

Backgrounder

Complaint calling on the Forest Stewardship Council to acknowledge Paper Excellence's connection to Asia Pulp & Paper

The objective of the [complaint](#) is to shine a light on Paper Excellence's secretive takeover of forests across Canada and its shady connections with APP/Sinar Mas, a globally notorious logging empire. The public in Canada deserves much more transparency and accountability from a company with that much power over forests across the country.

Over the past 15 years, Paper Excellence has carried out an [ambitious strategy of corporate acquisitions](#) to emerge as the largest logging company in Canada, now managing [over 22 million hectares of forests](#). In 2021 Paper Excellence acquired [Domtar](#), one of North America's largest pulp and paper producers, and in 2023 it completed the acquisition of another logging giant, [Resolute Forest Products](#).

Paper Excellence [now owns](#) 42 pulp, paper, and sawmills with Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification in Canada, France and the United States. Numerous sources listed in the complaint submitted by Greenpeace Canada and Indonesian NGO Auriga Nusantara to the FSC [provide strong evidence](#) that Paper Excellence is a sister company of Asia Pulp & Paper (APP), a company [proscribed](#) from FSC membership because of its "destructive forestry practices." According to multiple NGO and media reports, APP has been involved in a number of [social conflicts over land use with local and Indigenous communities](#) and is responsible for the deforestation of an area exceeding [two million hectares](#) in Indonesia.

According to [the FSC's own policy](#), businesses that are directly or indirectly involved with disassociated companies are proscribed from obtaining FSC certification. This policy specifically includes parent, subsidiary and sister companies. Paper Excellence disputes that it is related to APP or its parent company, the Sinar Mas Group. However, extensive evidence in the public domain [indicates](#) that Paper Excellence and APP are sister companies, both controlled by the Sinar Mas Group. Furthermore, not only is Paper Excellence an FSC member, but it also [holds a seat](#) on the FSC Canada Board of Directors via its Resolute Forest Products company.

This issue was previously brought to the FSC's attention. In October 2019, Auriga Nusantara [sent a letter](#) to the FSC's Director General and Chair of the International Board of Directors regarding Paper Excellence owner Jackson Wijaya's involvement in APP. However, despite admitting a connection, the FSC still allowed Paper Excellence's mills to keep the certifications.

Greenpeace Canada and others documented Paper Excellence's extensive connections with APP and Sinar Mas in an investigative report, [Papering over Corporate Control](#) in October 2022. The report concluded that "substantial evidence compiled in this report requires a response from

FSC that includes initiating its own Policy for Association (PfA) investigation of the links between Paper Excellence and APP.”

In the spring of 2023, a media investigation, [Deforestation Inc.](#), led by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), including a number of Canadian media organizations, further exposed Paper Excellence’s ties with APP / Sinar Mas. The Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC) “[found](#) leaked records and insider accounts that show that Paper Excellence, at least until a few years ago, appears to have been closely – and secretly – coordinating business and strategy decisions with Asia Pulp & Paper....” In response, FSC’s International Director General [said](#) at the time: “There is no relationship between APP on the one hand and Paper Excellence, Fibre Excellence on the other.”

This complaint provides significant evidence, indicating that Paper Excellence is indeed a sister company of APP. This includes:

- Paper Excellence's sole owner, Jackson Wijaya, is the son of APP Chairman Teguh Wijaya and was a Director of APP China when Paper Excellence [acquired](#) its first mill in Canada in 2007. This mill used [Sinar Mas letterhead](#) during its first years in operation.
- Insider accounts [reported](#) by multiple news outlets identify APP’s Teguh Wijaya as making high-level decisions for Paper Excellence.
- Canada’s International Trade Minister [referred to Paper Excellence](#) as “Sinar Mas from Indonesia” in testimony to a House of Commons committee as recently as 2021.
- In its 2021 database, Statistics Canada identifies Sinar Mas Group as an owner of Paper Excellence and Asia Pulp & Paper.
- In a 2019 briefing note from the Nova Scotia Department of Finance and Treasury Board to the Premier of Nova Scotia, Paper Excellence was described as “ultimately controlled by Asia Pulp and Paper.”
- Paper Excellence’s BC lobbyist, Moe Sihota, identified Sinar Mas as an “interested party” in his official registration.
- Leaked emails reported by [Canadian](#) and [French](#) journalists demonstrated a high level of coordination between the two companies on strategic business decisions.

The last time the FSC evaluated Paper Excellence’s ownership was in 2021. Since then, its suspicious connections with APP have been extensively reported by [media](#) and [environmental NGOs](#) and have even been under close scrutiny by [the Canadian federal government](#). Since then, the FSC has also updated its corporate responsibility policy, though the old policy continues to apply to infractions prior to 2023. Today’s complaint presents evidence showing that Paper Excellence’s ongoing membership contravenes both FSC’s old and new policies.

Paper Excellence’s astronomical growth in Canada over the last five years and its immense influence over forests across the country make its connection to a multinational company with a huge track record of forest destruction a matter of critical public interest. Therefore, both Greenpeace Canada and Auriga Nusantara call on the FSC, [positioning itself as](#) “the world’s most trusted mark for sustainable forestry,” to finally recognize this connection and, in accordance with its own policy, extend APP’s dissociation to Paper Excellence.