The Status of Revisions to Forest Certification Standards

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What is Forest Certification?

A voluntary process to manage forest lands and promote sustainable forest management through principles, criteria and objectives consistent with government processes around the world.

Began in the 1990s in response to concerns about logging practices and forest conversion, especially in tropical regions.

Today there are more than 50 different standards worldwide.
The Early Days of Standard Development
Factors Driving Forest Certification

- Growing concern over deforestation and illegal logging
- Increasing concern about the environmental provenance of goods people buy
- Industry and public authorities are looking for proof of legality and sustainability in products they buy, whether paper or solid wood products
  - Montreal Process
  - Pan-European (Helsinki) Process
Emergence of the Contemporaries

- All depend on third-party audits to measure planning, procedures, systems and performance of on-the-ground forest operations.

- All provide the basics by ensuring harvested areas are reforested, laws are obeyed, and there is no unauthorized or illegal logging.

- Standards were created for different contexts: SFI developed for North America, FSC developed for tropical regions, and ATFS developed for family forest owners.
Certification Standards
Used by land managers, procurement organizations and manufacturers

- **Forest Management** – addressing social, ecological, and economic aspects of forest management
- **Chain of Custody** – accounting system for tracking fiber flows resulting in label use
- **Fiber Sourcing (SFI)** – broadening the practice of sustainable forestry through landowner outreach, BMPs, and training
- **Off-Shore Sourcing & Controlled Wood** – risk assessments for identify unacceptable fiber
Revising the Standards

The process to develop, review, and revise the standards in a comprehensive, transparent, inclusive, and robust manner

Public Input
Providing opportunities for public input in an open and transparent manner

Emerging Developments
Incorporating new and emerging developments in the forest sector

Continuous Improvement
Promoting continuous improvement

All three programs – SFI, FSC, and ATFS – are currently in the process of revising all or portions of their standards.
SFI Standards

- SFI Inc. is North American organization responsible for maintaining, overseeing and improving the internationally recognized Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) program.
  - Requirements for the SFI 2010-2014 Program address all of SFI’s standards, rules for label use, procedures, and guidance for the program.

- SFI Forest Management & Fiber Sourcing Standard
  - Promotes sustainable forest management through 14 core principles, 20 objectives, 38 performance measures and 115 indicators.
  - Fiber sourcing requirements support responsible forest management on millions of additional acres that are not certified.

- SFI Chain of Custody Standard
  - Helping companies address the growing demand from governments, customers, and consumers for forest products from responsible sources.
SFI Revision Timeline

- SFI 2015-2019 Standard review process launched in June 2013
- Invitation to nearly 10,000 stakeholders to submit comments 6/5 to 8/6, 2013
- SFI’s Review Task Groups develop first draft of revisions to Standards
- Second comment period opens 1/6 to 3/7, 2014 to receive input on first draft
- Nine regional workshops and one webinar held to receive direct feedback
- Second comment period closes and Task Groups continue revising the Standards
- Final draft of Standards reviewed and approved by the SFI Board Nov. 2014
- SFI-certified companies have until Jan. 2016 to implement new requirements
## Preliminary Summary of SFI Revisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forest Management &amp; Fiber Sourcing</th>
<th>Chain of Custody &amp; On-Product Label Use</th>
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<tr>
<td>Conversion requirements, including forest cover types and to non-forest land use</td>
<td>Pre-consumer recycled content considered certified content</td>
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<td>Prohibited use of WHO 1A and 1B chemicals</td>
<td>Revised set of standardized SFI Claims</td>
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<td>Expanded protection of wetlands and riparian areas</td>
<td>Expanded definition of controversial sources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support a diversity of native forest cover types</td>
<td>Reduced number of Chain of Custody Labels</td>
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<td>Conservation of significant species of concern</td>
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<td>Recognize and respect Indigenous Peoples’ Rights</td>
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<td>Biodiversity requirements in Fiber Sourcing</td>
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<td>Avoidance of controversial sources including illegal logging</td>
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<td>Logger training continuing education and definition clarity</td>
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FSC Standards

- Global organization with national standards that align with FSC’s principles and criteria (P&C)
  - Standards and policies developed by Policy and Standards Unit
  - Process of revising national standards (e.g., FSC-US) predicated on completion of international framework policies and documents

- FSC-US Forest Management Standard (v 1.0)
  - Approved by FSC International on July 8, 2010

- FSC Standard for Chain of Custody Certification
  - International in scope
  - Current version: FSC-STD-40-004 V2-1 EN
FSC Revisions – Ongoing Processes

Prior to any specific revisions to the FSC-US Forest Management Standard, the following development and revision processes need to be completed:

- Development of International Generic Indicators (IGI)
- Development of the Transfer Process for National Standards
- Controlled Wood Revisions
- Development of U.S. National Risk Assessment
- Pesticide Derogation Procedure/Indicators and Thresholds Revisions
International Generic Indicators
and subsequent Transfer Process for National Standards

Ensure consistent application of Principles & Criteria v.5 across the globe
Revision of the Controlled Wood System and subsequent U.S. National Risk Assessment

Phase-out company-developed Risk Assessments to be replaced by FSC-approved National Risk Assessments for making risk designations.
FSC-US National Risk Assessment

United States

Draft prepared by NEFCon, for guidance only

3. High conservation value forest

The district of origin may be considered low risk in relation to threat to high conservation values if: a) indicator 3.1 is met; or b) indicator 3.2 eliminates (or greatly mitigates) the threat posed to the district of origin by non-compliance with 3.1.

3.0 Objects potentially contributing to unspecified risk (2 types)

3.1 Forest management activities in the relevant level (eco-region, sub-eco-region, local) do not threaten eco-regionally significant high conservation values

3.2 A strong system of protection (effective protected areas and legislation) is in place that ensures survival of the HCVs in the ecoregion

4. Conversion

The district of origin may be considered low risk in relation to conversion of forest to plantations or non-forest uses when the following indicator is present.

4.1 There is no net loss AND no significant rate of loss (> 0.5% per year) of natural forests and other naturally wooded ecosystems such as savannas taking place in the eco-region in question

5. GMO Trees

The district of origin may be considered low risk in relation to wood from genetically modified trees when one of the following indicators is complied with.

5.1 There is no commercial use of genetically modified trees of the species concerned taking place in the country or district concerned

5.2 Licenses are required for commercial use of genetically modified trees and there are no licences for commercial use

5.3 It is forbidden to use genetically modified trees commercially in the country concerned

Unspecified risk

United States

Workplan approved. Working Group meetings held and drafting started. Further development is currently pending due to the ongoing revision process of the IRA framework.
ATFS Standards of Sustainability
Revision Process

Designed for size, scale, and management intensity of family-owned and small woodlands in the United States

- Process implemented with:
  - AFF procedures
  - PEFC guidelines
- Began in Fall 2013
- First 60-day comment period completed (3/7/14)
- Second comment period: Jun.-Aug. 2014
- Adoption by Jan. 2016
- One year transition
ATFS Revision Comments
Primary observations and suggestions for area of focus

- need to maintain flexibility, clarity around High Conservation Value Forests,
- 5-year reforestation requirement,
- inclusion of biomass and carbon as forest products,
- private property rights,
- voluntary nature of the program,
- integrated pest management,
- forest health, prescribed fire,
- need to sustain credibility,
- need to recognize PEFC endorsement in prologue,
- ensuring guidance is understood in the ATFS community, and
- flexibility in management plans.
Resources

**Links to the Standards**
- Forest Stewardship Council (US): [https://us.fsc.org/certification.194.htm](https://us.fsc.org/certification.194.htm)
- American Tree Farm System: [https://www.treefarmsystem.org/atfscertification](https://www.treefarmsystem.org/atfscertification)

**Links to the Standards Revision Processes**
- Forest Stewardship Council: [https://ic.fsc.org/standard-setting.212.htm](https://ic.fsc.org/standard-setting.212.htm)
- American Tree Farm System: [https://www.treefarmsystem.org/standards-review](https://www.treefarmsystem.org/standards-review)