

Green public procurements are pro-environment

National policies are in place and municipalities have the will to implement them. What is needed now is advisory support and tools to help in the practical implementation of green public procurements.

Procurement professionals from municipalities attended the *Procuring Green* seminar focusing on consideration of environmental aspects in the purchases of wood-based products. The seminar was held January 18th at the House of Municipalities in Helsinki.

The impetus for the seminar arranged by PEFC Finland, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, and the Ministry of Employment and the Economy (MEE) was the Finnish National Public Procurement Policy for Wood-based Products prepared within the framework of the MEE's Strategic Programme for the Forest Sector. The policy provides guidelines for making sustainable wood-based product procurements.

Green public procurements mitigate climate change

The seminar approached green public procurements of wood-based products from several different perspectives. **Reima Sutinen**, Ministerial Advisor, Ministry of Employment and the Economy, presented the actual policy. In her address, **Taina Nikula**, Senior Advisor, Ministry of the Environment, tied the policy to the goals of Finland's sustainable public procurements.

Nikula's presentation also included results of research clearly indicating that green public procurements at the EU level reduce climate change-inducing emissions and are more economical than other procurements.

Advisory service on the drawing board

Sutinen and Nikula talked about plans for a green procurements advisory service for public procurers. Municipal procurers were very receptive to the service. The audience took a very active role in the review of the different topics by asking questions, voicing opinions and sharing their own experiences.

Demand creates supply

One of the presentations sparking the most discussion was that of **Janne Liljavuori**, Tendering Consultant, Hansel Ltd., who used practical examples to shed light on green tendering. It led to a discussion on e.g. the difficulty Finnish office furniture suppliers have in proving the sustainable and legal origin of the wood raw material they use. On the other hand, it was also noted that public sector requests for tender can steer suppliers to operate in a more environmentally sound way and to credibly prove it.

Jukka Koivusalo, Public Procurement Lawyer for the City of Espoo, clarified in his presentation that the Public Procurement Act allows for the use of environmental factors in the comparison of tenders. The key is that the comparison criteria used are directly related to the product or service being procured.

Sini Uuttu, Technology Adviser, Tekes, the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation, talked about the possibility of using Innovative Public Procurements Funding for public procurements. Tekes can fund the planning of public procurements when it targets the renewal of a service or operation.

PEFC label indicates origin of wood is known

Auvo Kaivola, Secretary General, PEFC Finland, addressed the issue of forest certification and forest certification labels. He emphasized that forest certification labels, with PEFC and FSC being the most widely used, known, and recognized, are practical tools for proving and verifying the legal and sustainable origin of wood. Consequently, the wood raw material of a product fulfilling PEFC criteria is a good and safe environmental choice.

Assessment standard for sustainability of construction work

The upcoming EU-level green building standards were the focus of the presentation by **Aila Janatuinen**, Department Manager, Finnish Forest Industries Federation. Within the framework of the CEN/TC350 work, European standards for all construction materials will be compiled for the assessment of the environmental performance of buildings and building products. This will create sustainable building assessment standards for Europe. According to Janatuinen, a standard can function as a selection tool in public procurements: a light calculator can be created for key indicators, like carbon footprint, and it can provide procurers with information that can be used in the selection process.

It was noted in the post-presentation discussion that, as a building material, wood is a strong ecological alternative; its good performance is expected to be reflected also in the upcoming standard.

Hannu Huhtala, Construction Engineer, Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, focused on the changing regulations for wood construction, which will facilitate the construction of Finnish apartment and public buildings taller than four stories. Thus the public sector now has an excellent opportunity to be a trendsetter in green building and in choosing wood as a building material, noted **Kristiina Vuopala**, Information Officer, Metsähallitus, in concluding the seminar.

Additional information:

Auvo Kaivola, Secretary General
PEFC Finland – Finnish Forest Certification Council
tel. +358 (0)400 765437
email: auvo.kaivola@pefc.fi
www.pefc.fi

Procuring Green seminar, 18 January 2011, program and presentations at www.pefc.fi > Ajankohtaista (only in Finnish).

PEFC Finland promotes and develops the PEFC forest certification system applied in Finland. PEFC is the certification of choice for Finland's family-owned forests. More than 95% of Finland's commercial forests are PEFC certified. The PEFC eco-label identifies products that have originated from sustainably-managed forests.

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PEFC (Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes) is the world's largest, international certification scheme and the world's biggest environmental movement promoting ecologically, socially and financially sustainable forestry globally.

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