

FSC FAQ's

WHAT IS FSC?

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) based in Bonn, Germany, is an international not-for-profit membership-based organization that brings people together to find solutions to the problems created by bad forestry practices and to reward good forest management. The FSC's mission is "to promote environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable management of the world's forests."

It accomplishes this mission with a market-based mechanism: independent, third-party certification. The FSC maintains a set of international standards for responsible forest management through a consultative process with its global membership. It also maintains a set of standards, known as chain of custody standards, for companies trading in products manufactured from fiber sourced from FSC-certified well-managed forests.

FSC has two systems of certification: *Forest Management* and *Chain of Custody*. Forest management certification ensures that forests are well managed according to a globally applicable set of FSC *Principles & Criteria of Forest Stewardship* that is augmented by regionally-based indicators. Chain of custody ensures that products that carry the FSC logo can be tracked back through the supply chain to an FSC-certified forest.

WHO ARE THE CERTIFIERS?

Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) and Rainforest Alliance's "Smartwood" are internationally recognized third-party certifiers of environmental claims. Both Certifiers recognize the highest levels of performance in natural resource management systems, food safety and quality, environmental protection and social responsibility in the private and public sectors, and seeks to stimulate continuous improvement in sustainable development.

Both Certifiers are accredited to conduct both Forest Management and Chain of Custody audits and to certify companies who meet the FSC criteria for certification. That is, FSC sets the rules: they audit and certify companies according to those rules.

HOW ARE FSC and THE CERTIFIERS RELATED?

In the early 1990s, these groups developed its Forest Conservation Program, one of the world's first independent certification programs to recognize exemplary forest management practices. SCS and Smartwood were among the first certifiers to become accredited by the FSC, and both Certifiers have played an instrumental role in the elaboration of the certification standards used today.

WHAT IS FSC CHAIN OF CUSTODY (COC) CERTIFICATION?

The "chain of custody" refers to the path taken by FSC-certified raw materials and forest products, from the forest through the supply chain to the end consumer. The objective of this chain of custody is to ensure that FSC-certified material can be verified all the way back to the forest of origin, enabling consumers to be confident that an FSC-certified well managed forest. Chain of custody certification allows companies to make claims about the FSC-certified status of their products.

In fact, only FSC COC certified companies are allowed to make market claims and label products with FSC trademarks.

WHO NEEDS TO GET FSC COC CERTIFIED?

Any company that takes legal ownership of an FSC-certified product and that wishes to make an FSC claim about that product needs to hold a valid chain of custody certificate. This applies equally to companies that manufacture, trade, re-label, and/or re-package products. Without COC certification, a company may not make an FSC product claim, nor use the FSC name or trademarks in its promotional activities.

Examples of companies that would require certification include; a **printer** printing on FSC-certified paper who wishes to use the FSC logo; a **lumber wholesaler** who wishes to trade in FSC-certified wood products and to make a claim about the FSC status of those products; a **wood door distributor** who wishes to buy and sell FSC doors or a **furniture maker** that wishes to use FSC-certified wood to produce furniture that will be sold as "FSC-certified."

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WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF GETTING FSC COC CERTIFIED?

FSC OCO certification enables companies to demonstrate environmental leadership and to be responsive to the environmental concerns of customers. FSC certification is a bold statement about the quality of the natural resource management behind the wood and paper products.

FSC COC certification enables companies to demonstrate compliance with such programs as the US Green Building Council (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program and the EU Eco-label scheme. FSC COC certification can lead to improved market access and provide new marketing opportunities through product differentiation.

Only FSC COC certified companies may label products with FSC trademarks and/or make other market claims using or invoking FSC trademarks.

FSC is the forest management standard of choice of most environmental groups, procurement schemes, and a growing number of Fortune 500 companies.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO BECOME CERTIFIED?

The factors in determining how long it will take your company to achieve certification include: the number of facilities to be inspected, the operating procedures and training in place, the nature of the business being certified, and for manufacturers, the complexity of the FSC claim that you wish to make. If your company is organized and motivated, you can expect to receive certification from SCS in 4-6 weeks.

If you have an FSC-certified job pending, we will make every effort to expedite the process for you.

WHAT ARE THE STEPS INVOLVED TO GET CERTIFIED?

1. YOU fill out an application.
2. Your selected Certifier reviews your application and provides you with a Work Order proposal.
3. YOU approve the Work Order.
4. The Certifier provides you with instructions and have our designated auditor contact you to schedule the audit.
5. YOU prepare for the audit by creating documented procedures that show how you will do business in conformance with FSC standards.
6. The Certifier conducts the audit and produces an audit report.
7. YOU sign the audit report, acknowledging our findings and agreeing to any corrective actions that they request, and pay your invoice.
8. The Certifier issues a certificate.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO GET CERTIFIED?

The Certifier will provide you with a quote for certification prior to commencing any work. The cost of certification is partly based on auditor time and travel, and therefore it is necessary to review each application.

Their audit fees reflect the following value-added activities; reviewing company documentation; conducting the field audit at all facilities that handle FSC material along with auditor travel expense; producing a written audit report; conducting a technical review of the audit report and company documents; certificate registration and related FSC communications; supporting your certification for the ensuing 12 months (e.g. answering any questions that arise during the certification period.)

Please take a few minutes to fill out an application and fax or e-mail. This will provide them with sufficient information to get you a binding quote.

http://www.scs-certified.com/forestry/forest_programmat_coc.html or <http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/forestry.cfm?id=applications>

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WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO PREPARE FOR THE AUDIT?

First, read and understand the FSC standard that applies to your business. The Certifier can help you determine which standard to use. Next, determine how your company's operating procedures will conform to the FSC requirements. Third, create a procedural document that describes how your company will conduct business in relation to the standard. Your document is essentially a standard operating procedure (SOP) or quality manual. The Certifier will provide you with a guidance document to help you draft your procedure. You will want to explain each step of an FSC job, including the ordering and receiving of certified material, inventory handling procedures, how calculations are made in the manufacture of FSC products, how FSC logos and trademarks are applied, and shipping and invoicing to a client. Some elements that you will address in your procedures;

- How do you know a product is certified when you order and receive it?
- How do you prevent certified and non-certified inputs/outputs from being confused?
- How do you separate and identify certified and non-certified products in storage, in processing, and in finished goods?
- How does your customer know they are receiving FSC-certified products?
- How do you establish the correct claim and logo to place on a product?
- Can you reconcile your certified output back to your certified inputs?

WHO PERFORMS FSC COC AUDITS?

The Certifier has an experienced team of auditors located across the US and around the world. Based on your location, a regionally based auditor will be assigned to perform the site audit of your facilities. Technical review and approval of the report is conducted by their office staff.

WHAT WILL AUDITORS LOOK FOR WHEN THEY AUDIT MY BUSINESS?

Auditors will check to see that your company's operating procedures conform to the applicable FSC standard. The auditor will check your system for tracking certified inputs, inventory, production and outputs. The auditor will confirm that there is a "paper trail" for certified purchases and sales, and that your designated staff has been duly trained in their various responsibilities.

HOW LONG DOES THE CERTIFICATION LAST AND WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO KEEP MY CERTIFICATE VALID?

Your FSC COC certificate is valid for 5 years. At the same time, you will be required to undergo annual audits as a condition for maintaining the certificate. You will also be required to correct non-conformities found by the auditor within specified time frames.

WHO CHECKS TO SEE IF COMPANIES USING FSC LOGOS ARE ACTUALLY CERTIFIED?

FSC is serious about protecting its trademark and actively pursues companies who illegally use the logo. Additionally, certification bodies, environmental groups, and other stakeholders help to maintain the integrity of FSC logo. Companies that are holders of FSC COC certificates also check carefully to be sure that any competitors making FSC claims are duly certified.

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I AM A DISTRIBUTOR. I DO NOT TAKE PHYSICAL POSSESSION OF FSC PRODUCTS. DO I NEED CERTIFICATION?

If your company is a broker, distributor, or wholesaler of FSC-certified products and you take legal ownership of the product and wish to pass the certified claim along to your customer, then you must hold a valid COC certificate. If you plan to buy FSC-certified products and sell it as FSC-certified products you must be COC certified.

The procedures for certifying companies that never take physical possession of their certified products (e.g., back-to-back sales only) are far simpler and more stream-lined than certification of companies that manufacture and warehouse. Please contact the Certifier to discuss the specifics of certification for brokers as it applies to your situation.

I WANT TO GET LEED POINTS FOR USING FSC-CERTIFIED BUILDING PRODUCTS. DO I NEED TO GET FSC COC CERTIFIED?

Under the LEED system, points are earned in five broad categories; sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, indoor environmental quality, and innovation and design process. The "MR 7 Credit" refers to a credit for the use of FSC certified wood in the materials and resources category. The requirements for the MR 7 credit are:

"Use a minimum of 50% of wood-based materials and products, which are certified in accordance with the Forest Stewardship Council's (FSC) Principles and Criteria, for wood building components. These components include, but are not limited to, structural framing and general dimensional framing, flooring, sub-flooring, wood doors and finishes. Only include materials permanently installed in the project. Furniture may be included, providing it is included consistently in MR Credits 3-7." – LEED NC V2.2

If the construction project plans to apply for the MR 7 credit, then you may be asked to provide FSC-certified wood products. All products that are manufactured according to the FSC guidelines and that are eligible for FSC labels are considered "FSC-certified" by LEED. The 50%

requirement refers to the overall construction project, not necessarily to the product that you manufacture or wholesale.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT FSC COC CERTIFICATION?

Please visit any of these websites to download an application, obtain copies of FSC standards, and learn more about the FSC:
http://www.scscertified.com/forestry/forest_programmat_coc.html or <http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/forestry.cfm?id=applications>

More information can be found here:

FSC international website:

<http://www.fsc.org/en/>

FSC United States website:

<http://www.fscus.org/>

Global registry of certificate holders:

<http://www.fsc-info.org/>

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