

Forest Certification in Ireland



Why Forest Certification?

Growing concerns about the need to protect tropical forests have expanded to include the management of all forests. Consumers are demanding that products from our forests are produced in an environmentally, socially & economically responsible way. Timber processors and retail markets are responding to this consumer led demand through voluntary certification. Forest Certification re-assures consumers of the origin of wood used in timber products. An independent organisation carries out an audit and certifies that the forest is managed in accordance with an agreed set of standards.



Pre-clearfell Sitka spruce



Semi mature oak with understorey

Why is Certification important to forest owners?

- Many retail outlets demand certified timber from manufacturers and processors.
- The processing sector in turn requires a supply of certified timber from growers.
- Without certification, forest growers' timber sales options may be limited.

What is Forest Certification?

Forest certification is a means by which the quality of forest management is judged against a set of agreed standards and how forest monitoring, tracing and labelling timber, wood products and non-timber forest products is carried out.

Forest Certification is made up of two processes:

1. Assessing forests to see if they are being managed according to an agreed set of standards, known as **Forest Management Certification**.

This involves an independent 3rd party assessment of forest owners' management practices according to a set of pre-determined standards. These practices are set out in a forest management plan.

2. Labelling wood that has been harvested from a well-managed forest, known as **Chain of Custody (CoC) Certification**.

This involves independent 3rd party chain of custody inspection to trace wood harvested in certified forests through all stages of transport, processing and marketing.



Forest Assessment plays a key role in Forest Certification



Timber from certified forests may be labelled and sold as certified.

What should be included in a forest management plan?

- Objectives
- Documentation
 - Land Registry documents
 - Records (and maps)
 - Safety plan with detailed maps
 - Past management, archaeology, fisheries, designated areas, etc.
 - Biodiversity considerations
- Detailed forest inventory
- Operational plan
 - Thinning systems, thinning control methods
 - Overview of annual operations per compartment
 - Restructuring measures: age profile, species diversity
 - Extraction routes, stacking areas, forest roads, etc.
- Timber sales, volumes harvested, etc.



Thinning of a mainly conifer forest

Forest Certification Schemes in Ireland

Two international Certification Schemes operate in Ireland at present

- Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)
- Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC)



Both schemes are voluntary and have no statutory basis. The schemes' standards represent a minimum measurable level of objectives and targets for management that must be obtained in order to achieve sustainable forest management.

Ireland's Forest Policy

It is Ireland's forest policy to develop an internationally competitive and sustainable forest sector that provides a full range of economic, environmental and social benefits to society and which accords with the Forest Europe definition of sustainable forest management.



Protecting water catchments & enhancing biodiversity

Group Certification

Group Certification is where a number of forest owners come together and make a single Forest Certification application taking advantage of economies of scale and the opportunity to build knowledge.

- The group is co-ordinated by a single person (the group manager) who ensures that all members are compliant with the relevant forest management standard.
- External auditors then evaluate a sample of woodland properties to ensure standards are met.
- Following compliance, Certification is awarded by the relevant body.
- Woodland properties continue to be evaluated over time.
- Although an individual may apply for certification; Teagasc believes that the group structure can be an effective means of achieving Forest Certification for the private forest owner.



Forest owners qualifying for Group Certification

What have certified forest owners learned so far?

1. The correct legal entity of the group needs to be agreed prior to establishing the project, to allow for cost effective management and expansion of the group.
2. A strong committed proactive membership is needed. The whole group is regarded as one by the certifying body.
3. Forest Certification is a complex process which requires a long term commitment by the owner, in addition to professional and experienced management.
4. Co-ordination and planning for access to forests for inventory and audit inspections are essential. A working knowledge by the owners of their forests is very important.
5. Retaining ownership documents, species maps, records of activities, etc. is essential.
6. There are financial and time costs to both achieving and retaining Forest Certification.
7. Public consultation is a requirement of certification and needs to be explained to all participating owners prior to entering into the process.
8. Forest Certification can enable group members to appreciate both the monetary and ecological value of their forests.

Remember - it is the forest management plan that is certified, not the forest.



Plank recovery from timber log



Finished timber lengths

This leaflet can be read in conjunction with:

Teagasc Farm Forestry Series No. 21: Sustainable Benefits of Forests

Teagasc Farm Forestry Series No. 22: Forestry Health and Safety

Teagasc Farm Forestry Series No. 23: Timber Harvesting and Sales Checklist

Contact Details:

Teagasc Forestry Development Department

Mellows Campus, Athenry

Co Galway H65 R718

Tel.: +353 (0)91 845200

www.teagasc.ie/forestry

July 2021



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine

