

The idea of forestry certification (awarding a quality certificate) as an incentive for sustainable forestry was established in the mid 1980s, during the debate on the boycott of tropical timber. Independent certifiers ensure that ecological, economic and social standards are adhered to when wood is extracted from a forest area. This way, consumers can be assured that their purchase comes from a forest that has been responsibly managed.



In the early 1990s, a number of interest groups were formed in several countries, to introduce forest product certification. The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) was founded in 1993 to establish an international certification system.

FSC formulated globally valid criteria for sustainable forestry, the aims of which are environmental sustainability, local community support and economic viability. By 1999, 15 million hectares of forest in 30 nations had been accredited by FSC.

FSC arranges a certificate and entrusts independent experts with its accreditation. It supports national task forces in the development of criteria applicable to local situations, because the interpretation of the criteria poses a problem in some cases.

The FSC certificate has been misused at times - the criteria being misinterpreted. In 1996, the German timber company Glunz should have been reprimanded for setting up a huge camp within an important protected area, the Forêt des Abeilles in Gabon. Within two months, 4,540 kg of bushmeat was consumed from this area, of which 41% was primate meat, including 35 chimpanzees and three gorillas! The company's further plans were also not sustainable. Protests lead to the withdrawal of its certificate.

Except for one model project in Cameroon, not a single African logging area has been FSC-certified!

10 Criteria for the FSC Certification

1. Adherence to national and international laws
2. Contractual security of owner, lease and user rights
3. Secure rights of local and affected communities
4. Involvement of local communities and adherence to employment laws.
5. Promotion of efficient use of various forest functions and products.
6. Preservation of biodiversity, ecological functioning and integrity of the forest
7. Implementation of binding organisational regulations
8. Monitoring of management of forests and socio-economic consequences
9. Preservation of natural forests and special biomes
10. Reduction of exploitation of natural forests through sustainable, natural management of plantations.

Bonobo female with young climbing a tree in Lomako Forest, DR Congo.



Bonobo in situ project



U. Karlovski

Forest nursery in Buhoma, Uganda. After the creation of an Ugandan Gorilla National Park, old agricultural areas within the park were reafforested with native tree species.