



Forest Certification

WWF believes that responsibly managed forests are necessary for the maintenance of biodiversity and ecosystems services, both on individual sites and within the wider landscape. Forest management, including intensive commercial management, can be a critical and cost-effective conservation tool within larger-scale conservation strategies. Well-managed commercial or community forests can for example provide vital buffers for and links between protected areas. Forest management should therefore seek to maintain forest quality and not degrade either the timber resource or the range of associated goods and services (non-timber forest products, environmental services, biodiversity, spiritual values, recreational uses etc).

Forest certification is a mechanism for 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.

WWF sees credible forest certification as a tool to:

- Promote socially, environmentally and economically responsible forest management;
- Safeguard biological diversity in managed forests including High Conservation Value Forests;
- Respect the ownership and use rights of local communities and indigenous peoples;
- Provide a forum for dialogue between different stakeholders and establish frameworks for resolution of social conflict over utilisation of forest resources;
- Ensure transparency of both forest management and the forest products trade; and
- Provide a market mechanism allowing companies and consumers to identify and purchase timber and non-timber forest products from well-managed forests.

During the last decade forest certification has become a significant market mechanism to promote responsible forest management and there is today a proliferation of certification schemes around the world. However, these vary widely in their standards, consistency, transparency, means of verification and in the degree to which governance is open to different stakeholders. Thus, the extent to which different schemes ensure, and credibly communicate, responsible forest management varies considerably.

To meet WWF's basic requirements of promoting improvement in forest management, transparency, international consistency and balanced multi-stakeholder governance, a forest certification scheme should be based on the following criteria:

- Compatibility with international frameworks for certification accreditation and standard setting;
- Compatibility with globally applicable principles that balance economic, ecological, and equity dimensions of forest management;
- The meaningful and equitable participation of all major stakeholder groups in governance and standard setting;
- Avoidance of unnecessary obstacles to trade;
- Objective and measurable performance standards that are adapted to local conditions;
- Certification decisions free of conflicts of interest from parties with vested interests;
- Transparency in decision making and public reporting;
- Reliable and independent assessment of forest management performance and chain of custody;
- Delivery of continual improvement in forest management;
- Accessibility to and cost-effectiveness for all parties; and
- Voluntary participation.

In collaboration with the World Bank, WWF has developed a methodology, The Forest Certification Assessment Guide (FCAG)¹, and used it to evaluate various certification schemes. These assessments^{2, 3, 4}, as well as other evaluations^{5, 6, 7} demonstrate that,

¹ Download the FCAG at <http://assets.panda.org/downloads/fcagfinal.pdf>

² *Forest Certification Assessment Guide (FCAG) Generic Analysis of the FSC and PEFC International Systems, September 2006, Updated August 2008*, Martin Walter at http://assets.panda.org/downloads/2008_11_17_final_fcag_assessment_.pdf



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For further details contact

Margareta Renström
WWF International
Tel: +46 8 5465 75 05
margareta.renstrom@wwf.se

while there is considerable room for improvement in all schemes, Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)⁸ certification best meets WWF's key requirements. Thus, while WWF acknowledges that several schemes may contribute to improve forest management, the organization will continue to focus its active efforts on improving the FSC system, on adapting FSC certification to different scales and national contexts, and on promoting the FSC logo as an internationally recognized hallmark of responsible forest management.

WWF will collaborate with forest stakeholders to:

- Further develop and strengthen the FSC as a credible certification system through active membership in the FSC environmental chamber;
- Provide support to certification schemes conditional on commitment to attain or maintain credibility as defined by FCAG;
- Support the development of national standards that fulfil WWF requirements for credible certification including the development of single national standards that can be endorsed by several systems if appropriate;
- Promote responsible forest management as well as trade and use of credibly certified products through the WWF Global Forest & Trade Network⁹;
- Promote the development and implementation of mechanisms to help local and indigenous communities and small forest owners to access certification;
- Promote the expanded application of certification to non-timber forest products and other environmental services provided by forests;
- Encourage the FSC label on products containing wood from FSC-certified forests in order to increase the visibility of the FSC label in the market place, and
- Promote the FCAG as a tool to evaluate the credibility of international and national certification schemes.

³ *Forest Certification Credibility Assessment in Indonesia applying the Forest Certification Assessment Guide on a National Level*, Alexander Hinrichs and Agung Prasetyo,
http://www.panda.org/news_facts/publications/index.cfm?uNewsID=102420

⁴ *Analyses of certification schemes in Malaysia using the WWF/World Bank Global Forest Alliance Forest Certification Assessment Guide*, Richard Robertson - to be published

⁵ *The Effects of PEFC-Certification – An Analysis of Audit Reports of PEFC Germany*, Peter Hirschberger -
<http://assets.panda.org/downloads/theeffectsofpefccertificationfinal.pdf>

⁶ *Confronting sustainability: Forest Certification in Developing and Transitioning Countries*, Cashore et al, Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, 2006

⁷ *Does Forest Certification Matter? An Analysis of Operation-Level Changes Required During the SmartWood Certification Process in the United States* - Deanna Newsom, Volker Bahn and Benjamin Cashore -
<http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/resources/documents/doesforestcertmatter.pdf>

⁸ For more info about FSC see www.fsc.org

⁹ For more information about GFTN see www.panda.org/gftn