

Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR

Telephone 020 7238 1134
Fax 020 7238 5529
Out of hours telephone 020 7270 8960
Out of hours fax 020 7270 8125
Website www.defra.gov.uk



News Release

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ENVIRONMENT MINISTER ELLIOT MORLEY ANNOUNCES MOVE TO ENSURE GOVERNMENT SOURCING OF LEGAL AND SUSTAINABLE TIMBER

Environment Minister Elliot Morley today announced steps to strengthen the Government's efforts to buy legally harvested timber from sustainably-managed forests. In developing its policy the UK has given a clear lead to other timber importing countries.

A thorough assessment of five forest certification schemes found they all give assurance of legal harvesting – the basic requirement. Two of them also provide assurance that forests are being managed in a way that meets the Government's contract definition of sustainable forest management (SFM)¹.

The Government has now set a period of six months from today, November 9th, before central departments begin making distinctions between the schemes. This will allow both industry and the certification schemes time to prepare for changes in procurement practice.

The report, commissioned for the Central Point of Expertise on Timber concluded that:

- certificates from the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) should be accepted as assurance of legal and sustainable timber;
- certificates from the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (PEFC), the North American Sustainable Forest Initiative (SFI) and the

¹ The Government's contract definition of SFM differs slightly from HMG's agreed position on sustainable forestry in that for contracts forestry-related social issues are omitted as a result of procurement law. For all other purposes HMG maintains its position that the well being of forest dependent people is an essential ingredient of truly sustainable forest management.

Malaysian Timber Certification Council (MTCC) should be accepted as assurance of legally harvested timber. However, in their current form they are not completely acceptable as assurance of sustainable timber as defined in the Government's model contract specification.

Mr Morley said the report was not the end of the story for the Government's interest in forest certification.

"The Government is not saying that forests certified under the PEFC, SFI and MTCC schemes are not well managed – just that the schemes as they currently work don't provide adequate assurance that our particular requirements are fulfilled. They were very close to doing so and it is my hope that they will work, in collaboration with the central point of expertise on timber, to give us the assurance we seek as soon as possible.

"Each of the five schemes assessed provides a valuable source of information and assurance for consumers," he added. "As such, they are not just valuable sources of information, but valuable guarantees of legality.

"In practice we insist on all timber being legally logged unless it is recycled or re-used. However, in addition we want our contractors to supply any virgin timber from sustainably-managed forests. We do not insist on this but we give preference to such bids when made. Certification is the most common form of evidence so it is important to know which schemes provide safe assurance of sustainable timber as well as legal timber.

"To ensure clarity for consumers, the UK Government would therefore prefer to see all schemes offering the same degree of assurance of sustainability – a position which has not yet been reached."

The SFI scheme does ensure that forests are well managed, but the certificate covering the final product does not reveal the percentage of uncertified material used. The critical issues with the PEFC and MTCC schemes concerned inadequate involvement of all the

relevant stakeholders in their standard-setting processes and, in the case of PEFC, a lack of consultation and lack of publicly available information on the certification process.

The report, compiled by ProForest and Environmental Resources Management, was based on a method of assessment, the development of which included consultation with all five schemes.

Notes to Editors

The UK Government's procurement policy on timber and timber products was announced in July 2000 and is being implemented through a contract condition for all supply to central government to ensure timber supplied is from legal sources, together with a variant specification for the option of supplying sustainable timber (Timber Procurement Advice Note, January 2004²).

A number of ways of implementing the new procedure in practice have been identified. One of the most straightforward is the purchase of timber from certified sources provided that the certification scheme involved delivers the government requirements for legality or sustainability. As there a number of different timber certification schemes available, the government recognised that it needed a framework for assessing which ones deliver its timber policy. Therefore, a set of criteria were developed to provide that framework and published as the *UK Government Timber Procurement Policy: Criteria for Assessing Certification Schemes, 15 September 2004*.

Five forest certification schemes have been assessed using these UK Government Criteria:

- The Canadian Standards Association scheme (CSA) which is applicable in Canada.
- The Forest Stewardship Council scheme (FSC) which is international in scope.
- The Malaysian Timber Certification Council Scheme (MTCC) applicable in Malaysia.
- The Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (PEFC) which is international in scope.
- The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) which is applicable in the US and Canada.

Methodology

The assessments were based on publicly available documentation from each of the five schemes, together with direct discussions with scheme personnel where this was necessary to clarify particular points. No assessment of the actual outcome of certification in the forest was made.

For each scheme compliance with the requirements of each criterion was scored on a 3-point scale:

0: Inadequately addressed and not acceptable;

² <http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/sdig/improving/partf/greenbuy/24a.htm>

1: Partially addressed;

2: Acceptable.

To achieve recognition as delivering requirements for **legality** the scheme must achieve a score of at least 1 for each criterion applicable to legality.

To achieve recognition as delivering requirements for **sustainability** the scheme must achieve a score of at least 1 for each criterion applicable to sustainability as well as an overall score equal to 75% of the total possible.

Therefore, a score of zero for any criterion prevents a scheme from being recognised for the category.

Products containing certified and uncertified material

All of the certification schemes examined allow mixing of certified and uncertified raw material in certified products. As a result, two types of certified product exist:

- 100% certified products: these products contain only material which originated in certified forests. For these products it is only necessary to assess the control of certified material.
- Mixed source products: these products contain material from a range of sources including certified forests, uncertified forests and recycled. Therefore, it is necessary to assess the control not only of certified material, but also of uncertified material.

Therefore, the results differentiate between products containing 100% certified raw material and products containing a mixture.

Summary of results

The results are summarised below indicating which schemes deliver government requirements for legal compliance and which for the sustainable variant. To qualify as sustainable, 70% of the product must meet the criteria for sustainable.

It was found that no scheme guaranteed that the uncertified content of mixed product was from a sustainable source. As a result, where certified raw material from a scheme delivers government requirements for sustainability, mixed source products must contain at least 70% certified raw material in order to deliver sustainability.

	Legal (100% from legal sources)	Sustainable (>70% from sustainable sources)
CSA	All certified products	Products containing >70% certified raw material
FSC	All certified products	Products containing >70% certified or recycled raw material
MTCC	Products containing 100% certified raw material	No
PEFC	All certified products	No
SFI	All certified products	No ¹

¹ Although material from SFI certified forests meets the requirements for sustainability, the current approach to chain of custody used by SFI does not report the proportion of certified and uncertified raw material in a product so in practice no product is guaranteed to contain >70% certified or recycled raw material.

Defra PN Ref 515/03 issued on 05 December 2003 announced the decision to proceed with Phase 1 of the Central Point of Expertise on Timber (CPET). Defra PN Ref 222/04 issued on 15 June 2004 announced the appointment of ProForest and ERM as the CPET Phase 1 service provider.

The Central Point of Expertise on Timber will be expanded in 2005 to provide a help line service for buyers in the public sector and their suppliers.

Press enquiries 020 7238 6043 ;
Public enquiries 08459 335577;
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