



## FSC and Climate Change

### What is Climate Change?

There is clear evidence to show that climate change is happening. Along with warming at the Earth's surface, many other changes in the climate are occurring:

- Warming oceans
- Melting polar ice and glaciers
- Rising sea levels
- More extreme weather events

### Why is it happening?

Rising levels of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other gases, such as methane, in the atmosphere create a 'greenhouse effect', trapping the Sun's energy and causing the Earth to warm.

CO<sub>2</sub> levels have increased by more than 40% since before the industrial revolution.

Evidence shows that this increase in greenhouse gases is almost entirely due to human activity.

The increase is mainly caused by:

- Burning of fossil fuels for energy
- Agriculture and deforestation
- The manufacture of cement, chemicals and metals<sup>i</sup>

### Forests and Carbon

Forests play a critical role in regulating the earth's climate. By removing carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) from the atmosphere, they form the world's largest terrestrial store of atmospheric carbon. Conversely, when forests are cleared, large amounts of carbon are released into the atmosphere.

The destruction and degradation of tropical forests accounts for 3 billion tons of carbon dioxide a year.<sup>ii</sup>

Halting deforestation and forest degradation are necessary elements of a successful global agenda to prevent the planet passing the 2 degrees celcius temperature increase scientists have set as the turning point for dangerous climate change.

Maintaining forest cover, and ensuring its quality through sustainable forest management, both belong on an effective climate change mitigation agenda.

Sustainable forest management can maintain, or restore, the carbon sequestration function of a forest, and is essential for safeguarding the forests that remain.

### Pressure on Forests

In coming years, demand for forest products will increase substantially, partly due to climate-inspired policies.

In the construction sector, wood's relatively low energy footprint is making it an increasingly widely-used building material.

But the biggest impact on forests may well come from policies in the energy sector, where biomass is promoted as an alternative to fossil fuels.

While some biomass will come from agriculture and waste, these sources are limited, and will face competition from food and fibre production. Forest biomass will therefore be an important part of this mix.

These shifts towards using wood as a renewable and sustainable source of materials and energy are positive.

However, if not followed by strong action to secure sustainable forest management, they also bring with them risks of increased deforestation, forest degradation, and failure to reduce carbon emissions from energy production.

## FSC and Climate Change

FSC helps take care of forests and the people and wildlife who call them home.

The FSC system can help businesses and consumers to choose wood, paper and other forest products such as cork and latex, from well-managed forests and/or verified and recycled sources. FSC is at the cutting edge of adapting sustainable forest management certification in an era of climate change.

We recognise that carbon capture and storage is an important component of forest ecosystem services – one that is paradoxically both central to climate stability, and threatened by increased demands for 'carbon-neutral' bio-energy.

From 2015, our revised forest management standards include the maintenance, conservation, or restoration of carbon sequestration and storage.

## What Can Consumers Do?

- **Purchase FSC certified products:**  
By selecting FSC certified products, you can ensure that your purchases are not the products of deforestation and unsustainable forestry practices.
- **Reuse and Recycle:**  
All paper and timber products contain carbon. When they rot or are burnt, they release the carbon they contain. By reusing and recycling products we can ensure that carbon is locked up for as long as possible.

When buying recycled timber and paper products, look for the FSC Recycled label to ensure that they have been independently verified as being made from recycled materials.



## Further Resources:

The following related factsheets are also available from FSC UK:

- What is FSC?
- FSC and Procurement
- FSC and Recycled Materials
- FSC Forest Management
- FSC Chain of Custody