



Because
Forests
Matter



factsheet

FSC is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation. It is an association of members from environmental and social groups, the timber trade and the forestry profession, community forestry groups and other organisations from around the world. FSC runs a global forest certification system that includes two key aspects: Forest Management and Chain of Custody certification. This ensures that timber produced in certified forests has been traced from the forest to the end user.

The public sector as a whole is responsible for the purchase of around 40% of all timber and wood-based products such as paper in the UK. The potential for influence on the world's forests is therefore enormous.

Michael Meacher announced in July 2000 that all UK Government departments and their agencies would be required "to actively seek to buy timber and timber related products from legal and sustainable sources". To help procurement officers and contractors identify products which meet these criteria, Defra commissioned CPET (the Central Point of Expertise on Timber) to assess existing forest certification systems, and found that FSC meets the Government's contract definition of sustainable forest management and provides Category 1 evidence of both legality and sustainability.

While social criteria were omitted due to the limitations of procurement law, the Government "maintains its position that the well-being of forest dependent people is an essential ingredient of truly sustainable forest management". FSC gives social issues equal weighting alongside environmental and economic criteria, as do many progressive and forward thinking organisations, whether they are local authorities, construction companies or suppliers. Purchasing FSC certified supplies gives added assurance that the products have the backing of a credible global scheme and you will also have the support of our dedicated advisory service.

How the system works

For you to be sure that a product comes from well-managed forests, you need to know two things:

1. The forest of origin is proven to be well managed (Forest Management certification).
2. The timber in the product has come from an FSC-certified forest, is reclaimed or from other Controlled Sources (Chain of Custody certification).

Forest Management certification involves a rigorous annual audit of every certificate holder by independent FSC accredited Certification Bodies to ensure the forest complies with FSC's internationally recognised Principles and Criteria of Responsible Forest Management.

Chain of Custody certification verifies that the timber in a product is from a certified forest, reclaimed or other controlled source. As with forests, the Chain of Custody is audited by independent FSC accredited Certification Bodies. Every link in the supply chain from forest to final product needs its own Chain of Custody certificate (though a Retailers who does not alter the product in any way, including repackaging, may not require their own certificate). Each certificate has a unique number and this number must appear on product labels or invoices, this allows you to identify the supplier and check their certification status.

For more information please see factsheets on Forest Management and Chain of Custody.

How to specify FSC Products

As a public sector body you will almost certainly have in place an environmental policy which includes procurement of supplies. By including a requirement that all specifications for wood-derived products should meet stated criteria you can ensure that everyone in the organisation with purchasing responsibilities is clear about what is acceptable.

The following is a sample policy that could be adapted for use in different areas:

Forest management can be environmentally appropriate and socially beneficial, but it can also be environmentally and socially damaging. This policy recognises the responsibility of this organisation as a consumer of forest products to ensure that we have a neutral or positive effect on the worlds' forests.

We will give preference to timber products that have been independently certified by a credible, globally applicable forest certification scheme and can demonstrate that the products are derived from well-managed sources. The following criteria must be met within the certification scheme: recognition of indigenous peoples' rights, long term economic viability, protection of biodiversity, conservation of ancient woodland, long-term responsible management, regular monitoring and chain of custody, showing the timber (tropical, temperate or boreal, hardwood or softwood) or timber product is from a credible, responsible source.

What FSC products are available?

The requirement to source timber from known legal and sustainable sources applies to all products used by central government departments agencies and other public bodies.

There are FSC-certified products available in the UK in all the following categories:

- Construction materials (including board materials used for form work)
- Street and landscape furniture (including seats, bollards and bus shelters)
- Office furniture
- Office paper
- Graphic papers
- Biomass for heating and power generation (including wood pellets)

For more information about producing FSC-certified publications please see factsheet Printing on FSC Paper. For more information about FSC and construction projects please see factsheet for Construction & Architects.

Finding suppliers of FSC products

The FSC UK Advisory Service will help you, by phone, email, post or fax. For UK suppliers, use the Product Selector on our website www.fsc-uk.org. For international sources, there is a searchable database in the product selector: click on Search Worldwide. You can search by product, country, or continent.

Verifying certified status of FSC products and suppliers

First, make sure that the wholesaler or distributor you buy from holds their own FSC chain of custody certificate. This is vitally important: it is not enough to have a copy of the manufacturer's certificate. The only exception is when you buy FSC products through an agent who takes neither physical nor legal possession of the items.

You can verify the status of any certificate number online at www.fsc-info.org, this website allows you to check that the certificate number belongs to the supplier in question and is currently valid.

How can we use the FSC logo and other trademarks to promote the FSC products we use?

FSC has 3 trademarks: our name, Forest Stewardship Council, our acronym, FSC and our 'tick tree' logo. All uses of the FSC trademarks must be authorised.

Make sure that your direct supplier is a chain of custody holder and that the products you have brought

are among their certified product lines. Products will always be identified as FSC certified on invoices, delivery notes and other accompanying paperwork. If you wish to use the trademarks to promote your purchase and use of FSC products you should then contact the FSC UK office.

Using the FSC trademarks

1. Construction or refurbishment projects must be covered by Chain of Custody certification if the FSC trademarks are to be used in a claim about the timber and building materials used. There are various possibilities:
 - Using contractors who already have FSC certification.
 - Encouraging contractors to gain FSC certification.
 - The project can be carried out under FSC Project Certification which covers main and sub-contractors. Please ask for details.
2. Public bodies such as government departments and agencies or local authorities who as end users are purchasing FSC certified products – desks, paper, playground equipment, bus shelters – directly from suppliers who have FSC Chain of Custody certification can obtain a Trademark Resource Pack from FSC UK in order to use the FSC logo and trademarks to promote their responsible purchasing.
3. A Trademark Resource Pack can also be used when producing public or internal information materials such as 'green living' guides and displays.

FSC certification for community woodlands

Many local authorities and public bodies are also woodland managers: nature reserves, parks and street trees may gain FSC forest management certification. As well as ensuring the long-term well being of your woodland areas, certification enables you to sell timber, firewood, charcoal and perhaps 'non-timber forest products' with the FSC label. New FSC policies mean that even very small areas can now benefit from certification.

FSC UK Advisory Service

Our free Advisory Service is able to answer all queries related to the FSC system, including FSC certificate verification and basic product searches. We also have a Subscription Service for organisations needing more support and we offer a range of training options.



FSC UK

R8 11-13 Great Oak Street,
Llanidloies
Powys, SY18 6BU

Telephone: 01686 413 916

Fax: 01686 412 176

Email: info@fsc-uk.org

Website: www.fsc-uk.org

Registered Charity Number 1060072



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