



Promoting sustainable forest management

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PEFC demonstrates customer commitment

The PEFC Council member countries have now approved two new requirements to the PEFC Council regulations in an extraordinary General Assembly vote. As of today the PEFC Council requires making a summary of certification audit reports publicly available, and having a public consultation, for each individual forest certification. The PEFC Council has also submitted the new PEFC documentation to the British Government for re-assessment against Her Majesty's Government's (HMG) requirements for sustainable and legal timber. "The vote by our member countries, and making these additions to meet HMG's public procurement requirements, clearly demonstrates PEFC's customer commitment", said Mr Ben Gunneberg, Secretary General of the PEFC Council. "With this decision the PEFC Council seeks to accommodate the needs of all users of forest certification and to guarantee and increase the market access of PEFC certified products."

The submission comes one month prior to the UK Government's six-month deadline for certification systems to adapt to the new British criteria for the implementation of its public procurement policy for timber. Over the last five months, PEFC has worked very closely with the UK ministry for environment, food and rural affairs (DEFRA) and with its advisory board, the UK Central Point of Expertise on Timber (CPET), to identify and develop the necessary changes.

Mr Gunneberg added: "We have thoroughly discussed all of the British Government's requests in this matter and with the experts involved. We now look forward to an early re-assessment and a positive result, so that a continued acceptance of PEFC certified products is assured after the transition period."

The UK Government's original assessment of PEFC in autumn of 2004 demonstrated that PEFC met all the thresholds for legality and for sustainable forest management standards. It was only on three procedural criteria, namely the decision-making at national standard setting level and the two issues voted upon today, that PEFC did not obtain the necessary score required to meet the government's "sustainability" threshold. PEFC therefore took up Environment Minister Elliot Morley's offer to collaborate with DEFRA and CPET, and within the given six-month period to provide the assurance the UK Government seeks. The issue of decision-making at national level had already been addressed at last year's PEFC General Assembly, shortly before DEFRA announced its initial assessment results.

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Editors Notes

Forest Certification:

Forest certification is a process which provides an assurance mechanism to purchasers of wood and paper products that the wood used in the products comes from sustainably managed forest. Sustainably managed forest are those whose management implements performance standards based on internationally agreed environmental, social and economical requirements.

PEFC (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes)

PEFC is a framework for the mutual recognition of credible national or regional forest certification schemes that have been developed based on internationally recognised requirements for sustainable forest management. Since its launch in 1999, PEFC has become the largest forest certification umbrella organisation covering national schemes from all over the world, delivering hundreds of millions of tonnes of wood to the processing industry and then onto the market place from over 100 million hectares of certified forests. PEFC has strong grass roots support from many stakeholders including the forestry sector, governments, trade associations, trade unions and non-governmental organisations.

press release