



FSC®: Delivering value from forest to consumer



FSC was established in 1993 in response to global deforestation, with support from NGOs, academics, progressive businesses and other stakeholders who shared a goal of tapping the power of the marketplace to ensure that forests thrive now and in the future. We've come a long way since then, with almost 200 million hectares of FSC-certified forestland and an array of global brands using FSC-certified materials. FSC currently operates in over 100 markets, with more certificates issued globally than any other forest certification scheme. We have more than 800 social, economic and environmental member organizations, including such respected NGOs as Greenpeace and WWF. By developing and maintaining the highest standards, FSC has become the most widely used certification by Fortune 500 corporations.

Unfortunately, despite such achievements, deforestation and forest degradation are still two of the world's most serious environmental problems. Approximately 7.6 million hectares of natural forest are destroyed each year, resulting in the loss of incalculable biodiversity and the other environmental services that forests provide. Deforestation and forest degradation are also responsible for a considerable portion of global greenhouse gas emissions, releasing an amount of carbon annually comparable to that of the entire transportation sector. If it weren't for the annual growth of approximately 4.3 million hectares of tree plantations globally, this balance would be even worse.

To provide sustainable alternatives to deforestation and correct unacceptable social conditions in forest-based industries, FSC seeks to vastly expand the adoption of its standard and demand for certified products. We developed an FSC Global Strategy that calls for a strengthened FSC framework to better respond to our stakeholders' needs and increase our market value. This bold plan marks the beginning of a new FSC that will enhance its value for members and certificate holders.



Engaging consumers

Consumerism is evolving. Rather than looking for the best product at the best price, a growing number of shoppers choose brands that align with their values. They care about how products are sourced, manufactured, or packaged, the environmental impacts and how workers are treated. They consequently look for products with certification labels or other descriptors to ensure that their purchases reflect the environmental and social issues they care about.

Many companies have adopted responsible sourcing to turn those consumers into customers, but capturing consumers' attention and inspiring their trust requires understanding their perceptions and desires. Conscientious shopping isn't confined to one generation, nor one region, though it varies across demographics and cultures. In order to gain a higher level of insight into consumer behaviours and needs globally, FSC International contracted the consultancy GlobeScan to conduct consumer research in 13 markets: USA, Germany, UK, Italy, Brazil, China, South Africa, Japan, Australia, Russia, India, Indonesia and Canada. FSC aims to use the insights gained from this research to help its partners to better tell their sustainability stories and help businesses that have adopted sustainable sourcing to create value for their brand.

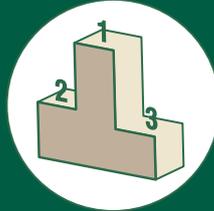
Increasing certification's value

On the other end of the supply chain, FSC has conducted surveys of certified forest owners and other certificate or license holders to measure their perceived value of FSC certification. To better understand stakeholder needs and the benefits that certification provides, FSC recently conducted over 300 interviews of license holders. Results show that the organization is widely viewed as the most rigorous and trusted forest certification scheme, delivering significant risk assurance and on the ground impact, while providing businesses a proof point for their sustainability objectives.

Our research¹ also shows that most stakeholders believe FSC certification gives consumers a clear sign that their organization is serious about responsible forest management, with 80 per cent saying that FSC creates a positive corporate image.

1 B2B International/FSC stakeholder interviews, September 2016.

Insights from recent research on consumer behaviour and needs



- Markets prioritize different factors when it comes to drivers of forest-based purchasing and independent certifications play an important role.



- Consumers clearly value responsible forestry that doesn't contribute to deforestation, and expectations are high.



- FSC provides a pathway of trust for people to take action on their concerns about air quality and climate change – normally debilitating and frustrating issues for consumers, who have few obvious options for dealing with them.

Nevertheless, we understand that there is still work to be done to better position FSC, as well as certification as a whole, in order to create more demand for FSC-certified products and get more forests certified. FSC needs to better define and deliver exceptional value to customers and drive greater adoption and acceptance of its standards. To do this, we need to better understand the unique decision drivers for different stakeholder groups, and which customers within the value chain are most likely to drive adoption.

Given the severity of threats that the world's forests face, and deforestation's contribution to climate change, it is essential and FSC and its partners generate more support for sustainable forest management, in order to preserve the vital services that forests provide for current and future generations.

