

FOREST PRODUCT CERTIFICATION

What is this Action Sheet about?

Buyers of wood products like carvings, furniture and charcoal want to know that the products they buy have come from a well-managed forest. They don't want to look at their purchase and know that they are partly responsible for the destruction of a natural forest. More and more people are asking: "Where did this product come from?" – but how can they trust sellers who say "It came from a sustainable supply!"? What buyers and sellers need is independent, third party certification, which guarantees that the wood came from a sustainable source.

The Forestry Stewardship Council certification system was set up to provide just that. Because the organisation makes no profit for itself, buyers trust the FSC certificate. There are two types of FSC certificate, a forest management certificate and a chain of custody certificate. This Action Sheet explains the system, and describes the Good Woods carving

What is a forest management certificate?

To obtain forest management certification, the forest manager invites an independent FSC-accredited certification body (usually based in the country or region) to check that the forest is being managed according to the 10 internationally agreed FSC principles of Responsible Forest Management. If forest management meets those standards, all the products of the forests can be certified as coming from a responsibly managed forest.

In January 2006, there were 35 forest management FSC certificates in Africa: Cameroon (1), Kenya (1), Namibia (2), South Africa (24), Swaziland (1), Uganda (2), Zimbabwe (4). All of those in Southern Africa were nearly all for charcoal production or plantations of non-native timber species like eucalyptus or pine. The certificates in Uganda are in national parks and relate to international projects which aim to preserve forests in order to store carbon dioxide to reduce global warming due to the burning of fossil fuel. The certificate in Cameroon is the only FSC-certified timber-producing forest in West Africa.

What is a chain of custody certificate?

Organisations that sell wood products can apply for an FSC Chain of Custody certificate. To obtain this certificate, the FSC-accredited certification body checks the whole supply chain from the forest or plantation where the wood was harvested all the way to the shop where it is sold. All the wood that ends up in the final product must come from FSC-certified sources. For the system to work, each log must be marked with a code referring to the source forest or plantation, and records must be kept at each stage so that the source material for each final product can be traced back to its source.

In January 2006, there were 125 Chain of Custody FSC certificates in Africa (out of a global total 4375 of across 79 countries): Cameroon (1 sawn logs), Kenya (2 carvings), Morocco (1 eucalyptus – paper pulp), Namibia (2 – charcoal), South Africa (106), Swaziland (4), Zimbabwe (9).

Good Woods Carving, Kenya



There are more than 80,000 carvers in Kenya, and they are beginning to eat into the resource upon which they depend. Wild hardwoods like Ebony and Mahoghany (muhuhu), growing in the coastal forests of East Africa suffer from over-exploitation. The WWF Good Woods project is helping carvers switch from endangered slow-growing hardwoods to trees that can be easily grown on farms – trees like Neem, Jacaranda, Grevillea and Mango. By educating buyers to ask what wood a carving is made from, and to choose farm-grown wood over wild hardwoods, carvers now have an incentive to use farm-grown woods. In March 2005, the Akamba Handicrafts Society, the Coastal Farm Forestry Association and the Coastal Tree Products Company obtained FSC certificates, assuring buyers that their products were from a sustainable farmed source. For more information on carving with Neem wood, see Action Sheet 51.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Forestry Stewardship Council – www.fsc.org
Good Woods project (see Contacts listing)