



How can I get certification?

As an individual:

Most certifications are held by single entities in Australia. They are typically large forestry and processing companies, which have the depth of resources to realign their systems to meet the required standards.

Few small growers in Australia have been certified. Individual certification is costly, time consuming and requires some expertise.

As part of a group:

Group certification acts as a means for forest growers to reduce the costs of certification. Such a mechanism is widely and successfully used in Europe and the United States. It offers an opportunity for group learning, as well as managing costs.

The process effectively brings together a group of growers under a single certification, and is typically managed by a consultant.

Costs for group certification vary according to group size and auditing methodology. For instance, the cost of the audit can be spread over the participants in the scheme. And the auditor could employ sampling, meaning that not every forest grower in the group need be visited.



What costs are involved in certification?

Initial costs:

The preparation of a business for certification will need a significant investment of time and money in preparing, achieving and maintaining certification.

You will probably have to engage a suitably skilled consultant to create appropriate documentation, consult with external stakeholders, such as community groups and regulators, and undertake an internal audit in preparation for your auditor's visit.

Achieving certification will require the presence of an accredited auditor. Costs will typically include their time, travel, and expert (usually forestry) advice.

Ongoing costs:

Once certified, there are regular compliance audits and periodic full audits. If non-compliances are found during an audit, you will need to rectify them and additional inspections may be required. These costs will all fall to the entity being certified.



Who do I talk to about obtaining certification?

There are an increasing number of consultants and service providers who are accredited to operate either one or both of the schemes. The respective websites of AFS and FSC have a list of their accredited auditors (see Contacts on the back page).



CONTACTS

Australian Forest Growers

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Australian Forestry Standard Limited

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Forest Stewardship Council Australia

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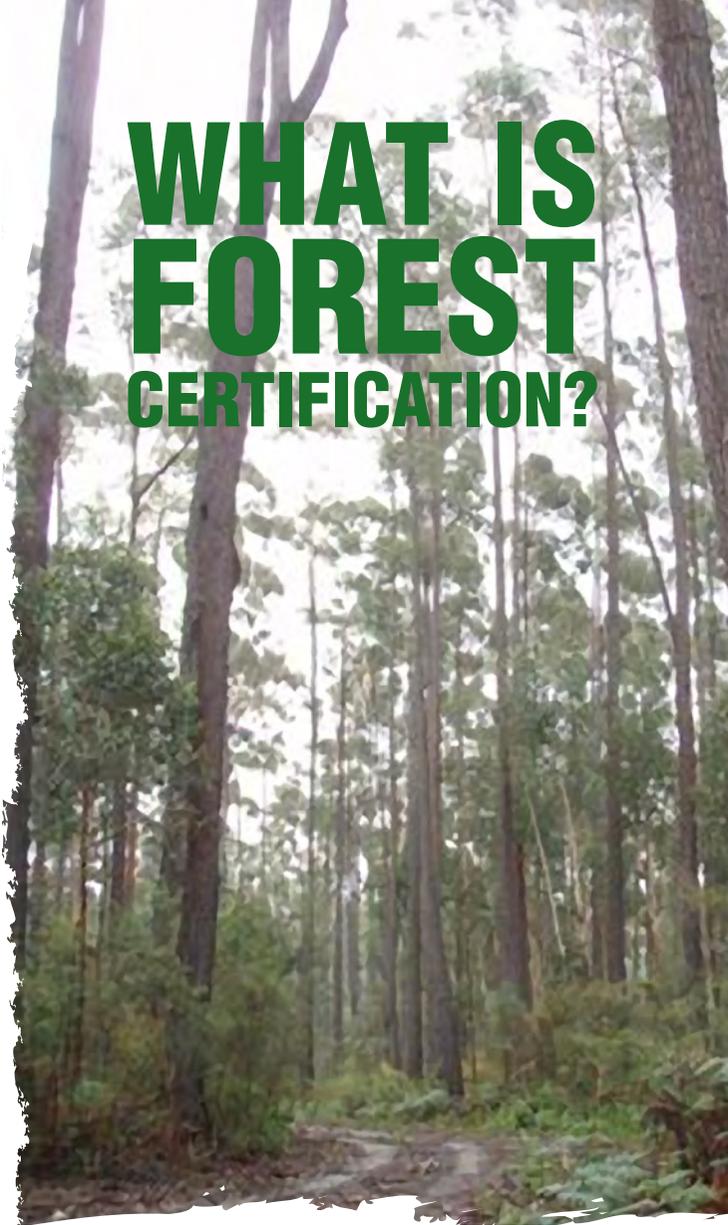
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WHAT IS FOREST CERTIFICATION?



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Office of Environment & Heritage



What Is Forest Certification?

The certification process provides assurance that a product meets a certain set of standards. Typically, an independent, third party is called upon to verify whether or not those standards have been met. The purpose of certification is to give consumers confidence that a product, such as organic vegetables or a six star energy-saving fridge, actually measures up to the claims made by its producer. In the forest industry, certification takes two forms: Forest Management Certification and Chain of Custody Certification.

Forest Management Certification (FMC)

Forest Management Certification (FMC) is aimed at giving consumers confidence that the timber product they are purchasing has been grown and harvested in a legal and sustainable manner. By signing up to FMC, a forest owner agrees to comply with a set of environmental stewardship and 'good neighbour' standards in the management of their forest.

To prove compliance, the forest owner is required to document their forest management performance against the set of criteria adopted by the particular certification scheme. Independent auditors inspect the forest management practices documentation to verify whether or not the forest owner has complied. This can be a complex and time consuming process, and forest owners should be fully aware of its requirements. While certification is not compulsory, some domestic and international markets are increasingly calling for proof that the timber they purchase is legally and sustainably produced. Certification can provide such assurance.

Chain of Custody Certification (CoC)

Forest Management Certification only pertains to what happens in the forest. Once the timber leaves the forest's gate, Chain of Custody Certification (CoC) tracks the forest products through to sale in the marketplace.

CoC consists of two processes. First, the certified entity puts in place a comprehensive traceability system, which is independently audited. Traceability is designed to give consumers confidence that the wood product they buy is derived from a certified forest.

The second process is the devising of labelling schemes, recognisable at the consumer level. Many types of writing paper, publications, toilet paper or furniture carry a branded label from either the Australian Forestry Standard or Forest Stewardship Council. The label offers instantly visible evidence that the product being purchased has complied with a CoC.

Building and other materials may carry the label on the packaging, or the evidence of the CoC is on the accompanying paperwork – similar in process to such schemes as the national livestock identification scheme.

What FMC schemes operate in Australia?

Two types of certification schemes are used to certify forests in Australia. They are the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Australian Forestry Standard (AFS).

FSC is an international set of principles that are applied to Australian conditions through the application of interim standards by accredited certifiers. AFS is an Australian Standard (AS-4708) specifically developed for Australian forests, and is internationally recognised by the Program for Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC).

Is one certification scheme better than the other?

Both schemes are recognisable internationally through their own labelling schemes (see Chain of Custody Certification). Consumers in any market can have confidence that if they see a labelled product from either certifier, that product has undergone a comprehensive third party auditing process. There are some differences between the schemes, mostly relating to ideology, criteria and process.

What are the benefits of certification?

To the environment:

Certification ensures that forests are managed in a sustainable manner, ensuring protection of endangered and threatened species, areas of cultural heritage values and the safeguarding of soil and water values.

Forest certification may be a method of demonstrating legal logging. If certification is demanded by the retailer and customer, this will limit sales of illegally logged timber, greatly benefiting the environment.

To the consumer:

As consumers become more environmentally aware, they are seeking information on whether or not the management and harvesting process involved exploitation or environmental harm. Forest certification acts as a guarantee that a set of high environmental standards has been met.

To the manufacturer:

Many major retailers now require compliance with a certification standard on timber and timber products that they sell. Certification gives retailers confidence in the product they are purchasing, and will also benefit processors by slowing down and eliminating unfair competition from illegally logged timber products.

To the grower:

In the longer term, growers should receive a better price for their timber, especially if the certification process restricts illegal logging, and cheap timber imports cease. Ultimately, the grower may not be able to market their timber without forest management certification.

Why should I get certification?

Many people using a wood product want to know where it comes from and how it has been made. They want assurance that neither the forest nor the people who made the product were harmed or exploited in the process. Many state government agencies and departments, major processing companies and some architects and specifiers will no longer take the risk to their reputation of buying uncertified products. This may mean that despite the obvious high quality of your product and its legality, such purchasers will refuse to buy your product simply because it is not certified.

In some cases uncertified product can be mixed with certified product, but there are limits to proportions and a purchaser may still prefer a fully certified product. Certification acts as a guarantee of entry to all markets.