

Greenpeace, RAN Warn of Forest Certification Greenwash

Greenpeace and the Rainforest Action Network consider that the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), along with PEFC-endorsed standards the Indonesian Forest Certification Cooperation (IFCC), the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and the Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme (MTCS), are weak forest certification systems that do not guarantee responsible or sustainable forest management.

These forestry certification schemes are largely developed by the forestry industry with insufficient stakeholder and NGO involvement and endorsement. They are based on inadequate rules and poor standards and therefore cannot provide assurance that the ecological and social values of forests are being protected [1]. Hence, we believe that any sustainability claims based on these certification schemes is industry 'greenwash.'

The recent IFCC standard ('Sustainable Forest Management Requirements') – endorsed by the PEFC umbrella scheme – has weak rules which allow certification of plantation areas converted prior to 2011 (compared to November 1994 under the Forest Stewardship Council) and there are no provisions to address previous forest clearance by certified companies. It has no specific provisions prohibiting new plantations on peatland nor addressing the impacts of existing plantations on peat. Furthermore, there are major concerns around the quality of auditing against the IFCC standard.

While the Forest Stewardship Council is not perfect, it contains a framework, as well as standards (principles, criteria and indicators) that can guarantee socially and ecologically responsible practices if implemented correctly. This includes clear requirements to prevent deforestation, protect environmental values and High Conservation Values (HCV) including peatlands, and respect the rights of traditional and indigenous communities.

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[1] Through its May 2015 WWF Forest Certification Assessment Tool (CAT), WWF confirmed the inadequacies of PEFC's system and standards, following earlier assessments of PEFC which found it insufficiently protected human rights, stakeholder participation, and transparency.

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