


English

Forest certification in Finland

WHAT IS IT?

Published in 2005

A large yellow brushstroke graphic that starts from the top left and sweeps across the page, partially overlapping the text boxes.

Forest certification is a method that forest owners, the forest industry and the entire production chain for wood products can use to show consumers that products are made from wood that comes from well-managed forests. A well-managed forest is one in which forestry is ecologically, socially and economically sustainable.

Forest certification is based on three things:

Forest certification ensures that the wood used to make a product comes from forests that are managed according to certification criteria. It does not say anything about other aspects of the production chain.



PUBLIC CRITERIA CONCERNING FOREST MANAGEMENT

The purpose of making forest management criteria public is to ensure that information on the management of certified forests is available to everyone.



CRITERIA CONCERNING THE CHAIN OF CUSTODY OF CERTIFIED WOOD USED IN PRODUCTS

Criteria concerning the chain of custody of wood ensure that the indicated portion of wood used in the product is really from certified forests.



MONITORING COMPLIANCE WITH CRITERIA AND LABELLING OF THE END PRODUCT

Compliance with certification criteria is monitored by a competent independent body. Independence means that the body is not linked to the parties in the production chain: the forest owner and the parties involved in harvesting, transporting, processing or selling wood. Competence means sufficient expertise in forestry, certification and the production of wood products. Usually compliance with certification criteria is controlled by a private certifier who has proved to be impartial and qualified for the job.



WHY IS FOREST CERTIFICATION NECESSARY?

Concern about the negative impacts of economic activity on the environment, workers and other people grew in the 1990s. However, wood is a better raw material than its rivals in terms of environmental impacts. Forest certification is one way to indicate this to consumers who purchase wood products.

All economic activity has positive and negative impacts on the environment and people. **Sustainable forestry** means that negative impacts on the environment are not irreparable but can be repaired by natural means or by man. Nordic forestry, with its emphasis on nature, strives to do this by imitating natural processes as closely as possible – without harming the profitability of forestry.

Sustainability is a competitive edge for forestry. This edge can only be achieved, however, if consumers of wood products are properly informed so that they understand the message and are convinced. Forest certification is necessary to assure customers that their purchasing decisions support economically, socially and ecologically sustainable forestry.



Forest certification provides

- **consumers** an opportunity to promote sustainable forestry by purchasing products that have been made using wood from certified forests
- **the forest industry's customers** an opportunity to promote sales and reduce associated risks
- **forestry**, wood-processing industry and sellers of wood products an opportunity to promote sales of wood products and improve their image
- **society** an opportunity to create sustainable solutions for social problems.

Forest certification is very important for Finland since most of its wood products are exported to environmentally conscious European markets. Customers and consumers on these markets seldom have a chance to find out about Finnish forestry's sustainability first hand or to receive adequate information on it.

FOREST CERTIFICATION,
WHAT AND WHY?



DOES FINLAND HAVE CERTIFIED FORESTS?

In terms of area, about 95% of Finland's commercial forests have been certified under the *Finnish Forest Certification System (FFCS)*. In 2005 less than 1% of forests were certified under the *Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)* scheme.



In 2000 the Finnish Forest Certification System was endorsed by the *Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (PEFC)*. The PEFC makes sure that national schemes in different countries – such as the FFCS – comply with jointly agreed criteria. Once a national scheme has reached an agreed level, mutual recognition follows.

The FFCS does not have a label of its own that is attached to wood products. Instead the national schemes in the PEFC system are allowed to use the PEFC label on products.

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WHAT IS GOOD FOREST MANAGEMENT?

A "well-managed forest" is a forest that is managed according to the principles of sustainable development. According to established views this means that development is ecologically, socially and economically sustainable. This is also in line with the definitions that were agreed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Forest management and harvesting must not weaken forest ecology or destroy a forest's recreational or cultural values. Forest management must also be economically profitable for all those involved in it.

CRITERIA CONCERNING
FOREST MANAGEMENT



HOW DOES FOREST CERTIFICATION PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY?

The FFSC sets 28 criteria for forestry. These deal with the economic, social and ecological sustainability of forest management and use. The criteria concern the planning and implementation of forest management, workers' rights, the training and advice provided to forest owners, and increasing young people's knowledge about forestry. Together the criteria are more stringent than Finnish legislation and other regulations, which are themselves quite strict by international standards.


The criteria focus special attention on

- protecting ecologically valuable habitats and waterways
- managing young forests
- training and instructions for forest management
- harmonizing nature-based industries and forestry.



What does sustainable forestry mean?

Sustainability means that forestry is ecologically, socially and economically sustainable.

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- Ecological sustainability means preserving natural environments and habitats and seeing that species' living conditions are not permanently weakened.
 - Social sustainability means ensuring the working conditions and occupational safety and health of forest workers while also allowing other people to use forests for hiking and short-term camping purposes, regardless of who owns them. Picking berries and mushrooms is also allowed and a forest's cultural values must not be destroyed.
 - Economic sustainability means that the production and processing of forest products are profitable for all those involved in the production chain.

How does certification ensure forest conservation?

Forest certification can influence the sustainability of forest management and use. It is not a forest conservation tool. Nor can it influence the management of strictly protected forests, since forestry is forbidden in these by law. Consequently forests in protected areas are not certified.

Forest certification can ensure biodiversity in commercial forests. Forest certification can also ensure that conservation values in strictly protected forests are not endangered by forest work in adjacent commercial forests.

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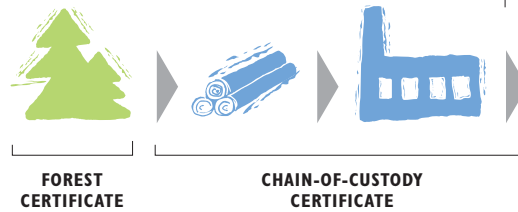


HOW IS THE ORIGIN OF RAW MATERIALS MONITORED?

If a company is entitled to use a forest certification label on its products, it must have a certified system to monitor the origin of wood. This system can reliably track the origin of wood used in the production process all the way back to certified forests. Independent certifiers make sure that the system is reliable. The proportion of wood from certified forests in the production chain can be monitored in two ways:

- **In the percentage model** products may be labelled as certified in the same proportion as the amount of wood that is certified. This is attested by inventory records during different stages of production and marketing. If there is enough certified raw material, a company's whole production can be labelled as certified. The PEFC allows this if 70% of raw materials is from certified forests. The share of recycled raw materials can also be taken into account in PEFC certification.

- **In the physical segregation of wood,** batches from certified forests must be kept separate from other wood. This applies to harvesting, transport, intermediate storage and processing. This is very expensive and increases transports and thus negative impacts on the environment, so the percentage model is generally preferred.



REQUIREMENTS FOR USING A LABEL

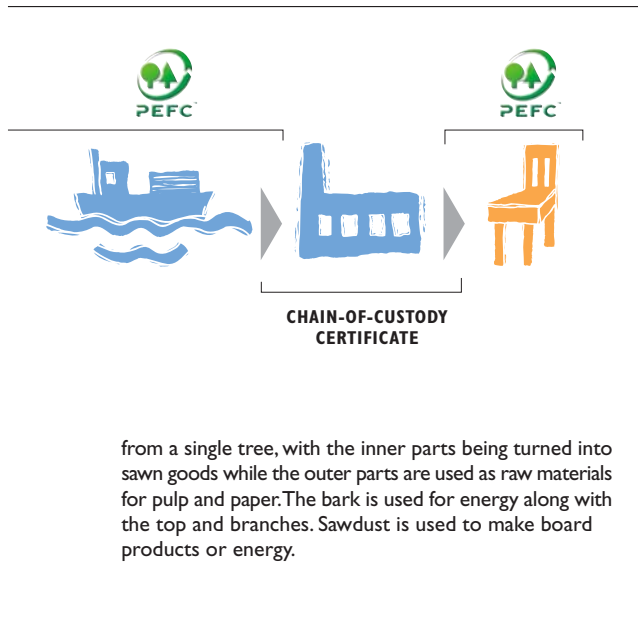
Using a forest certification label always requires at least two types of certificates, one concerning forest management and the other the chain of custody. More certificates may exist, covering different parts of the chain of custody, for example. Wood can also come from different forests and different products can be produced

What are group certification and regional certification?

In group certification a group of forest owners jointly apply for certification regarding forest management. In regional certification a regional organization of forest owners is authorized by its members and other parties to apply for certification regarding forest management in a particular region.

Regional group certification is quite suitable for Finnish family forestry because:

- Over 60% of Finland's forests are owned by private citizens and families and the average size of these forest holdings is small, only about 30 hectares.



- Certification objectives concerning the management of the forest environment and the multiple use of forests can be achieved better and more effectively if forestry can be influenced in a larger area than small forest holdings.
- It also provides the owners of small forest holdings an equal opportunity to participate in forest certification.
- Its implementation costs are reasonable.

Forest certification is always voluntary. Forest owners can choose to remain outside regional group certification.



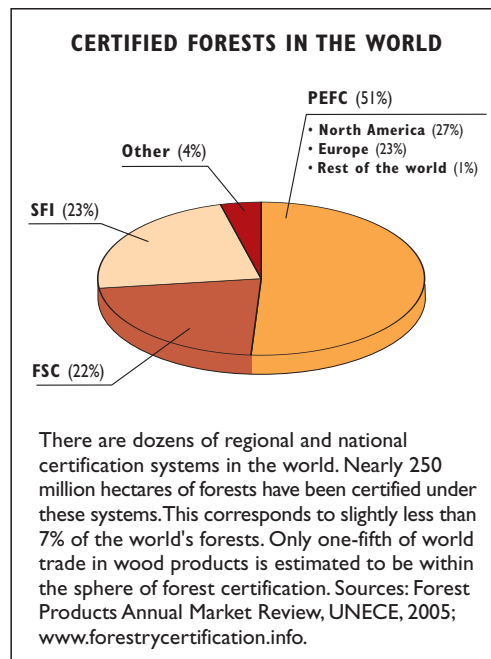
HOW CAN CONSUMERS KNOW THAT A PRODUCT IS MADE OF WOOD FROM A CERTIFIED FOREST?


Forest certification can be verified by checking the label on a product or its packaging. The right to use the label is only granted to companies and products that meet the required conditions. In Finland, the right to use the PEFC label is granted by the Finnish Forest Certification Council. Companies that process and market certified wood have started to use the PEFC label. Organizations that promote forestry or act in an advisory capacity can also use the PEFC label if they have made a commitment.



WHY ARE THERE DIFFERENT CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS?

Forests, forest owners, forestry and related activities differ in different countries and different parts of the world. Consequently forest certification systems also differ. The first forest certification system, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), was established in 1993. It was designed mainly with large forest owners in mind but was also adapted to suit the needs of small forest owners. The PEFC system, established in 1999, is particularly suitable for small forest owners. More and more large forest owners have joined it as well.






PEFC (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes) is a global umbrella organization for national certification schemes, which can gain mutual recognition within this framework. Products bearing the PEFC label are made of wood from forests that meet the criteria of national certification schemes endorsed by the PEFC. The structure and criteria of national certification schemes have been decided at the national level in an open manner involving all the interested parties. The PEFC system sets minimum requirements for national schemes, whose criteria are based on internationally accepted views concerning sustainable forest management objectives. The certification process specifies measures to achieve these objectives.

FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) is an international system set up on the initiative of environmental organizations. The FSC has defined ten general principles of forest management. Actual certification standards should be prepared through a national cooperation process according to the FSC's rules. In practice, however, most FSC certification is performed according to standards that have been adopted by companies supervising certification and comply with the FSC's ten principles, without national standards.

SFI (Sustainable Forestry Initiative) is a system developed by the North American forest industry, mainly for managing its own forests. The SFI belongs to the PEFC and its compatibility with the PEFC's requirements will be reviewed in 2005.

CSA (Canadian Standard Association) is a forest certification scheme developed in Canada. It is the largest national scheme endorsed by the PEFC and thus belongs to the PEFC system.



Why does the Finnish Forest Certification System belong to the PEFC?

The Finnish Forest Certification System (FFCS) cooperates with other national forest certification schemes within the framework of the PEFC. This is mainly because the PEFC is quite suitable for private family forestry, which plays such an important role in Finnish forestry. In the PEFC forests owned by different parties – families, local authorities, industry and the state – can be certified regionally as a group. This cuts costs and achieves greater ecological benefits than when individual holdings must be certified.

The PEFC system abides by the principles of good governance and an open multi-stakeholder process in which anyone can participate in developing forest certification. The Finnish Forest Certification Council is responsible for maintaining the certification system in Finland. According to its bylaws all the participating members are equal and no party has been given more power than others. This applies to all the Council's activities.

PEFC certification is open and all documents and main results concerning certification are public. This is in accord with the principle that the handling of disputes, the execution of decisions and the preparation of rules should be separated from one another. Thus questionable linkages can be avoided.



Finnish forest certification ensures the level of forest management

The PEFC has endorsed the Finnish Forest Certification System, which indicates that it adequately takes the requirements of ecological, economic and social sustainability into account. The rules concerning the chain of custody are also quite strict. A mill can label its whole production as being certified only if at least 70% of its wood raw materials is from certified forests. This threshold is high and helps ensure that the effect of PEFC certificates on forest management is significant.

Finnish forest certification increases interest in and responsibility for the forest environment. It also contains more requirements for sustainable forestry than legislation. Annual, independent and detailed audits and reporting ensure that requirements are in fact met.

The schemes that belong to the PEFC, such as the FFCS, comply with the requirements of the International Standardization Organization (ISO). The same principles are applied in certifying ISO quality and environmental systems. The FFCS goes farther than these, however: it is not enough to constantly improve activities but a clear minimum level has been set for forest management.



WHAT IS REQUIRED OF A GOOD FOREST CERTIFICATION SYSTEM?

According to established international views, a forest certification system must have the following characteristics:

- It must be monitored by a third, independent body.
- It must be developed in an open process including forest owners, industry, trade unions, recreational organizations, indigenous people and non-governmental organizations.
- It must be based on approved principles of sustainable forestry and require an objective and measurable minimum level of forest management.
- Information concerning the system must be available to everyone.
- Decision-making authority and responsibility must be arranged clearly and in a way that is understandable to everyone.
- It must be voluntary for all parties.
- It must be impartial, which means that everyone meeting certification conditions is entitled to certification.
- It must be independent of public authorities.

The criteria for a forest certificate must be regularly revised since opinions, knowledge and evaluations concerning the forest environment change. The criteria for the Finnish certificate are revised every five years, for example.

WHO IS INVOLVED IN FINNISH FOREST CERTIFICATION?

The Finnish Forest Certification Council develops and promotes the FFCS. Council membership is restricted to organizations.

Members of the Council (in 2005)

- National Ecclesiastical Board
- Association of Machine Entrepreneurs
- Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners, MTK
- Forestry Experts' Association
- Transport Contractors in the Forest Branch
- Metsähallitus, the state-owned forests
- Society of Finnish Professional Foresters
- Finnish Forest Research Institute
- Finnish Forest Industries Federation
- Wood and Allied Workers' Union
- Finnish 4H Federation
- Finnish Sawmills
- Central Union of Swedish-speaking Agricultural Producers in Finland

The revised standard for the FFCS was introduced in 2005. The standard was prepared by a working group that included a large number of parties that are interested in developing Finnish forestry. The working group was independent of the Finnish Forest Certification Council. In addition to Council members, participants in the working group included the following:

- Metsäliitto Cooperative
- Hunters' Central Organization
- Reindeer Herders' Association
- Finnish Furniture and Joinery Industry
- Saami Parliament
- Stora Enso Oyj Forest
- Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities
- Central Association for Recreational Sports and Outdoor Activities
- Finnish Association of Forest Owners
- UPM Kymmene Oyj Forest



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Canadian Standard Association
www.csa.ca

Confederation of European Paper Industries
www.cepi.org

Ministerial Conference on the Protection of
Forests in Europe
www.mcpfe.org

Forest Stewardship Council
www.fsc.org

Finnish Forest Certification Council
www.ffcs-finland.org

Sustainable Forest Initiative
www.afandpa.org, click **Forestry** and **SFI**

PEFC Council
www.pefc.org



PEFC/02-44-09

Promoting sustainable forest management
For more information: www.pefc.org

Publisher: Finnish Forest Foundation

Design and layout: gravision

Photos: Hannu Hautala
Lassi Rautiainen
Finnish Forest
Industries Federation

Printed by: Sävypaino /
December 2005



FINNISH FOREST FOUNDATION

www.metsasaatio.fi

The Finnish Forest Foundation is voluntarily funded by forest owners, the forest industry, private sawmills, Metsähallitus (Forest and Park Service) and other organizations in the field. It works to promote Finnish family forestry and the use of wood-based products.

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PEFC/02-44-09

