



INDEPENDENT RESEARCH AND OTHER VOICES CONFIRM FSC AS THE LEADING FOREST CERTIFICATION SYSTEM

A large and growing body of literature exists comparing and assessing forest management certification schemes. This document collects key citations and includes a full list of references for further reading.



Assessment of FSC Principles and Criteria. ISEAL Alliance (2006):

“Our legal advice shows that there is nothing within WTO rules that prevents governments from referring exclusively to compliance with the FSC Principles and Criteria

(P&C) within their government procurement specifications, technical regulations or voluntary standards.”

Certifying extinction? An assessment of the revised standards of the Finnish Forest Certification System. S. Harkki. Greenpeace (2004):

“The FFCS has failed to provide any credible guarantee that Finnish timber products originate from forests managed in an environmentally or socially responsible fashion.”

“The likelihood is that unless practices change in Finland, endangered species will be pushed to extinction and the traditional livelihoods of indigenous communities will be lost, all with the FFCS or PEFC stamp of approval.”

FFCS is endorsed by the Pan-European Forest Certification scheme (PEFC).

Certifying the incredible, the Australian forest standard. Barely legal and not sustainable. The Wilderness Society (2005):

“Both the AFCS and PEFC are a sham designed to pass off wood and wood products as legal and sustainable in markets where concerns over environmental and social justice have never been higher.”

“The AFCS certifies wood and wood products that come from land clearing, old-growth forests logging and clearing, the poisoning of thousands of animals every year, and the contamination of domestic water supplies.”

**Collapse. J. Diamond. Penguin (2005):**

“The effectiveness of the Forest Stewardship Council has received the ultimate compliment from logging companies opposed to it: they have set up their own competing certification organizations with weaker standards. These include the Sustainable Forestry Initiative in the U.S., set up by the American Forest and Paper Association; the Canadian Standards Association; and the Pan-European Forest Council. The effect (and presumably the purpose) is to confuse the public with competing claims: for instance, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative initially proposed six different labels making six different claims. All of these “knockoffs” differ from FSC in that they do not require independent third-party certification, but they permit companies to certify themselves (I’m not joking). They do not ask companies to judge themselves by uniform standards and quantifiable results (e.g., “width of the strips of riparian vegetation flanking streams”), but instead by unquantifiable processes (“we have a policy”, “our managers participate in discussions”). (...) The Pan-European Forest Council practices regional automatic certification, by which for instance the entire country of Austria became certified quickly. It remains to be seen whether, in the future, these competing industry attempts at self-certification will be outcompeted by the FSC through losing credibility in the eyes of consumers, or will instead converge on FSC standards in order to gain credibility.” p.478/479

Confronting sustainability: Forest certification in developing and transitioning countries. B. Cashore, F. Gale, E. Meidinger, D. Newsom (ed.). Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies (2006):

“An intense competition has been waged for almost a decade now between FSC and industry-initiated certification programs, which were established to offer a more “business friendly”, flexible, and less stringent approach to forest management.”

“Certification has had important social effects, especially in terms of community and workers rights. (...) Certification has also had important economic effects (...) at both the level of the firm and the level of the economy as a whole.”

Consuming Canada’s Boreal Forest: The chain of destruction from logging companies to consumers. Greenpeace (2007):

“There is increasing recognition that the marketplace can have a significant impact in shifting the way forestry is carried out on the ground and ending logging in intact forests. Individual consumers worldwide are increasingly demanding products that limit damage to the environment and this concern is reflected in the purchases they make. The evidence for this is seen in the growth of the variety and amount of papers manufactured from recycled and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-certified materials and from lumber that is FSC-certified. (...)”

“One of the most effective ways to transform the practices of destructive logging companies is for corporate customers to demand responsible forestry certified to the standards of the FSC (...)” p.5

Does forest certification conserve biodiversity? R.E. Gullison. Cambridge University Press (2003):

“The process of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification generates improvements to management with respect to the value of managed forests for biodiversity.”

“Firstly, the FSC is the only international certification system with wide geographical coverage. (...) Secondly, the FSC standards have the greatest support from the environmental and social non-governmental organization (NGO) communities (...). Thirdly, the FSC has the greatest commitment to transparency (...)”

Experiences with voluntary standards initiatives and related multi-stakeholder dialogues. B. Lang. GTZ (2006):

“The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) which has a tripartite structure in which social, environmental and economic interest groups have equal voting weight enjoys a higher credibility with the general public and civil society in particular than alternative schemes which tend to be dominated by a single interest group.”



Footprints in the forest - Current practice and future challenges in forest certification. S. Ozinga, L. Krul. FERN (2004):

“The eight forest certification schemes examined – AFS, CSA, CERFLOR, FSC, PEFC, SFI, MTCC and Certfor – clearly demonstrate how different certification schemes tell different stories and therefore will yield different results. (...) The problem is that most of these forest certification schemes certify the status quo thereby undermining the concept of certification. To give just one example, all schemes assessed, with the exception of the FSC, allow for the conversion of forests to plantations.”

“The FSC should still be seen as the benchmark for credible certification, as it has clear minimum performance-based national standards and a balanced and inclusive decision-making process. It is also transparent and has well developed certification, accreditation, chain of custody and labelling procedures.”

Governing through markets: Forest certification and the emergence of non-state authority. B. Cashore, G. Auld, D. Newsom. Yale University Press (2004):

“Overall the study reveals that the gulf between the FSC and FSC competitors is still wide, with significant differences over the use of exotics, genetically modified organisms, chemicals, and governance mechanisms.”

Legal forest destruction - The wide gap between legality and sustainability. IUCN, Greenpeace, ICCO, Milieudefensie, NCIV & WWF (2006):

“Clear safeguards are needed to prevent the endorsement of ineffective licensing systems and illegitimate and unsustainable practices, particularly with regards to forest certification schemes as a number of these schemes have been heavily criticised for being corrupted and ineffective for the verification of legality.”

“Adopt a “truly green” procurement policy, with 100% of its purchased timber from sustainable managed forestry operations, which are certified at least to the standards demanded by the Forest Stewardship Council. Do not procure forest products from certification schemes that do not guarantee legality and sustainability.”

Missing links - Why the Malaysian Timber Certification Council (MTCC) certificate doesn't prove that MTCC timber is legal nor sustainable. Greenpeace (2005):

“Greenpeace concludes that the MTCC scheme, in its present form, cannot be considered to provide sufficient guarantees that MTCC timber offered in the marketplace – in Europe or elsewhere – is fully derived from legal and sustainable sources.”

On the ground - Forest certification: green stamp of approval or rubber stamp of destruction? A. Tan. ForestEthics, Greenpeace & Sierra Club Canada (2003):

“The preference for FSC is informed by sound scientific evidence that industrial forestry as practiced in the past and present has unacceptable costs, including the loss of key wildlife species such as grizzly bears, ruined water supplies and rapidly eroding soils. And where there are ecological costs, there are bound to be social and economic costs, costs that are disproportionately borne by indigenous peoples and rural communities the world over.”

“That's why FSC remains the only viable certification system at this time, and why the general public and forest product buyers should reject CSA/SFI certifications that simply rubber-stamp the status quo.”

Partnerships in forest governance. I. Visseren-Hamakers, P. Glasbergen. Global Environmental Change 17, 408-419 (2007):

“The FSC is the only partnership in which social and environmental interests have their own formal place in the organisation.”

“The effectiveness of the different certification schemes also differs. The FSC is the most stringent and inclusive. The FSC clearly specifies the level of performance or results that must be achieved in a forest; it is a performance based system. It also addresses issues that the others do not.”

“There seems to be a trend for partnerships to choose for less stringent and less inclusive approaches towards



sustainability. The FSC and RSPO are the only exceptions (...). If this trend continues, the added value of partnerships in the forest biodiversity governance system will remain limited. (...) Often, the more difficult issues, like indigenous peoples' rights or the use of GMOs, are not (thoroughly) addressed."

Public procurement and forest certification: Assessment of the implications for policy, law and international trade; Comparing major certification schemes: FSC, PEFC, CSA, MTCC and SFI. P. Sprang, N. Meyer-Ohlendorf. Ecologic Briefs (2006):

"Findings indicate that the FSC operates strictly under publicly available performance standards which are generally more strict than those of other schemes. FSC shows a higher audit intensity than other schemes."

"Generally, it can be concluded that the FSC has more checks and balances in place to keep inconsistency at a minimum while providing clear evidence of its impact on forest management."

The effects of FSC certification in Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Russia, Sweden and the UK. WWF (2005):

"The analysis across 6 countries shows that FSC certification is delivering a number of benefits for a wide range of stakeholders in the forest industry, and provides hard evidence of tangible improvements that the voluntary mechanism of credible certification delivers for society, the environment and the economy."

"Certification to the FSC standards has demonstrated across Europe that it can consistently raise the standard of forest management."

The effects of PEFC-certification - An analysis of audit reports of PEFC Germany. WWF (2005):

"Certification under PEFC converses the status quo in forest management with its strengths, but also with its weaknesses."

"Most of the corrective actions by PEFC are only recommendations a forest owner can ignore without any consequences."

What role for private rule-making in global environmental governance? Analysing the Forest Stewardship Council. P. Pattberg. Springer (2005):

"By bringing together many different actors and interests within one forum, by verifying these commitments, and by providing a model for other actors and other issue areas, the FSC provides an institutionalised solution to global environmental problems."

WWF Position Paper on Forest Certification (2007):

"In collaboration with the World Bank, WWF has developed a methodology, The Forest Certification Assessment Guide (FCAG), and used it to evaluate various certification schemes. These assessments, as well as other WWF evaluations, demonstrate that, while there is considerable room for improvement in all schemes, Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) 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 Press release in reaction to: Review of forest certification schemes, Central Point of Expertise on Timber - CPET (2006):

"...major environmental groups, including WWF, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and FERN, criticized the [UK] government's decision to allow its departments to purchase wood products certified by schemes that allow destructive logging practises, by accepting them as proof of sustainability."

"The only certification scheme currently recognised as credible by industry, NGOs and indigenous peoples groups alike is the scheme operated by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)."