



Results of the 2008 review of certification schemes to monitor continued compliance with UK government's timber procurement policy

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Defra is responsible for development and implementation of the UK Government timber procurement policy which requires all timber purchased by central government departments to come from legal and sustainable sources. Defra has set up a Central Point of Expertise on Timber (CPET) to provide practical support and assistance in implementing the policy. This includes assessing the certification schemes most widely used to certify timber used in the UK to establish which provide adequate evidence of legality and sustainability. CPET undertook an initial assessment of five forest certification schemes in 2004, carried out a further review in 2006, and is committed to reassess schemes every two years to monitor continued compliance.

The 2008 review was undertaken against the May 2006 version of *Criteria for Evaluating Certification Schemes*. These set out the definition of legal and sustainable currently used by the UK government for procurement which includes technical and environmental, but not social, requirements.

To provide the greatest technical rigour and independence, the assessment of schemes was undertaken by an independent technical panel using the March 2008 version of *Category A Review Methodology* which focuses on the scheme requirements as set out in publicly available documentation but does not include investigation of outcomes on the ground.

The results of the 2008 review indicate that four of the five schemes - Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), Canadian Standards Association (CSA) and Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) (the latter two now endorsed by PEFC) - continue to deliver evidence of sustainability. The fifth scheme - the Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme MTCS system (formerly MTCC) - which was found to deliver legality in the last assessment, is in the process of introducing revised requirements. The 2008 review concluded that the scheme will provide evidence of sustainability once these revisions are fully in place. During the transition MTCS will continue to provide evidence of legality which is currently adequate to meet the policy but will no longer be sufficient once the policy changes in April 2009. Updates on the status of the MTCS scheme will be provided on the CPET website.

Further work will be done on the criteria and methodology for assessment of certification schemes based on insights from the 2008 review including the addition of requirements related to scheme governance. Information on this process will be provided on the CPET website.

At the next review, due in 2010, national schemes (such as CSA and SFI) which are part of endorsed global programmes will no longer be individually assessed.

The documents and further details can be found on the CPET website at www.proforest.net/cpet.

Notes

1. Currently the UK government's timber procurement policy requires all central government departments, executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) to actively seek to purchase legal and sustainable timber and timber product. From 1 April 2009, only timber and timber derived products originating either from independently verified legal and sustainable sources or from a licensed Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) partner will be demanded for use on the Government estate – appropriate documentation will be required to prove it. Details on the new policy is available in the Timber Procurement Advice Note August 2008, available for download on the CPET website.

2. Five forest certification schemes (CSA, FSC, PEFC, MTCC, SFI,) were originally assessed against the Government's contract requirements for legality and sustainability in November 2004. A set of criteria were developed, on the basis of the contract requirements, for undertaking the evaluations. The last review of forest certification schemes was published in December 2006.

3. Some observers have expressed concerns with the absence of performance-related evidence when schemes are assessed. Forest certification schemes are assessed against criteria published on the website of the Central Point of Expertise on Timber (CPET). The guidance for interpreting the criteria was amended to allow implementation to be examined in addition to the scheme documents. The Government is not in a position to assess performance on the ground for each scheme as part of its regular reviews, but is looking at possible ways of working with other stakeholders to undertake this type of review.