnam. Efforts are also continuing to make certification cost-effective for the smallest producers at the very margins of the global economy.

Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) have huge potential to provide both an incentive for responsible forestry and a source of income. The first FSC certified NTFP was the resin base for a chewing gum which provided an excellent fair trade income. This is just the start of additional income-generating schemes which can supplement logging in forests and many organisations have been working to develop standards for other NTFPs such as Brazil nuts and cork. The next few years should see exciting developments in this area which could bring benefits to many people not involved in “traditional” forest management.

Similarly, many trees are grown outside forests in woodlots or as individual trees on small-holdings throughout the world. WWF, in partnership with several other organisations, has been exploring how these can be incorporated within certification systems to encourage tree planting and to allow farm owners to share some of the economic benefits of certification. Certification must work for all and benefit everyone who is responsibly managing their resource, however small.

WWF’s vision

WWF’s long-term vision is that all production forests will be well-managed and independently certified, and that the forest industry, forest owners, environmental and social interest groups will collaboratively strive to maximise the social, environmental and economic benefits of forestry. Forest products will be recognised as environmentally and socially beneficial. The FSC will be the benchmark for sustainable forestry and will hold a global set of national and regional standards that define good forest management. There is a long way to go and much to do but the foundations have

been laid and, with many organisations and individuals pushing in the same direction, certification can help to ensure a future for the world's forests.

Where to find out more

Certification web sites

<u>Organisation</u>	<u>http:// web address</u>
BMZ/GTZ Forest Certification Project	www.gtz.de/forest_certification/english/index.html
Certified Forest Products Council	www.certifiedwood.org
FAO	www.fao.org
Friends of the Earth	www.foe.co.uk
FSC International	www.fscoax.org
Forests Forever's overview of certification	www.forestsforever.org.uk/forestcertification.html
Greenpeace	www.greenpeace.org
Institut für Marktökologie (IMO)	www.imo.ch
ITTO	www.itto.or.jp/index.html
ISO	www.iso.ch
Rainforest Alliance	www.rainforest-alliance.org
Scientific Certification Systems (SCS)	www.scs1.com
SGS Forestry	www.sgs.co.uk/qualifor
SKAL	www.Skal.com
SmartWood Program	www.smartwood.org
Soil Association	www.earthfood.co.uk

World Bank/WWF Alliance for Forest

www-esd.worldbank.org/wwf

Conservation and Sustainable Use

WWF- World Wide Fund For Nature

www.panda.org

WWF Forests for Life

www.panda.org/forests4life

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