



FOREST STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

Who are we?

The Forest Stewardship Council is an international non-profit organization founded in 1993 to support environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests.

It is an association of Members consisting of a diverse group of representatives from environmental and social groups, the timber trade and the forestry profession, indigenous people's organizations, community forestry groups and forest product certification organizations from around the world. Membership is open to all who are involved in forestry or forest products and share its aims and objectives.

An Executive Director and a highly trained staff run FSC on a day-to-day basis from a head office in the city of Oaxaca, Mexico. It is controlled by an elected Board, which consists of people from industry, conservation groups, indigenous people's representatives and others.

What we do ?

The Forest Stewardship Council is introducing an international labeling scheme for forest products, which provides a credible guarantee that the product comes from a well-managed forest. All forest products carrying our logo have been independently certified as coming from forests that meet the internationally recognized FSC Principles and Criteria of Forest Stewardship. In this way FSC provides an incentive in the market place for good forest stewardship. The forest inspections are carried out by a number of FSC accredited certification bodies, which are evaluated and monitored to ensure their competence and credibility.

FSC also supports the development of national and local standards that implement the international Principles and Criteria of Forest Stewardship at the local level. These standards are developed by national and regional working groups, which work to achieve consensus amongst the wide range of people and organizations involved in forest management and conservation in each part of the world. FSC has developed Guidelines for developing regional certification standards to guide working groups in this process.

Why we do it ?

There is huge public concern about the destruction of the world's forests. More and more people demand products that come from well-managed forests. This demand has led to many different labels on forest products, making claims such as 'for every tree felled at least two are planted'. Many of these claims are irrelevant or misleading. An authoritative study by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) found that of a sample of 80 different environmental claims found on wood and paper products, only three could even be partially substantiated.

FSC aims to clear up the confusion by providing a truly independent, international and credible labeling scheme on timber and timber products. This will provide the consumer with a guarantee that the product has come from a forest, which has been evaluated and certified as being managed according to agreed social, economic and environmental standards.

How we do it ?

The Forest Stewardship Council has developed rigorous procedures and standards to evaluate whether organizations (certification bodies) can provide an independent and competent forest

evaluation (certification) service. This process is known as 'accreditation'. FSC accredited certification bodies are required to evaluate all forests aiming for certification according to the FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship.

All accredited certification bodies may operate internationally and may carry out evaluations in any forest type. Certified forests are visited on a regular basis, to ensure they continue to comply with the Principles and Criteria. The performance of the certification bodies is closely monitored by FSC. Products originating from forests certified by FSC-accredited certification bodies are eligible to carry the FSC-logo, if the chain-of-custody (tracking of the timber from the forest to the shop) has been checked.

What is Certification?

Forest Certification is the process by which the performance of on-the-ground forestry operations are assessed against a predetermined set of standards. The Forest Stewardship Council's Principles and Criteria for Forest Management serve as the global foundation for the development of region-specific forest-management standards. Independent certification bodies, accredited by the FSC in the application of these standards, conduct impartial, detailed assessments of forest operations at the request of landowners. If the forest operations are found to be in conformance with FSC standards, a certificate is issued, enabling the landowner to bring product to market as "certified wood", and to use FSC trademark logo.

Accredited Certification Bodies

The FSC Accredited Certification Bodies are organizations accredited by the Forest Stewardship Council to certify forest management operations that comply with the FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship. Accreditation covers plantation and natural forest certification. They are also accredited to verify and certify chain of custody systems for products from certified forests.

National Initiatives

FSC encourages and supports national and regional initiatives for developing standards, for promoting certification, or forest management. In addition FSC has its own program of National Initiatives. These include:

- 1) FSC Contact Person (now in 24 countries);
- 2) FSC Working Group (in 12 countries);
- 3) FSC Advisory Board; and
- 4) FSC National or Regional Office.

FSC encourages and supports national and regional initiatives, which are in line with the FSC mission. The objective of the FSC National Initiatives Program is to decentralize the work of FSC and to encourage local participation. Goals are to promote and assist initiatives around the world for the development of national or regional support base for FSC and its missions in a country or region, and for the implementation of FSC programs and activities at national or regional level.

Social Issues

The mission of FSC implicitly and centrally, includes improvement of the quality of life and relief of poverty, for forest dependant people and workers. Social issues figure prominently in the formulation of the P&C, and social members are given an equal voice in the chamber structure. At the first General Assembly a Social Working Group was established to address social issues within the FSC. The II Annual Conference "Certification for the People", held in Nov. 2000, focused exclusively on social issues

Focusing on the social aspects of forestry requires taking a holistic approach to the interaction between the social chamber constituents - (indigenous peoples, workers, and community and small-scale forest users) and forest management and the environment. This involves considering industrial forestry as well as all other uses of the forest like subsistence harvesting, the use of non-timber forest products (NTFP) and uses for recreational, cultural or spiritual purposes.

Frequently asked questions

How and when was FSC formed ?

A group of timber users, traders and representatives of environmental and human-rights organizations met in California (USA) in 1990 to discuss how they could combine their interests in improving forest conservation and reducing deforestation. Their meeting confirmed the need for an honest and credible system for identifying well-managed forests as acceptable sources of forest products. It was from these beginnings that FSC has developed.

In September 1993 in Toronto (Canada) 130 representatives from around the world came together to hold the Founding Assembly of the Forest Stewardship Council. In October 1993 an agreement was reached to launch FSC, and by August 1994 a definitive set of Principles and Criteria, together with the Statutes for the Council were agreed and approved by the votes of the Founding Members.

How is FSC funded ?

Charitable foundations, government donors, membership subscriptions and accreditation fees fund FSC. To ensure its independence it does not accept funding from industry. Until now funding has been received from the Austrian, Dutch and Mexican governments, the European Commission, Ford Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, WWF-Netherlands, IUCN-Netherlands, SSNC (Swedish Society for Nature Conservation) and Summit Foundation. In the near future FSC expects to develop a system to obtain royalties for the use of its logo.

What is forest certification ?

Forest certification is the process of inspecting particular forests or woodland to see if they are being managed according to an agreed set of standards.

What is chain of custody ?

Chain of custody is the process by which the source of a timber product is verified. In order for products originating from certified sources to be eligible to carry the FSC Trademark, the timber has to be tracked from the forest through all the steps of the production process until it reaches the end user. Only when this tracking has been independently verified, the product is eligible to carry the FSC logo.

When will FSC-endorsed wood products be available in the shops?

A growing number of products are already available, such as wooden kitchen utensils, doors, frames etc. As more forests are certified, the number of products will rapidly increase.

Who supports FSC ?

FSC is the only organization offering a credible worldwide timber certification scheme for all forest types and plantations, and as such has already received endorsement and active commitment from a wide range of respected NGOs, including WWF, Friends of the Earth, and Greenpeace.

Furthermore, FSC has the support of a large and growing number of companies, who have united themselves in various countries into 'buyers groups'. The members of such buyers groups have committed themselves to selling only independently certified timber and timber products within 3 - 5 years. The FSC-labeling scheme is the preferred scheme for buyers groups in the UK, Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Brazil, USA and Japan.

This unprecedented alliance of major companies, NGOs and a host of other supporters around the world, means that the commercial, social and environmental impact of the FSC Trademark on timber-based products is going to be enormous and unavoidable.

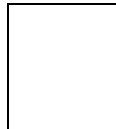
What is the difference between FSC and ISO ?

FSC's scheme is based on specified performance standards that need to be met by the forest operation before a certificate is issued. The environmental management system standard from ISO (ISO 14000-series) is a process standard. It specifies how a company's management system must be organized to address environmental aspects and impacts of its operations. ISO certification does not result in a product label. FSC and ISO are fully compatible and can be complementary. ISO standards can provide the framework and control mechanisms for the management system, within which the FSC standards serve as the target performance level.

The FSC accreditation system is based upon the relevant ISO-guides.

Will FSC really make a difference ?

Yes. Through the FSC Trademark the public will at last have a way of identifying that the product they are purchasing originates from a forest or woodland, which is managed according to internationally, agreed social and environmental principles and criteria. A MORI poll conducted in 1990 showed that 80% of the consumers would buy 'green' products given the choice. The FSC Trademark will give them that choice with timber-based products.



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