



FOREST CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS: STATUS AND RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE SOUTH

A Report of the Southern Group of State Foresters

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Introduction and Rationale

Forest product certification has become more important as many consumers consider the impact of their purchasing decisions. The retailers of many types of forest products see the advantage, and often the need, of offering products with “green” labeling. This is occurring with all types of paper and packaging, with building products, and to energy products produced from wood. Market access to these “green” products by wood suppliers will often depend on the presence of certified forests at the source of the wood. While there may not be a significant pricing advantage, there are obvious benefits to the industry and forest **landowners in having a larger market for their wood production.**

Forest management certification programs have developed to provide a method of assurance to wood product markets that forest products offered are grown, harvested and processed consistent with sustainability criteria, specific to each certification program. Recently, the use of forest certification systems has increased, particularly in parts of the NE and the Lake States. However, southern forest owners have shown a low interest in forest certification. State forestry agencies in the South provide assistance to non-industrial forest owners and to the forest industry with utilization and marketing issues. It follows that state forestry agencies should also provide guidance and assistance with questions from landowners and the industry concerning forest certification and certified forest products. The purpose of this paper is to briefly describe the major certification programs, and highlight specific aspects of each program that might or might not work well in southern forest management systems. The paper also provides a matrix summarizing three major certification programs, a list with the status of certification program participation in each state, and makes suggestions of alternative strategies to help the forest community better understand certification issues.

Certification systems have become competitive creating a debate among consumers, environmentalists and forest managers about which system is best. But interestingly, both Dovetail Partners, Inc. and the National Association of State Foresters (NASF) say that all the established forest certification systems are needed.

Dovetail states, “At their heart, it appears the FSC’s guidelines are geared to preserve natural systems while allowing for careful harvest, while the SFI’s guidelines are aimed at encouraging fiber productivity while allowing for conservation of key resources. Given the current trend toward uncontrolled consumption growth, both approaches are probably not only valuable, but also necessary.”

The NASF *2008-7 Policy Statement Forest Certification as it Contributes to Sustainable Forestry Practices* states “While in different manners, the ATFS, FSC and SFI systems include the fundamental elements of credibility and make positive contributions to forest sustainability. Proponents of individual certification programs often promote their option as the best or only option. This has little to do with quality and everything to do with marketing and selling their program. No certification program can credibly claim to be the “best”, and no certification program that promotes itself as the only certification option

can maintain credibility. Forest ecosystems are complex and a simplistic “one size fits all” approach to certification cannot address all sustainability needs.

Certification is driven by the marketplace, and the marketplace has driven the development of certification programs at all levels of the forest products supply chain. Competition among certification programs produces innovation and continuous improvement in certification processes and on-the-ground forestry practices.”

It should be stated that no matter which system that foresters from the industry and from government agencies think is best, the market place (demand) is making the determination for the systems that are used. At this time, the majority of demand for certified lumber and other building products are for Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification. Much of this demand is driven by the U.S. Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy, Efficiency and Design (LEED) building standard. Hopefully, USDA’s push for recognition/use of green building systems, in addition to LEED, will allow wood from other certification systems to earn “green building” credits. The demand is growing in many parts of the world, especially Europe, for certification of a wide range of wood products from paper to bio-energy products. The emerging biomass markets associated with wood pellets and bio-electricity in the Southeast are also beginning to request some form of forest certification for their feedstock.

It is apparent to the authors of this paper that forest certification is here to stay. Forestry agencies should not consider if they should get involved. Rather, the agencies should try to determine how and to what degree to become involved.

Types of Forest Certification

- *Forest Management Certification*: the most common type of certification in which the forest land management is evaluated against agreed upon standards of sustainability and/or responsible forest management. Forest Management Certification can be issued as Standard Certification or Group Certification.
- *Standard Certification*: a forest management organization or forest owner is certified individually and is subject to either a full audit or surveillance audits every year.
- *Group Certification*: a number of forest management organizations or forest owners are certified collectively as one group or under one professional resource manager certificate holder. This structure allows for forest certification at a lower cost to individual landowners since only a small sample of owners' property is audited annually.
- *Chain of Custody*: the certification system in which wood is tracked from the certified forest to the finished product. This certification process involves mills, manufacturers and retailers who purchase, use or sell certified wood. The finished product may be accompanied with a logo identifying the certification system or a certification claim on product invoices and other documentation.

Key Elements of Credible Forest Certification Systems

From **NASF 2008-7 Policy Statement Forest Certification as it Contributes to Sustainable Forestry Practices:

Credible forest certification programs include the following fundamental elements:

1. *Independent Governance* – The governance body should include economic, environmental, and social interests and operate independently from participants and compliance verifiers or auditors.
2. *Multi-Stakeholder Standard* – A diverse group representing forestry, wildlife, conservation, industry, government and academic expertise should establish an objective Standard for sustainable forestry with specific performance measures.
3. *Independent Certification* – Certification requires verifying compliance with the Standard during full certification and periodic surveillance audits. This should be accomplished by independent, qualified, and accredited third-party auditors. Auditors should meet professional standards established by an independent accreditation body such as the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

4. *Credible Complaints & Appeals Process* – There should be a clear process for credibly responding to on-the-ground compliance concerns or certification challenges.
5. *Open Participation and Transparency* – Public and private sector landowners, including family forest owners, should have access to any forest certification program for which they qualify.

It should be noted that most of these elements are satisfied by all three of the major certification programs.



Major Forest Certification Systems

Forest managers and the forest industry in the South should examine the costs and benefits of each system as it applies to their own specific situation prior to investing in certification. The ease (and cost) of accomplishing the management standards associated with certification may vary for smaller landowners (less forestland).

The three major forest certification systems used in the United States are briefly described below with a reference to a website that provides the detailed standards of each system.

A matrix has also been prepared by the authors of this report to facilitate examination and comparisons of the three major certification systems. The matrix is located in Appendix A.

Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)

SFI Inc. is an independent 501(c)(3) not-for-profit charitable organization and is solely responsible for maintaining, overseeing and improving the internationally recognized Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) program (www.sfiprogram.org). Across North America, more than 180 million acres (73 million hectares) are certified to the SFI forest management standard, making it the largest single forest standard in the world. The SFI chain-of-custody certification tells buyers the percentage of fiber from certified forests, certified sourcing and/or post-consumer recycled content. The SFI program's unique fiber sourcing requirements promote responsible forest management on all suppliers' lands. The SFI Inc. is governed by a three-chamber board of directors representing environmental, social and economic sectors equally. The SFI is North American in scope but recognized internationally through Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) endorsement.



Overview of SFI Objectives

- SFI Standard land management objectives 1-7 provide measures for evaluating Program Participants' conformance with the SFI 2010-2014 Standard on forest lands they own or control through long-term leases. Through these objectives, addressed in forest management plans, Program Participants are implementing sustainable forestry principles by employing an array of economically, environmentally and socially sound practices in the conservation of forests - including appropriate protection, growth, harvest and use of those forests - using the best scientific information available.
- SFI Standard fiber sourcing objectives 8-10 provide measures for evaluating Program Participants' conformance with the SFI 2010-2014 Standard through their fiber sourcing programs within the United States and Canada.

- SFI Standard fiber sourcing objectives 11-13 provide measures for evaluating Program Participants' conformance with the SFI 2010-2014 Standard through their fiber sourcing programs outside the United States and Canada.
- SFI Standard land management and fiber sourcing objectives 14-20 provide measures for evaluating all Program Participants' conformance with the SFI 2010-2014 Standard for research, training, legal compliance, public and landowner involvement, management review, and continual improvement.

The SFI Standards can be found at <http://www.sfiprogram.org/>.

American Tree Farm System (ATFS)

The American Tree Farm System (ATFS) is a certification program run by American Forest Foundation. It is a certification program for small, private, non-industrial landowners (family forest landowners). The Tree Farm program was initially established in 1941 to help small private non-industrial forest landowners with forest management on their properties and to encourage them to maintain forests on their properties. The Tree Farm program pursued and achieved approval as a group certification program under ATFS name in 2004. Subsequently, the ATFS program was endorsed by PEFC in August of 2008. The ATFS certifies contiguous parcels from 10 to 20,000 acres. According to 2011 Eligibility Guidance document, all properties larger than 10,000 contiguous acres currently certified through the state programs must undergo a third-party audit. This requirement may be fulfilled by joining an Independently Managed Group (IMG) or obtaining an individual third-party certificate by 12/31/2012. Also, properties owned by state governments regardless of size will have until 12/31/2012 to be recertified through an IMG or by obtaining an individual third-party certificate.

The ATFS Standards can be found at http://www.treefarmssystem.org/cms/pages/26_130.html

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is an independent, non-governmental, not-for-profit organization established to promote the responsible management of the world's forests. It was established in 1993 as a response to concerns over global deforestation. The FSC is comprised of members who have established a list of environmental, social, and economic standards that they feel are appropriate in managing forests.

The FSC has developed national and regional forest management and chain of custody standards, delivers trademark assurance and provides accreditation services to a global network of committed businesses, organizations and communities. The FSC certification provides a link between forest production, based on the FSC standards, and consumption of forest products by using market-based incentives.

The FSC is represented in more than 50 countries. Individual National Offices (such as FSC-US) have developed indicators used by auditors to determine compliance to FSC

principles and criteria. The broad support of environmental organizations is reflected in the dominance of the FSC Chain of Custody certificates around the world.

The FSC takes a unique stance against deforestation (conversion to non-forest conditions) and conversion of forest areas that involve the use of exotic species.

The FSC approach toward plantation management merits further discussion, as it has been the source of much misunderstanding. Planted forests that utilize native species and that capture most of the ecological components of natural forests (e.g. wildlife habitat and species diversity) generally are not considered “plantations” in the FSC sense, despite the fact that they are referred to as plantations in the Southeastern U.S.. The FSC recognizes that planted forests can play a key role in capturing environmental and social values based on the choice of species and the subsequent management of these areas. In contrast, the FSC recognizes the environmental challenges of forest areas converted to “sterile,” agricultural style, management regimes.

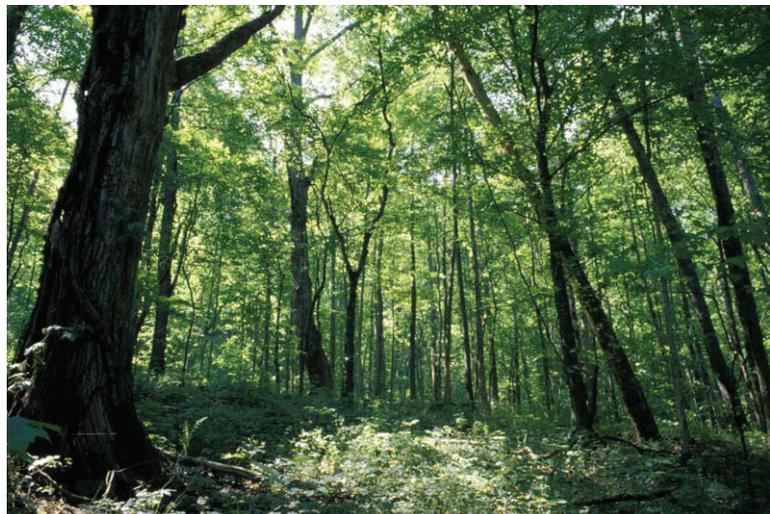
The FSC-US Forest Management Standard can be found at http://www.fscus.org/standards_criteria/standards_revision_process.php

Status of Major Forest Certification Program Implementation in the U.S.

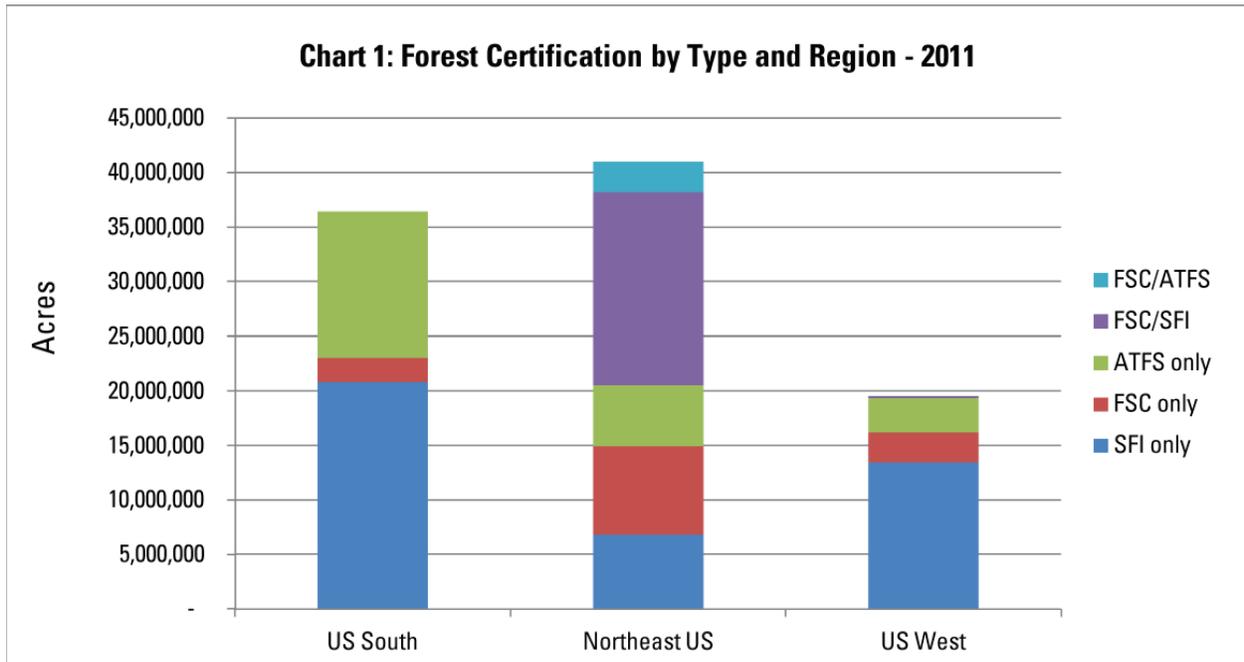
There are 96.9 million acres certified with at least one forest certification system in the United States. This is 12.9 percent of the 751 million acres of forestland in the United States. Chart 1 provides an overview and Table 1 provides detailed information on the status of forest certification by U.S. region and state.

Since forest certification is normally not applied to Federal lands, the higher proportion of privately-owned lands in the Northeast and South results in higher implementation of certification in these areas. The South has the most certified forestland at 36.4 million acres. However, the Northeast has the highest proportion of certified forestland at 23.8 percent compared to the South’s 17.0 percent.

Specific certification systems are more prevalent, depending upon the region. The FSC dominates in the NE while being a minor component of forest certification in the South and West. Over 53



percent of all ATFS acreage is in the South. The SFI is a significant component of certified acres in all regions, likely in direct proportion to the size of corporate forestland ownership. The combination of ATFS and SFI comprises 84 million acres, or 87 percent of all certified forestland in the U.S.



**Table 1: U. S. Forestland Certified to SFI, FSC, and/or ATFS Standards by Region and State, 2011
Ranked by % Timberland in Regions (Units in Acres)**

State	Total Forestland	Certified Forests			Dual Certification		Net Certified	% of All Forestland*		
		SFI	FSC	ATFS	FSC/SFI	FSC/ATFS		All certified	FSC	SFI & ATFS
US South										
Louisiana	14,221,733	3,129,004	603,584	1,610,198			5,342,786	37.6%	4.2%	33.3%
Alabama	22,692,817	3,255,868	6,074	3,181,418			6,443,360	28.4%	0.0%	28.4%
Arkansas	18,829,891	2,805,293	539,533	1,150,676			4,495,502	23.9%	2.9%	21.0%
Mississippi	19,622,417	1,946,526	634,064	1,313,304			3,893,894	19.8%	3.2%	16.6%
Georgia	24,783,744	2,532,586	0	2,083,638			4,616,224	18.6%	0.0%	18.6%
South Carolina	12,745,895	1,086,784	6,865	1,050,359			2,144,008	16.8%	0.1%	16.8%
Texas	17,273,287	2,368,824	26,809	59,161			2,454,794	14.2%	0.2%	14.1%
Florida	16,146,905	1,121,313	120	1,076,054			2,197,487	13.6%	0.0%	13.6%
Virginia	15,765,707	406,552	209,683	884,416			1,500,651	9.5%	1.3%	8.2%
Oklahoma	7,664,682	709,045	0	0			709,045	9.3%	0.0%	9.3%
North Carolina	18,446,595	1,065,980	10,455	311,627			1,388,062	7.5%	0.1%	7.5%
Tennessee	14,480,278	231,868	42,371	398,919			673,158	4.6%	0.3%	4.4%
Kentucky	11,970,446	152,000	156,757	247,785			556,542	4.6%	1.3%	3.3%
South total	214,644,397	20,811,643	2,236,315	13,367,555	0	0	36,415,513	17.0%	1.0%	15.9%
NE US										
Minnesota	16,391,465	7,042,767	6,845,367	249,233	5,660,746		8,476,621	51.7%	41.8%	44.5%
Maine	17,672,762	6,061,497	4,781,057	807,411	3,460,660		8,189,305	46.3%	27.1%	38.9%
Wisconsin	16,274,666	3,994,362	5,678,132	2,581,365	2,948,914	2,239,207	7,065,738	43.4%	34.9%	40.4%
Michigan	19,544,598	4,998,022	4,547,930	807,181	3,800,000		6,553,133	33.5%	23.3%	29.7%
New Hampshire	4,850,055	187,732	574,040	483,625	295,651		949,746	19.6%	11.8%	13.8%
Pennsylvania	16,577,218	132,787	2,576,247	289,864	115,322		2,883,576	17.4%	15.5%	2.5%
Indiana	4,655,509	154,000	676,370	616,536	148,019	528,351	770,536	16.6%	14.5%	16.6%
West Virginia	12,006,826	257,044	897,777	620,534			1,775,355	14.8%	7.5%	7.3%
New York	18,668,750	1,403,563	1,242,953	496,662	960,434		2,182,744	11.7%	6.7%	10.2%

State	Total Forestland	Certified Forests			Dual Certification		Net Certified	% of All Forestland*		
		SFI	FSC	ATFS	FSC/SFI	FSC/ATFS		All certified	FSC	SFI & ATFS
Maryland	2,565,797	81,917	124,847	141,775	81,917		266,622	10.4%	4.9%	8.7%
Rhode Island	355,770	0	0	36,404			36,404	10.2%	0.0%	10.2%
Delaware	382,847	17,876	1,358	17,830			37,064	9.7%	0.4%	9.3%
Ohio	7,894,105	202,927	218,776	413,482	202,927		632,258	8.0%	2.8%	7.8%
Vermont	4,618,076	0	164,844	158,123			322,967	7.0%	3.6%	3.4%
Massachusetts	3,171,421	0	51,159	112,709			163,868	5.2%	1.6%	3.6%
Connecticut	1,794,101	0	7,840	77,477			85,317	4.8%	0.4%	4.3%
Iowa	2,878,943	0	0	81,279			81,279	2.8%	0.0%	2.8%
New Jersey	2,132,162	0	20	57,063			57,083	2.7%	0.0%	2.7%
Missouri	15,078,279	0	146,235	210,750			356,985	2.4%	1.0%	1.4%
Illinois	4,525,231	0	1,794	87,953			89,747	2.0%	0.0%	1.9%
NE US total	172,038,581	24,534,494	28,536,746	8,347,256	17,674,590	2,767,558	40,976,348	23.8%	16.6%	19.1%
US West										
Washington	22,279,465	6,222,481	240,372	300,854	165,291		6,598,416	29.6%	1.1%	29.3%
California	32,816,873	2,544,888	1,258,933	1,367,826	39,688		5,131,959	15.6%	3.8%	11.9%
Oregon	30,169,487	3,007,983	566,929	800,821			4,375,733	14.5%	1.9%	12.6%
Idaho	21,430,143	429,641	838,381	201,681			1,469,703	6.9%	3.9%	2.9%
Montana	25,013,512	1,303,431	0	176,167			1,479,598	5.9%	0.0%	5.9%
Hawaii	1,748,268	0	24,543	0			24,543	1.4%	1.4%	0.0%
South Dakota	1,682,126	0	0	22,818			22,818	1.4%	0.0%	1.4%
New Mexico	16,681,577	90,000	0	119,829			209,829	1.3%	0.0%	1.3%
Colorado	22,611,889	0	0	126,722			126,722	0.6%	0.0%	0.6%
Utah	17,962,455	86,158	0	0			86,158	0.5%	0.0%	0.5%
Kansas	2,105,519	0	0	8,178			8,178	0.4%	0.0%	0.4%
Nebraska	1,244,843	0	0	1,269			1269	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%
Alaska	126,869,004	0	0	0			0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Arizona	18,671,399	0	0	0			0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Nevada	11,088,924	0	0	0			0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

State	Total Forestland	Certified Forests			Dual Certification		Net Certified	% of All Forestland*		
		SFI	FSC	ATFS	FSC/SFI	FSC/ATFS		All certified	FSC	SFI & ATFS
North Dakota	724,162	0	0	0			0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Wyoming	11,444,896	0	0	0			0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
US West total	364,544,542	13,684,582	2,929,158	3,126,165	204,979	0	19,534,926	5.4%	0.8%	4.6%
US										
Totals	751,227,520	59,030,719	33,702,219	24,840,976	17,879,569	2,767,558	96,926,787	12.9%	4.5%	11.2%

* Percentages cannot be added due to dual certification.
 Source of data: SFI Program Certification Database, FSC Certificate Database, ATFS Staff Communication (September 1, 2011); USDA Forest Service, Forest Resources of the United States, 2007.

Forest Certification Strategies for Southern State Forestry Agencies

The SUM Task Force sub-committee on forest certification considered several strategies that state forestry agencies and other forestry organizations could choose to pursue. These strategies are listed below as a “Recommended List of Strategies.”

Recommended List of Strategies

- Information on forest certification systems should be provided to forest landowners, forest consultants, other forest managers, wood suppliers and others in the forest industry in the form of workshops and one-on-one contact.
- Conduct workshops and/or webinars to inform state agency foresters about three major certification systems to include representatives from all three systems moderated by a neutral person. Southern Regional Extension Forester (Bill Hubbard) might be a good point-of-contact for either workshops or webinars.
- Promote and encourage the use of forest certification and production of certified forest products as voluntary and market-based through programs such as the Forest Stewardship Program rather than through regulatory approaches.
- Develop and provide credible scientific information to regulatory agencies relative to forest management and market effects, including the impacts of regulating forest management on privately owned forestland with certification systems. Encourage studies to verify this information.
- States should include certified products as a data field on state and online forest product directories.
- Forest certification systems should be further examined and monitored by state forestry agencies to maintain a knowledge base on “best fit” for various landowners and market types.
- Promote the use of green building systems that encourage the use of wood products and which credit SFI and ATFS systems as well as FSC.
- Recognize that “verified sustainable” programs do not guarantee certified wood products but may fill other needs.
- Have NASF and SGSF do the primary promotion for the use of forest certification and the use of other green building systems mentioned above, possibly on their respective websites.

Disclaimer

With respect to information in this report, neither the Southern Group of State Foresters, any of the 13 states represented by the Southern Group of State Foresters, United States government, nor any employee of these organizations, makes any warranty, express or implied, including the warranties for a particular purpose, or assumes any legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy, completeness or usefulness of information, or represents that its use would not infringe privately owned rights.

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Appendix A: Forest Certification Systems Comparison Matrix

Criteria	ATFS	FSC	SFI
<p>Direct cost</p> <p>Landowner participation in Regional Certificates through State Tree Farm programs is currently free. Costs associated with participation in an Independently Managed Groups (IMG) vary by group.</p> <p>For Individual Third-Party certificates and IMGs, initial assessment, annual surveillance assessment and recertification assessment costs vary by auditing firm, acreage and Group Manager profile, including number of office sites and employees.</p> <p>Annual fees for IMGs and Individual Third-Party certificates are based on acres enrolled, as follows: Less than 249,000 acres: \$0.02/acre 250,000-499,000 acres: \$0.03/acre 500,000-1,000,000 acres: \$0.04/acre 1,000,001 or more: \$0.05/acre</p> <p>ATFS invoices both IMGs and Independent Third-Party certificate holders for annual fees in the first quarter of the calendar year.</p>	<p>Per acre costs are higher for smaller ownerships in part because there are relatively fixed auditing and preparation costs and fewer acres to spread the cost over. One option to reduce costs is the joining together of small ownerships for group certification. Recent information obtained by N. C. State (Cubbage 2011) listed median annual costs of approximately \$15 per acre for SFI and \$3 per acre for FSC, for reported forest certification ownerships less than 10,000 acres. It is important to note that the costs are not the same for all, with some ownerships reporting higher costs to transition from traditional management to certified forest management.</p>		
<p>Scope (suitable for)</p>	<p>Family woodland owners in the U.S.</p>	<p>All forest types throughout the world.</p>	<p>Primarily medium and large-scale forests in U.S. and Canada.</p>
<p>Year Founded/ Created</p>	<p>1941 (2004 as certification system)</p>	<p>1993</p>	<p>1995</p>
<p>Sponsor(s)</p>	<p>American Forest Foundation (AFF)</p>	<p>World Wide Fund for Nature, Scientific Certification Systems (SCS), SmartWood.</p>	<p>SFI Program Participants are made up of public and private landowners, conservation groups, and academic institutions.</p>

Criteria	ATFS	FSC	SFI
Governance			
Oversight	Woodlands Operating Committee of AFF.	General assembly organized into 3 equally weighted chambers (social, environmental and economic). Nine-person Board of Directors plus 50 national initiatives each with a Board of Directors.	Eighteen-member Board of Directors made up of 3 chambers (social, environmental and economic).
Representation	Tree Farmers, academics, forestry associations, state foresters, forest industry, natural conservation organizations, forestry extension Agencies.	Environmental and social non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and individuals, forest industry, manufacturers, retailers, academics.	Environmental, conservation, professional and academic groups, independent professional loggers, family forest owners, labor, forest industries.
General standards and approval			
Scope	Environmental & social issues.	Environmental, silvicultural, social, and economic issues.	Environmental, silvicultural, social, and economic issues.
Approval	AFF Board of Trustees	FSC International Board of Directors	SFI Board of Directors
Public input	Subject to public review	Subject to public review	Subject to public review
Updating	Every 5 years	Every 5 years	Every 5 years
Auditor's qualification review			
Auditor evaluation process	Auditor application process which includes an on-site and witness assessment process.	Accreditation Services International (ASI) conducts office audits and witnessing of one trial audit in the field.	Auditor application process which includes an on-site and witness assessment process.
Auditor approval	ANSI-ASQ* National Accreditation Board (ANAB) independent Accreditation Council; Standards Council of Canada (SCC). <small>*ANSI – American National Standards Institute ASQ – American Society for Quality</small>	ASI Managing Director approves an ASI Accreditation Committee's recommendations.	Accreditation body's independent Accreditation Council.
Auditor monitoring	Annual surveillance audits.	Annual office and field audit.	Annual office and field audit.
Auditor renewal	Every 3 years	Every 5 years	Every 5 years

Criteria	ATFS	FSC	SFI
<p>Reviewing Bodies</p>	<p>Auditors accredited by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Accreditation Forum, Inc. (IAF) American National Standards Institute (ANSI) ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board (ANAB), where ASQ stands for American Society for Quality Standards Council of Canada (SCC) 	<p>Certification bodies accredited by FSC International's Accreditation Services International (ASI).</p>	<p>Certification bodies performing audits to SFI forest, chain-of-custody or certified sourcing requirements must be independent, objective and qualified. Depending on the scope of the certification audit, they must have completed an accreditation program through one or more of the following independent, international accreditation bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> American National Standards Institute (ANSI) ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board (ANAB) Standards Council of Canada (SCC)
<p>Certification standards conformance evaluation</p>			
Reviewer	Accredited third party auditor	Accredited third party auditor	Accredited third party auditor
Evaluation process	Audit team reviews management process of state committees or group managers, including field visits, management plan review & review of internal monitoring procedures.	Multidiscipline audit team reviews documentation, conducts field assessment and interviews relevant parties including mandatory public consultation and social impact assessment.	Audit team reviews documentation, conducts field assessment and interviews relevant parties.
Approval	Internal monitoring approved by trained inspector.	A certification committee decides, based on profile, feedback from applicant, stakeholder consultation, and peer review.	Audit team grants approval based on resolution of non-compliance issues.
Public input	Audit team seeks outside stakeholder comments during third party audit. ATFS maintains public dispute resolution procedures.	Any member of the public can file a dispute if there is disagreement with the decision or ongoing compliance to the standard.	Any member of the public can file a dispute if there is disagreement with the decision or ongoing compliance to the standard.
Monitoring	Annual surveillance audits	Annual surveillance audits	Annual surveillance audits
Renewal	Every 3 years	Every 3 years	Every 3 years
Group certification availability	Yes	Yes	Yes; the requirements are outlined in the SFI Standard, Section 9, Appendix 1.

Criteria	ATFS	FSC	SFI
Product tracking			
Material tracking (cert., uncert., recycled)	ATFS does not certify products. Fiber from ATFS certified lands is included in SFI & Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) chain-of-custody systems as certified content.	Chain-of-custody tracks products from forest through each stage of manufacturing and distribution.	Chain-of-custody tracks products from forest through each stage of manufacturing and distribution. Participants required to have auditable monitoring systems to account for all wood flows.
On-product labeling	ATFS does not certify products. Fiber from ATFS certified lands is included in SFI & Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) chain-of-custody systems as certified content.	Three product labels: 1) "FSC 100%" label 100% FSC Pure products groups; 2) "FSC Mix" label for product groups from well managed forests controlled sources and recycled wood or fiber; 3) "FSC Recycled" label for product groups with 100% recycled content.	Four product labels: 1) Certified Content Label for volume based credit; 2) Certified Content Label for average percentage calculations; 3) Recycled Content Claims for including percentage of recycled content; 4) Fiber Sourcing/Procurement Label for companies certified under the fiber sourcing requirements.
Use of non-certified material	ATFS does not certify products. Fiber from ATFS certified lands is included in SFI & Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) chain-of-custody systems as certified content.	Yes, but prohibits use of sources that are illegally harvested, harvested in violation of traditional or civil rights, derived from forest practices threatening high conservation values, genetically modified trees and from forest converted into plantations or non-forest uses in areas of loss of natural forest cover.	Yes, but "non-certified" raw material shall originate from uncontroversial sources, and must follow SFI's fiber sourcing requirements.
Additional issues of concern			
Principles (indicators, etc.)	ATFS has 9 standards each with performance measures for landowners to meet to become certified.	FSC has 10 principles and 56 criteria for landowners to meet to become certified.	SFI has 14 principles and 114 indicators for landowners to meet to be certified.
How to become certified	To participate in State Tree Farm Programs, fill out request form and contact the State Tree Farm Program. ATFS auditor will be sent to inspect management plan and implementation. To be certified through an IMG or Individual Third-Party certificate, contact AFTS national office.	Family Forests: Locate a local, state or regional group to join. Others: Contract an FSC accredited 3rd-party certifier. Auditor will be sent to inspect management plan and implementation.	Contact SFI, Inc. by reviewing process & steps. This includes an application and list of certifiers. Develop a management plan. Third party certifier will be sent to audit.

Criteria	ATFS	FSC	SFI
Forest conversion	ATFS only certifies forested land. Any land that is converted to other uses is dropped out of the certified acreage.	Conversion of natural forests to plantations of exotic species, GMOs, or genetic clones, or non-forest use is not allowed except under specific and extenuating circumstances	Fiber from forests converted to other uses cannot count toward certified content in labels and claims. Interpretation 2.2 states "Conversions are not allowed except in justified circumstances where the program participant can document that ecological impacts are not significant if managing for a different species mix after a final harvest."
Plantations	All lands certified under the ATFS certification program are required to meet each of the provisions within the AFF Standards, ensuring that plantations will support the same values of protection of water quality and wildlife habitat, sustainable product harvest and support of special sites.	Certification of plantations generally characterized by use of exotic species, genetic clones is allowed under some circumstances. Generally not allowed if forest conversion from natural forest occurred after 1994. Planted forests that capture most elements of natural forests (including wildlife habitat and plant species) are not considered plantations by FSC.	SFI requirements apply on plantations and natural forests alike. Short-rotation woody crops and other high intensity forestry operations are beyond the scope of the SFI Standard.
Clearcutting	The AFF Standards do not disallow certain silvicultural prescriptions.	Depends on the U.S. region and the forest type being managed. For natural and semi-natural forests, there are no binding limits in the Southeast, but FSC recommends up to 40 acres usually, 80 acres under some circumstances. Other clearcut limits (openings without retention) in the region for natural or semi-natural forests are as follows: Appalachia 10 acres; Ouachita 20 acres; Ozarks 20 acres; Mississippi Alluvial Valley 20 acres.	Standard technique where appropriate. Average clearcut size not to exceed 120 acres.
Chemical use	Under ATFS, pesticides used must be EPA-approved and applied, stored and disposed of in accordance with EPA-approved labels and by persons appropriately trained or licensed and supervised. Pesticides include chemicals commonly known as herbicides and insecticides.	Promote non-chemical approach; strive to avoid use of chemical pesticides. Prohibit pesticides that are persistent, toxic or whose derivatives remain biologically active and accumulate in food chain, require proper equipment, training and disposal. Commonly-used chemicals that are prohibited for use by FSC without explicit exemption include, hexazinone, atrazine, dicamba, permethrins, and some formulations of 2,4-D.	Minimize chemical use in general; use least-toxic & narrowest-spectrum pesticides. Use integrated pest management where feasible. Require proper equipment, training and disposal. Follow all laws and regulations and label directions.

Criteria	ATFS	FSC	SFI
Genetically modified trees	ATFS does not define or address GMOs within its Standard or glossary and defers to PEFC relative to GMO policy.	Not allowed.	Research on forest tree biotechnology trees allowed.
Chain-of-custody	Yes, through SFI	Yes	Yes
Avoid illegal sources	This is not an applicable issue because ATFS certifies forestland only.	Yes	Yes
Maintain biodiversity	Yes	Yes	Yes
Logger certification /training	This is not an applicable issue because ATFS certifies forestland only.	No	Yes
Education and outreach	Yes	No	Yes
BMPs	AFF Standard 4: Air, Water and Soil Protection Performance Measure 4.1 – Forest owner must meet or exceed practices prescribed by State Forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs) that are applicable to the property.	No	Yes - required for all harvests
Credit eligibility for Green Building Systems			
LEED	No	Yes	No in Materials and Resources section, but yes under Pilot Credit 43
Green Globes	Yes	Yes	Yes
National Green Building Standard	Yes	Yes	Yes

Appendix B: Definition of Terms

Certified Sourcing Label: A procurement label not a Chain of Custody (CoC) label (see below).

Chain of Custody (CoC): Chain-of-Custody certification is a tool used to track wood fiber from a certified forest, providing a link between certified forestlands and certified products. Through CoC certification, a company can accurately identify how much of the product comes from certified forestlands, non-certified lands and/or recycled content.

Clonal pine: Clonal pines are generally reproduced from a process called somatic embryogenesis (e.g., ArborGen describes their clonal processes at: <http://www.arborgen.us/index.php/propagation?phpMyAdmin=iPU8la6jISo93dPyYdigifeIV%2C3>). Loblolly pine seedlings that are reproduced through tissue cultures (i.e., somatic embryogenesis) are clones whereas those reproduced through open pollination or mass control pollination are not clones.

Clonal trees: Clonal trees are allowed under FSC-US Forest Management Standard under certain conditions and would generally be classified as P10 Plantations (see below).

Controlled Wood: An FSC term referring to evaluation system used to identify prohibited and/or illegally harvested sources of fiber.

Forest tree biotechnology: As commonly used, forest tree biotechnology encompasses structural and functional studies of genes and genomes (including development and application of genetic markers); various methods of vegetative reproduction such as micro propagation, tissue culture, somatic embryogenesis and genetic engineering (GE), which is the physical manipulation and asexual insertion of genes into organisms (SFI).

Genetically modified organism (GMO): An organism that has been transformed by the insertion of one or more genes (called transgenes) from a different species. Genetic modification does not include traditional breeding or natural hybridization, i.e. GMO trees cannot be obtained through conventional tree breeding methods such as controlled pollination. In the U.S., the only GMO tree that is at advanced stages of commercial testing is a cold-tolerant eucalyptus. For example, ArborGen describes their work on cold-tolerant eucalyptus at: <http://www.arborgen.us/index.php/products/product-pipeline/freeze-tolerant-eucalyptus>. Currently, the FSC does not allow any GMO trees.

Mixed Sources: Sources of fiber containing a mixture of certified, controlled, recycled, and/or non-certified forest content (allowed mixture depends on the program). All non-certified forest content must meet the Controlled Wood (FSC) or Uncontroversial Sources (SFI) threshold.

Percentage system: A CoC system that represents a given threshold of certified content.

Principle 10 Plantations (P10 Plantations): A Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) term for forest plantations that are highly regimented and made up of blocks of exotic trees (like Eucalyptus in the U.S.), cloned trees lacking natural genetic variation and other types

of forest trees that lack traits of natural forests. A P10 Plantation may consist of one or more of the following: non-native species, short rotation woody crops, and/or plantations “sanitized” through the removal of all natural and/or competing vegetation. Designated P10 Plantations may be certified only under certain and/or specific conditions. For example, 20 to 25 percent of the overall tract acreage must remain in semi-natural forest state. Under the *FSC-US Forest Management Standard*, block plantings of loblolly pine clones are classified as P10 Plantations, but aspen clonal plantings would not automatically trigger the same classification. This is because loblolly pines naturally do not reproduce from roots or stumps (clonally) whereas aspen species do.

Uncontroversial Sources: An SFI term regarding an evaluation system used to identify sources of fiber which are not prohibited and/or illegally harvested.

Volume Credit: a CoC system that represents a mix of certified and controlled wood.

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