



The Amazon and the Forest Stewardship Council

With the world's ancient forests disappearing, species, cultures and entire ecosystems are forever lost. Consumers are becoming increasingly concerned about the origin of the timber products they buy. Not only do individual and corporate consumers want to buy timber from legal sources, but they also want to support good forest management and sustainable logging operations. The only way to ensure that wood products from the Amazon and other ancient forests are coming from legal and well-managed forests is to demand that all products have been independently certified to at least the standards required by the Forest Stewardship Council.

The Forest Stewardship Council, or FSC, is an international, non-profit forest certification and labelling system that was established by a coalition of environmental, social and economic interests, including Greenpeace. The FSC oversees third party, voluntary certification of forests and offers a single, easily recognisable label consumers can trust. Ecologically responsible forest management, such as that required by the FSC, seeks to ensure that the forest ecosystem is not damaged and only low volumes of trees that can be sustained by the forest are extracted. The impacts on the plant and animal life in the forest from this method of logging must be minimal.

FSC certification also means that the forest has been independently inspected and evaluated for compliance with local laws, respect for indigenous and traditional peoples rights, the health, safety and rights of forest workers, and the provision of a wide range of social benefits. The FSC has grown rapidly since its inception and there are now FSC endorsed certifications and working groups in all major forest production regions. Over 24 million hectares of forest in 47 different countries worldwide have now passed FSC endorsed certification assessments. The certifications cover all types of situations, including communal and group certifications, natural and semi-natural forests, government owned forests and plantations.

Brazil has played a strong leadership role in the formation and development of the FSC, at both a national and international level. Five forest companies have been certified in the Brazilian Amazon to date and other assessments are under way. Precious Woods Amazon was the first natural forest to obtain FSC certification of their entire operation in the Brazilian Amazon. Of the other four companies, two now have full certification, while the other two have certification for only a part of their operations.

Precious Woods Amazon manages 80,000 hectares of forest in Itacoatiara, east of Manaus. Each logging operation uses low impact methods to cut trees which are then processed locally. They produce a wide range of products in their own sawmill, and sell logs to a local mill for the manufacturing of FSC certified plywood. Precious Woods' products are sold to Europe, Asia and the US.

Efforts are also underway working with a number of community managed forests in the Amazon to establish FSC certified systems, as well as expanding certifications for non-timber forest products, including for Brazil nuts. Ten manufacturing companies, including Gethal, the largest exporting timber company in Amazonas state, have received certificates for tracking timber origin and are providing FSC labelled products for the Brazilian and international markets.

Support for the FSC label is high among major purchasers and retailers of forest products, but the tens of billions of dollars in market demand for FSC products still far exceeds supply. FSC certified products make up an estimated five percent of the market in Western Europe, and sales of half a billion dollars in the US with a market growth estimated at 100 to 150 percent a year. Yet less than one percent of the Amazon is logged sustainably. As the greatest reserve of tropical rainforest in the world, the Amazon represents an opportunity to expand the FSC market to meet demands while promoting sustainable use of the forest.

The FSC represents an important tool for efforts to end ancient forest destruction and redirect the forest products industry towards more sustainable paths. FSC forest certification and labelling, which hardly existed a decade ago, is now widely recognised as the single most important new international forest policy instrument to be established in the last 10 years.

Greenpeace is actively working in market countries to uncover the hidden flows of forest products coming from ancient forest destruction. Consumers have a right and responsibility to purchase forest products that do not contribute to forest degradation and destruction. The FSC gives concerned buyers the opportunity to make an informed choice, and use the power of the market to support those who are promoting and practising ecologically responsible forest stewardship around the world.



The Forest Stewardship Council: facts and figures

The FSC is the only international certification and labelling system which:

- is based on a internationally endorsed and recognised set of comprehensive principles and criteria and is global in scope;
 - uses ecological performance based standards for certification,
 - brings together a broad range of environmental, social and economic stakeholder interests within a decision making process,
 - is not dominated and controlled by forest industry and/or government interests;
 - is based on third party, independent certification;
 - requires public consultation and broad stakeholder support for its certification assessments;
 - enjoys widespread public and company recognition in key market regions, and
 - gives consumers a label which provides a verifiable guarantee that the products comes from well-managed forests.
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- The goal of the FSC is "to promote environmentally responsible, socially beneficial and economically viable management of the world's forests."
 - In the UK, a group of 85 companies with annual turnover of wood and wood products totalling more than US\$ 4.3 billion has agreed to preferentially purchase FSC certified products as they come available and eliminate purchases coming from forests which are not well managed.
 - In November 1997, an FSC buyers group, the Certified Forest Products Council, was established in the US, representing 140 corporate members, including the Turner Corporation, the nation's leading general builder, and Habitat for Humanity, one of the US's largest homebuilders. Home Depot, the world's largest Do-It-Yourself building supply chain, has since joined, following a large US grassroots campaign concerning their lack of environmentally informed forest product purchasing policies.
 - FSC buyers groups have also been established in the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Spain, Japan, Brazil, the US, and other countries.
 - More than 20,000 FSC certified forest products are available in the global marketplace.
 - The FSC has over 450 members in more than 50 countries including environmental and social groups, progressive forestry and wood retail companies working in a balanced partnership to improve forest management worldwide.
 - FSC members include some large forest players including Sweden's Assi Doman (the world's largest private landowner), Home Depot and B&Q (the largest do-it-yourself chains in the US and UK respectively) and many smaller companies, community forest groups, indigenous peoples organisations, union and environmental organisations.
 - The Amazon Basin spans six million square kilometres (2.3 million square miles), most of which is in Brazil. Only 2,740 square kilometres (1,057 square miles) of natural forest in the Brazilian Amazon have been certified according to FSC standards.
 - Precious Woods Amazon began operating in 1994 and received FSC certification three years later. By 1999 they were making a profit from sustainable timber harvest in the Amazon. They export most of their production outside of Brazil, with the remaining sales concentrated in the surrounding Amazon region.