

Forest Certifications in Europe

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Today there are more than 50 certification programs worldwide addressing the many types of forests and tenures around the world. The two largest international forest certification programs are the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC). Third-party forest certification was pioneered in the early 1990s by the FSC, a collaboration between environmental NGOs, forest product companies and social interests.

Basic requirements of credible forest certification programs include:

- Protection of biodiversity, species at risk and wildlife habitat; sustainable harvest levels; protection of water quality; and prompt regeneration (e.g., replanting and reforestation).
- Third-party certification audits performed by accredited certification bodies.
- Publicly available certification audit summaries.
- Multi-stakeholder involvement in a standards development process.

Forests certifications objectives:

- to establish credibility through verification of conformity to agreed standards or performance indicators.
- to accredit and monitor the certifying companies that carry out the forest audits.
- to create a world in which people manage forests sustainably.



Forest Stewardship Council

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is an international not-for-profit, multi-stakeholder organization established in 1993 to promote responsible management of the world's forests. Its main tools for achieving this are standard setting, certification and labeling of forest products.

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) was founded in 1993 by representatives from environmental and conservation groups, timber industry, the forestry profession, indigenous peoples' organizations, community forestry groups and forest product certification organizations.



Similarities

- ✓ FSC and PEFC use the same forest management standard in countries such as the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Norway.
- ✓ SFI and FSC consist of a standard, a certification process, and rules to guarantee that products carrying their label are actually derived from certified forest.
- ✓ The SFI and FSC standards both identify the protection of old-growth and other special sites or high conservation value areas as important in the practice of sustainable forestry.
- ✓ The SFI and FSC standards both recognize the importance of well-trained professionals in the practice of responsible forestry.

The Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification

PEFC™ is a worldwide non-profit, non-governmental organization promoting Sustainable Forest Management. PEFC's aim is to create a world in which people manage forests sustainably. By means of certification forest owners can show that they manage their forest sustainably according to the PEFC standard. Its 35 worldwide independent national forest certification systems represent more than 240 million ha of certified forests, making it the largest forest certification system in the world, covering about two-thirds of the globally certified forest area. It is based in Geneva, Switzerland.



SFI

Is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting sustainable forest management. The SFI program's unique fiber sourcing requirements promote responsible forest management on all suppliers' lands. The Sustainable Forestry Initiative is the world's largest single forest certification standard by area. The SFI program was launched in 1994 by the American Forest and Paper Association. It became more independent in 2007 as a separate charity.

Differences

- The SFI approach varies by region and the FSC approach defines specific old-growth types and protections, including variations for American Indian lands.
- The SFI approach to addressing training requirements details the specific training courses to be provided. The FSC approach is performance based.
- The FSC standards is approved by the same organization while the PEFC organization standards is approved by independent certifiers.

Critics:

- State forests are certified while private forests aren't in FSC.
- Only large businesses with rigid structures can afford the process of assessment and maintenance of the schemes.
- Certification schemes are anti-competitive because they favor large firms over smaller ones.
- FSC-Watch commonly accuses FSC of practices that are a form of greenwashing.

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