

Canadian Institute of Forestry/Institut forestier du Canada
“Voice of Forest Practitioners”

Policy Paper

Forest Certification Systems

Issues

Several issues that relate to certification processes include the following:

1. Although there are major certification processes operating in Canada, there are numerous other processes operating worldwide. Ultimately, there needs to be some rationalization of these processes for similar forest types. At a minimum, there is a requirement for mutual recognition and/or equivalency of the different standards by the various systems.
2. Affordable certification processes, at the proper scale, are required for small landholdings. Group processes are available for the International Standards Organization (ISO), Canadian Standards Association (CSA) and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) systems. However, they all require an umbrella organization or group co-operative to act on behalf of each landowner.
3. Landscape-level issues, such as the need to designate a percentage of the land base as “protected area”, cannot always be resolved through certification processes at the forest management unit scale. Resolution of these issues may require government action through land use planning.
4. The methods for auditor accreditation are significantly different among the certification systems. Registration of an Environmental Management System under ISO, or Registration of a Defined Forest Area under CSA, are achieved following a successful third-party audit by a Registrar who has been accredited by the Standards Council of Canada. Certification of a forest management unit under the FSC is achieved following a successful third-party audit by a certifying body accredited by the FSC. Therefore, under the ISO and CSA, standards development processes and auditor accreditation are quite separate, while both of these processes are under the control of the FSC organization.
5. Concerning product logos, the main issues relate to:
 - Chain of custody;
 - Use of recycled fibres or materials; and
 - Partial incorporation of non-certified wood into certified products.
 - The FSC has a policy on minimum percentage requirements and labelling directions in the use of their logo on certified wood products.
6. Certification (or rather its absence) has the potential to become a non-tariff trade barrier. Thus, rather than certified wood products filling a specialized product



niche, or having producers receive a premium price for certified wood products, the result may be a loss of market share for those producers whose operations and products are not certified.

Background

Certification is a market-based, voluntary activity designed to demonstrate that forest operations are being managed according to a recognized standard that presumes resource sustainability. It assumes that consumer interest in forests is strong and that these same consumers will discriminate in favour of wood products originating from forests they believe are being managed according to sustainable principles. In this regard, certification has the potential to become a key factor in the international trade of forest products.

Canada is a forest nation and forests cover nearly 50% of the landscape or 417.6 million hectares. Of the forested land, 235 million hectares are considered “commercial forests” capable of producing timber and non-timber products. To date only about 120 million hectares are managed, primarily for timber production. Canada’s forests support numerous other industries including tourism, recreation, the fur trade, wild foods and maple products. Canada’s forests also provide for an array of social, environmental and cultural benefits.

Canada has embraced the concept of sustainable forest management (SFM). Members of the forest community have clearly stated a commitment to SFM by being signatories to the Canada Forest Accord (1998), which accompanied the renewed National Forest Strategy. Achieving SFM must be demonstrable both within Canada and to Canada’s export partners. Certification has the capacity to verify that forest operations meet all the ecological, economic and social standards of the selected certification system. In this regard, the hectares of forested land registered/certified using the major certification processes available in Canada continue to grow.

The CIF/IFC and Certification

Certification is poised to become a critical factor in successfully demonstrating SFM in Canada. As such, CIF/IFC endorses the concept of certification and advocates the continued use and development of certification systems. In this regard, the CIF/IFC will:

1. As a signatory to the Canada Forest Accord, continue to work toward implementation of SFM in Canada.
2. Recognize that voluntary certification systems are an act of good faith relative to the pursuit of SFM.
3. Support the position that any certification system used in Canada must abide by respective jurisdictional legislation, regulations, standards, policies and practices.
4. Recognize and promote the notion that certification is a voluntary decision to be undertaken by forest owners/managers and that barriers to achieving certification (including costs) should not exist under any system.



5. Encourage interested parties to obtain all information available on the various certification systems when they make their decision to pursue certification.
6. Encourage governments to support the concept of certification by:
 - Participating in certification activities where required as a landowner, licence grantor, regulator and/or forest manager.
 - Managing landscape level issues, which cannot be resolved at the forest management unit, level.
 - Conveying to Canada's trading partners the degree and extent of SFM practised in Canada's forests and the extent of successful forest certification in the country.
7. Encourage rationalization of certification standards for similar forest types and the pursuit of mutual recognition and/or equivalency of the different certification standards.
8. Inform interested parties about certification through a range of communication tools.
9. Monitor and report on the progress of SFM certification across Canada.

The CIF/IFC

The Canadian Institute of Forestry / Institut forestier du Canada (CIF/IFC) is a national voice of forest practitioners. The CIF/IFC, formed in 1908, represents members who are foresters, forest technologists and technicians, educators, scientists and others with a professional interest in forestry. The Institute's mission is *"to provide national leadership in forestry, promote competence among forestry professionals, and foster public awareness of Canadian and international forestry issues."*

We are people with a professional interest in forestry, working in government, industry, academic and consulting fields. Our members use their education, training, and experience to help manage the forests of Canada and to make the Canadian public aware of forestry.

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