



Forest Certification

Forest certification is a system of forest monitoring, tracing and labelling timber, wood and pulp products and non timber forest products, where the quality of management from environmental, social, and economic perspectives is judged against a series of agreed standards. The key to forest certification is the development of a system that combines auditing forest practices with tracing forest products. Discussions about certification began in the early 1990s. To avoid confusion, and provide an overall system for monitoring and assessing certification systems, the Forest Stewardship Council was established in 1993. The FSC agreed a general set of *Principles and Criteria* in June 1994. Forest certification is thus finishing its first decade of existence. Its proven benefits range from environmental protection to socio-economic improvements.

WWF believes that forest certification is a tool to promote:

- Good forest management that gives weight to social values, environmental conservation and economic benefits
- Conservation of biological diversity in managed forests including High Conservation Value Forests (see separate position paper)
- Mechanisms to ascertain the ownership or use rights for local communities and indigenous people
- Frameworks for resolution of social conflict over utilisation of forest resources
- Transparency of both forest management and the forest products trade
- Provision of a credible guarantee of legal and responsible forest management to forest industries, timber trade, consumers of forest products and other stakeholders (which also has the potential to be instrumental in helping to curb illegal logging)

To date, certification has been carried out mainly in industrial production forests. This has helped to establish recognition of certification processes with a range of stakeholders, whilst providing market benefits to those participating companies.

WWF thinks that it is both desirable and feasible to extend the benefits of certification significantly beyond these industrial production forests, working particularly with community managed forests and those under the control of indigenous peoples.

WWF will work with responsible members of the timber trade and other stakeholders to further advance certification, by:

- Striving to widen and strengthen the array of incentives for certification outside direct market benefits (e.g. reinforcement of the rights and values of indigenous peoples)
- Promoting the development and implementation of mechanisms to help local and indigenous communities and small forest owners access certification
- Supporting the FSC as the only credible system currently available
- Carrying out periodic objective evaluations of the FSC and other schemes, thus helping them to maintain and increase their quality and efficiency
- Encouraging periodic objective comparisons of all schemes, extracting key messages and communicating them to different audiences
- Working at national and regional levels on the development of standards and delivery mechanisms to encourage greater stakeholder participation in discussions on forest management standards
- Developing forest certification among a diversity of global regions, forest types and land tenure regimes, including developing countries and economies in transition



Position Paper

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One of a series of position papers produced as WWF's response to the WWF/IUCN Forests for Life strategy and WWF's current five-year target-driven programme on forests
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* Specific policy papers regarding mutual recognition, the Forest Stewardship Council and PEFC have been prepared.