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Press Release

Introduction of PEFC Forest Certification in Wallonia: an asset for the management of its forests

Sustainable development and a sustainable economy are increasingly important concepts, which naturally also apply to forests, their owners and their managers.

At the initiative of Europe's forestry sector, and in partnership with the nature conservation and wood sectors and the forest users, a forestry certification system has been set up which is appropriate for Europe's highly fragmented family-owned forests. The **PEFC** (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification) scheme is applied in 26 countries and covers 48 million hectares in Europe.

Since September 2003, Walloon landowners, both public and private, representing 162,000 ha of woodland, have been involved in the PEFC system. We would like to celebrate this landmark event in the management of Wallonia's forests with you.

In Wallonia, PEFC certification involves **the inspection by an independent body of the management of forests by their owners**. This takes the form of sampling in accordance with environmental standards based on the work of the Helsinki Ministerial Conference on the Protection of European Forests.

PEFC forest certification is also characterised by a region-based approach as well as continuous improvement of forest management, both set up by the Division de la Nature et des Forêts (public authorities) and the Société Royale Forestière de Belgique (private sector). This takes the concrete form of a progress plan developed by **a work group comprising several actors: forestry businesses, environmentalists, scientists and industrialists from the wood sector and forest users.**

The wood from Wallonia's certified forests will bear the distinctive "PEFC" label.

Consumers buying wood with the **PEFC** logo will be encouraging a **voluntary initiative on the part of landowners** keen to demonstrate their responsible management of Walloon forests.

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