

# Forestry Sustainability, Timber Regulation and Industry Certification Schemes



Forests have a central role to play in protecting the environment by acting as a carbon sink, regulating water flows, hosting wildlife and providing recreational opportunities. Well managed forests also have a role in providing a source of sustainable raw materials widely used both by local communities and industry. Indeed, sustainable harvesting can be fundamental to avoiding the permanent conversion of forest land to other uses; income from the sale of forest products acting as a powerful incentive for landowners to keep land afforested.

Proper forest management can reconcile these varied roles, helping avoid conflicts that result in unsustainable actions that damage forests. This issue is increasingly important as new parts of industry look to forests to provide sustainable raw materials to drive an expanding bio-based economy. With growing pressure on forests, international efforts to promote sustainable forestry are increasing important.

In practice, pulp used in papermaking comes from many sources, and industry continues to work to high standards of sustainability in both virgin and recycled pulps. Of paper made in the UK, more than 70% is made from recycled fibre, providing a key market for materials collected for recycling from households and businesses. The balance is either made from domestic timber processed in one of the two UK integrated pulp and paper mills (Iggesund in Cumbria and UPM Caledonian in Ayrshire), imported pulp, or from other types of non-wood fibre used to make specialist papers.

### European Union Timber Regulation (EUTR)

The European Union has laws in place to ensure that timber and many timber-based products (including pulp, un-printed paper and pre-use paper-based packaging) sold anywhere in the EU are produced from materials that were legally harvested. CPI warmly welcomed this legislation being introduced and continues to call for additional categories of product to be included within the scope. Sustainability is a cornerstone of the paper industry and there is no place for illegally harvested materials in the sector.

Organisations buying and selling regulated products are required to comply with the requirements of EUTR. Essentially, if a company places a product on the market in any EU Member State for the first time, they are an “operator” and are required to carry out due diligence and act on detailed risk assessments to minimize any risk of illegally harvested material being used. If a company buys or sells material already placed on the EU market, then they are a “trader” and their responsibility is limited to recording who they purchased from and who they sell onto – this system allows Regulators to track products back to their source and check their legality. At this stage it’s not clear what impact Brexit will have on the scheme, though the UK Government has indicated a preference for the scheme to continue. CPI supports this position.

Detailed information on UK regulation can be found at: [www.gov.uk/guidance/eu-timber-regulation-guidance-for-business-and-industry](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/eu-timber-regulation-guidance-for-business-and-industry)

While EUTR ensures that pulp is made from legally harvested materials, independent certification provides an opportunity to go further by also addressing sustainability issues.

### Forest Certification

The concept of forest certification comes from the As consumers become increasingly concerned about green issues, the environmental credentials of paper-based products become more important and differentiate paper from other non-renewable materials. Independent certification schemes are the key way sustainability is assured, with certification scheme logos being widely used on paper and card products to demonstrate they are made from sustainable sources.

The concept of forest certification comes from a United Nations Conference in 1992, where a number of Forest Principles, aimed at halting the deforestation of tropical rainforests, were agreed. This was the first serious global attempt to define (by awarding equal status to



environmental, social and economic criteria) and to achieve sustainable forest management. Over time this thinking has developed and been refined, with a number of different certification schemes now available to provide independent assurance that the principles of Sustainable Forest Management are followed in specific forests or regions. Of the varied schemes two are international ones are key: FSC and PEFC. CPI supports the work of both organisations.



**Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)** ([www.fsc.org](http://www.fsc.org))

*FSC is an independent, non-profit, non-“The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is an international, non-governmental organisation dedicated to promoting responsible management of the world’s forests.”*

FSC was founded in 1993 with the support of a number of international environmental groups (most particularly WWF) and social non-governmental organisations. FSC is guided by three equally weighted chambers: economic, social and environmental that meet at regular intervals to guide the development of the scheme. A number of paper companies actively support the work of FSC and are part of the economic chamber.

FSC does not certify forests itself, rather its role is to evaluate and accredit auditors and set overriding principles and criteria to which they work. National standards are developed by working groups which include representatives from all the relevant stakeholder groups.

FSC has developed a range of on-product logos for products that are widely used by the paper industry, with their proper use being monitored by FSC approved auditors.

While the preference is for product to contain 100% certified or recycled materials, FSC rules allow products to contain some non-certified material as long as it meets certain minimum standards and is appropriately marked on the final product ('FSC mix').

Under the FSC credit system, the company must purchase sufficient fully certified material to cover the total amount of FSC marked product they sell; while under the FSC percentage system, marked product

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must contain a minimum of 70% FSC certified or recycled material, with the balance being controlled wood: (<http://www.fsc-uk.org/preview.what-do-the-fsc-labels-mean-factsheet.a-749.pdf>).

Of critical importance is that any **controlled wood** must be from responsibly managed sources which have been assessed as having a low probability of including wood that has been illegally harvested; harvested in violation of traditional and civil rights; harvested in forests of high conservation value (threatened by management activities); harvested in forests being converted into other uses; or containing GM modified material. Increasing company assessments draw on country (or region specific) information provided by FSC.

**Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC)** ([www.pefc.org](http://www.pefc.org))

*PEFC is a forest industry initiative launched in 1999 and has now become the largest forest certification umbrella organisation, with its membership comprising individual certification schemes.*

PEFC is primarily supported by owners of small forests that collectively supply a substantial amount of timber to the Paper Industry.

PEFC facilitates the mutual recognition of national forest certification initiatives that deliver a similar level of assurance. It enables countries, or regions, to develop schemes that cater for their own particular forest types, conditions and ownership structures. The PEFC model is based on independent third-party auditing and regional certification. All member countries and their stakeholders can vote on whether or not to mutually recognise applicant schemes. Certification schemes that seek to be recognised by the PEFC council and use the logo must fulfil all PEFC's requirements. Details on PEFC logo use can be found at: <https://www.pefc.org/standards/logo-use>

Most national certification schemes are derivatives of either the FSC or PEFC. The UK also has a national scheme – the **UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS)** ([www.ukwas.org.uk](http://www.ukwas.org.uk)) – designed as a single national certification standard for common use by international forest certification schemes operating in the UK such as FSC or PEFC. A fourth revision was released in 2018, now adopted by both FSC & PEFC for use in UK assessments.

The latest figures show that 50% of the UK's woodland area and an estimated 85% of harvested timber is certified through one or both of these schemes. A unique feature of the UK forestry sector is that woodlands can be dual-certified to a single national standard.



**Chain of Custody.** Companies taking part in certification schemes are required to operate independently audited Chain of Custody systems to demonstrate that materials they use can be tracked through supply chains to prove that material contained in product is as claimed. To operate a verified CoC Standard, there needs to be certification throughout the full supply chain, with proper control systems and records every time materials change legal ownership. Materials are tracked through every stage of the production process, from harvesting, processing, manufacturing, printing and distribution, until the final product goes to consumers.

**Independent verification.** To ensure systems are properly managed, and that environmental claims can be shown to be valid, most companies take part in independent schemes where independent verifiers audit company systems and confirm they are properly run. FSC and PEFC both require such independent verification. If their logos are used on packaging, then customers can be assured that the product meets the environmental standards set by the relevant organisation.

### Spreading the Message

Forest certification is used by the UK Government as part of its timber procurement policy, and Government departments can only buy timber-related products that have been independently verified as coming from legal and sustainable sources. Policies were developed by the Central Point of Expertise on Timber Procurement (CPET). CPET is now closed, but its guidance papers are still available via:

[www.gov.uk/government/groups/central-point-of-expertise-on-timber](http://www.gov.uk/government/groups/central-point-of-expertise-on-timber)



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