



Robinwood



Forest Certification



Certification Principles

Summary

Europe is committed to the goal of sustainable forest management, as shown by the Helsinki Guidelines (1993) and the associated Pan European Criteria PEC (1998)

Since the early 1990's forest certification has become an increasingly important tool as a means of verifying management of a forest against a standard. There are two main elements to certification, both of which require independent audits of procedures.

Forest management certification is an assessment of the methods of management.

Chain of custody certification involves an audit of the procedures used by companies and other organisations for tracing wood products along the supply chain, to assure buyers that products originate from certified forests.

Certification within the EU and partner regions

Within Europe there are two main certification bodies the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Standards (PEFC). The UK has its own certification system, the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme, (UKWAS) which is an accredited scheme under both the FSC and PEFC banner.

The FSC is an international body which aims to “bring people together to find solutions which promote responsible stewardship of the world’s forests” it bases its certification standards on a set of “Principles and Criteria of Forest Stewardship”.

Countries or regions are encouraged to use these principles and criteria as the basis for their own local standards.

PEFC is a “global umbrella organisation for the

assessment of and mutual recognition national forest certification schemes, developed in a stakeholder process”.

Each member country or region is required to write its own standard based on inter-governmental processes for the promotion of sustainable forest management.

European schemes are based on the Helsinki guidelines (www.europa.eu.int)

UKWAS was developed by a multi-stakeholder partnership in 1999 to own, interpret, develop and promote a certification standard for forest management in the United Kingdom.

These schemes aim to give a transparent, ongoing independent assessment of forests and their management, the wood chain from producer to consumer using a standard that is globally appropriate yet also meets the needs of the local environment.



Certification and Regional Policy

Governments recognise and support certification, but there are no moves to make certification of private forests a government requirement. However, government procurement policies are indirectly encouraging certification.

In Brandenburg the view is that national and regional forestry regulations are sufficient to guarantee SFM. However, the Brandenburg administration has recognised that local, national and international buyers of timber are increasingly demanding a certified product. It also sees certification of state forests as a means to encourage certification by private owners.
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Where there is a strong link between government regulations and certification

uptake in private woodlands is greater. Also in these regions certification of state forests is seen as a means to encourage certification of private owners.
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Robinwood Certification Study

Robinwood undertook a study into certification within partner regions. Its findings included the following:

Barriers

There are several important barriers to certification that are generally common across the partner regions.

Particularly significant for private owners are:

- Direct costs of certification, preparation of plans/documentation, time, and post certification costs.
- Indirect costs, improving forest management and operations to meet the level required for certification.
- Absence of price premiums for certified products. (True in partner regions where certification is new and low percentage, but not in Wales or Brandenburg.)

For commercial enterprises in Wales, the market has been the main driver for certification. Earlier certifications responded to perceived or anticipated market pressure, followed by ‘certify or we’ll buy elsewhere’ to the present situation where a price premium does exist.
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Other concerns raised by the Robinwood study include:

- Lack of demand for certified products,
- Difficulty in understanding certification requirements
- Unavailability of independent advice on certification
- There is little incentive for commercial growers to certify unless the forest is near to production.

In Slovakia positive impacts have been improved public perception of forests and increasing, market potential, especially in export markets.

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Certification Within Eu and Partner Regions

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Country Totals	Date	Certified Area 000 ha			
		FSC	PEFC	UKWAS	Total
Germany	December 06	600	7200	0	7800
Italy	February 07	22	637	0	659
Spain	February 07	132	518	0	650
Slovakia	February 07	163	336	0	499
UK	February 07	0	0	1693	1693
Robinwood Countries Total		917	8691	1693	11301

Benefits

Early indications from regions where certification has a longer history are:

- Improved public awareness of certification.
- Improved planning, both short and long term.
- Better managers are more professional and are required to focus on efficient documentation and systems to minimise time required for compliance.
- Streamlining of management and documentation -usually after two to three years certification.
- Better monitoring.
- Better and stronger links between government policy and certification standards.
- Better standards of forest management
- More and better communication with better relationships with neighbours and external bodies.
- Certification brings compliance and assurance that operations are legal (H&S).

It seems that both the price premium and demand develop with time and with increasing coverage of certified forests.

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Common issues

The vast majority of private forests across the Robinwood partner regions remain uncertified. This is mainly because of:

- Lack of independent advice on certification with advice mainly only available from certification agencies, or NGO's and forestry consultants already involved with certification.

Further reading:

- www.pefc.org
- www.ukwas.org.uk
- www.fsc.org
- Robinwood Certification report - www.robinwood.it
- UK Forest Standard - publications@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
- European Union - www.europa.eu.int
- Forestry Commission Wales - www.forestry.gov.uk

The Impacts of Certification on UK Forests,
M. Garforth and K. Thornber 2002.
Sustainable Forestry and the European Union -
ISBN 92-894-6092-X

- It is difficult for small private woodland owners to translate the standard into what is needed on the ground without a forest manager or consultant
- Disproportionately high costs of certification for small privately owned woodlands.
- Bureaucratic and excessive procedures.
- Lack of price incentive in some regions.
- Lack of market information on demand for certified timber
- Lack of initiatives to stimulate demand for certified timber
- Lack of integration of forest management certification procedures with government and regional regulatory procedures leading to confusion and duplication of tasks.
- Undeveloped group certification schemes (except Wales) to enable small woodlands to benefit from economies of scale.
- Lack of mutual recognition of schemes by FSC and PEFC
- Low public awareness of the meaning of certification and of certification labels and logos.

Standardisation of forest management and management planning, these plans lead to improved consistency of forest management across sites and through changes in staff.

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Recommendations

If regional governments see certification as an instrument for bringing about Sustainable Forest Management this should be clearly stated in their policies/strategies.

An independent advisory service is required to inform private forest owners about the key aspects of certification - i.e. systems, markets costs etc.

Mechanisms for financial assistance to private owners should be considered to encourage certification.

Efforts should be made to encourage the mutual recognition of FSC and PEFC systems, and to create a level playing field across the EU.

This report has been produced as a result of the Robinwood Project, a 45 month European Interreg 111c Regional Framework Operation project – a first for Wales and delivered by Forestry Commission Wales on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government. It looked at how we should manage our trees and forests to provide solutions to hydrological issues, increase the amount of wood used in heat and energy and the key role they play in helping to regenerate rural communities across Europe.

The Italian project leaders named the project after Robin Hood – a deliberate play on the UK folk hero best known for taking from the rich and giving to the poor. Research carried out by the project now provides valuable new information on how forests can provide all kinds of opportunities for the future.