



2nd April 2001

**Initial PEFC Comments on
the WWF Press Release of 2nd April 2001.**

PEFC members are committed to promote the environmentally appropriate, economically viable and socially beneficial management of forests.

PEFC always welcomes constructive criticism and has a proven track record of acting quickly and positively on it. For example the inclusion of the ILO (International Labour Organisation) conventions as requested and advised by the International Federation of Building and Woodworkers. We are therefore very disappointed and surprised at the negative approach taken by WWF. Similarly, it is very surprising and curious, that at no stage in conducting this study, was PEFC contacted. This can only bring into question the real motives behind the report. Instead of working with us to promote responsible forest management, the organisation has decided to exclude itself. We look forward to WWF actively participating in the process as social interests such as labour unions have done.

PEFC is very concerned that a well respected international organisation such as WWF, which claims it cares for the responsible management of forests, has appointed as its consultant one of its former employees, whose views are well known. Would it not have been a better and more credible approach to appoint someone who is clearly seen to be independent and who could have produced an unbiased objective and authoritative report? This would surely have provided a better basis to work on to improve the protection of our forests.

The Press Release unfortunately contains many unsubstantiated claims and biased opinions. Therefore rather than contributing to the ongoing development of sustainable forest management it is merely distracting genuine efforts in this respect.

Contrary to the claims in the WWF Press Release, PEFC endorsed schemes **DO** comply with the basic requirements for forest certification. We use nationally agreed standards developed by multi stakeholder involvement, based on the Ministerial Conference On the Protection Of Forests In Europe (MCPFE) - a process in which WWF itself participates in as a non voting observer. PEFC endorsed schemes use certification bodies accredited by national accreditation organisations, which are independent of the standard setting process and the PEFC Council. This therefore complies with the requirements of ISO guide 61, which states that accreditation bodies “shall not provide, directly or indirectly, services to design, implement or maintain a certification scheme”. It is very questionable if WWF’s preferred scheme meets such strict requirements.

PEFC labels make very clear statements and always refer readers to the website where they can obtain full and comprehensive information. PEFC is about more than just labels - it is about promoting the economically viable, environmentally appropriate and socially beneficial management of forests.

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Contrary to the claims in the WWF Press Release, no risk is posed to the credibility of retailers. Anyone who looks objectively at our process can see that the scheme is based on normal certification procedures verified by independent accredited certifiers as is normal for all other certified products in the world. By selling products with a PEFC logo, retailers will be promoting sustainable forest management.

Contrary to claims in the WWF Press Release PEFC has as one of its cornerstones, compliance with national laws. This is verified by independent consultants when schemes are assessed and it is checked regularly by the independent certification bodies when they do their audits.

Contrary to the claim in the WWF Press Release, PEFC has a comprehensive mechanism to ensure all stakeholder views are extensively considered. Stakeholder views are sought at all of the following levels:

- a) the development and establishment of national and regional standards
- b) the assessment of schemes via a public consultation process to which all are invited to participate. We put out press releases and post schemes on the Internet with the independent consultants address so that comments can be sent directly to them.
- c) the Disputes settlement procedures with both the independent certifiers and the independent dispute settlement board, which is set up in each country.
- d) Ultimately the PEFC Council where issues not resolved up until then can be taken.

It seems that the WWF spokesperson does not want to understand the very democratic nature of the PEFC (even though it has been explained to him several times). As with for example, the MCPFE process, each country has a say. ENGOs can take part in discussions at national and local level where it really counts. Like the MCPFE process, observer status can be conferred on NGOs and in fact is. Like the MCPFE these observers have influential powers and their votes come through the national members. To do otherwise would be to unfairly give one stakeholder group undue influence.

Contrary to the claim in the press release, PEFC is based on the commitment of woodland owners and provides a regional mechanism, which allows even the smallest to get involved to demonstrate their commitment to sustainable forest management.

Contrary to the claims in the WWF Press Release, PEFC does not fail to meet the World Trade Organisation's Technical Barrier to Trade Agreement. In fact it promotes competition and the first non-European member countries are soon to join the Council. We have also had expressions of interest in membership from both northern and southern hemisphere countries that are developing national forest certification schemes.

Contrary to the claims in the WWF press release, PEFC scheme does respect the decision making processes as outlined in the internationally agreed Agenda 21.

It is alarming to see such a sensationalised press release full of inaccuracies. It should also be noted that the "consultants" themselves state "*some references may not be valid at time of writing*". Shouldn't a consultant check? And if not why not? PEFC has not been given an opportunity to look at the report in detail. It is important therefore that the PEFC takes time to study the report to elicit any genuine constructive criticism; to help PEFC in its continual review process. We will also need to correct the misleading and inaccurate information so that everyone can be properly informed. This will take time and we are sorry that a proper objective study, involving PEFC, wasn't conducted.

PEFC Council Secretariat, 2nd April 2001.

For more information contact:

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1. What is Pan European Forest Certification?

The Pan European Forest Certification (PEFC) Council was launched in Paris, in June 1999, following months of intensive development work. The PEFC scheme, a voluntary private sector initiative, provides assurance to the customers of woodland owners that the products they buy come from independently certified forests managed according to the Pan European Criteria as defined by the resolutions of the Helsinki and Lisbon Ministerial Conferences of 1993 and 1998 on the Protection of Forests in Europe. Timber products from these forests will be identifiable through the PEFC logo and customers buying these products will be making a positive choice for sustainable forest management.

The PEFC scheme has established an internationally credible framework for national forest certification schemes and initiatives and facilitates mutual recognition of such schemes. The PEFC Technical Document and Statutes (*see web page <http://www.pefc.org/>*) define the basic requirements of forest certification standards and schemes and the set up of institutional arrangements at Pan-European and national and sub-national levels. Timber from certified forests that meet the PEFC criteria can have access to a PEFC logo through a certified chain of custody.

Summary Bullet Points

- PEFC is voluntary private sector initiative based on a consensus view among relevant interested parties on sustainable forest management at the national or regional level.
- PEFC offers a framework for the establishment of mutually compatible national certification systems and their mutual recognition.
- PEFC aims at strengthening and improving the positive image of forestry and wood as a renewable raw material.
- PEFC contributes to the promotion of economically viable, environmentally appropriate and socially beneficial management of forests as defined by the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE).
- PEFC gives assurance to customers, and the general public, that forests certified under the program are managed as defined by the MCPFE.
- PEFC is based on independent third party auditing.
- PEFC is based on regional certification levels and is open for other options as appropriate.
- PEFC can serve as an operable system for mutual recognition of independent certification schemes on a global level.

2. Who is involved?

Stakeholders from the following countries are involved in PEFC's development: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. In these countries the forest area under non-industrial private ownership covers more than 100 million hectares and the total annual timber harvested is approximately 280 million cubic metres. Interest in the PEFC process has also been expressed by Canada and the United States, who attend meetings as observers. Other observers present at PEFC meetings include representatives from: Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Malaysia, New Zealand, Poland, Romania, Russia and South Africa.

The PEFC Council membership currently comprises:

1. PEFC Austria
2. WoodNet asbl -Belgium
3. The Council of the National Certification Centre – Czech Republic
4. PEFC Denmark
5. PEFC France
6. Forest Certification Council, Finland

7. PEFC Germany e.V.
8. PEFC Council of Ireland
9. PEFC Latvia
10. PEFC Norway
11. Conselho Da Fileira Florestal Portuguesa, Portugal
12. PEFC España, Spain
13. Swedish PEFC Co-operative
14. PEFC Switzerland
15. PEFC UK Ltd

The scheme has the support of many European forest industry, trade and owner organisations, which have become extraordinary members such as:

1. FEBO (The European Timber Trade/ Retailers Association)
2. CEPI (Confederation of European Paper Industries)
3. CEI Bois (European Confederation of Woodworking Industries)
4. ELO (European Landowners Organisation)
5. CEPF (Confederation of European Forest Owners).
6. UEF (Union of European Foresters)
7. FECOF (Fédération Européenne des Communes Forestières)

Environmental, retailing and social interests participate at national level and have been invited to participate at international level.