

Buying Certified Timber

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Buying certified timber is an important step you can take to verify the legality of your supply chains, and it will make it easier for you to obtain the necessary information about the origin of your timber products. It will also help your customer to assess and mitigate risk.





The EU Timber Regulation

As you may know, The European Union has recently implemented a regulation (the EUTR) that prohibits placing illegal timber on the EU market, and also requires EU importers to implement systems to reduce the risk that they buy timber from unknown or illegal sources – called a due diligence system.

The EU Timber Regulation (EUTR) prohibits the “placing on the market of illegally harvested timber or timber products derived from such timber”. It came into force on 3 of March 2013. The origin of the timber can be inside or outside the EU. The EUTR covers the markets inside the EU (and, in the future, also Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland).

The EUTR obliges “operators” (first placers of timber) to implement a due diligence system (DDS) to minimize the risk of putting such illegal wood products on the market. The DDS

consists of three elements:

**Ability to access information
about the material**

**Conducting an assessment
of risks of illegal timber in the
supply chain**

**Mitigation of any risks, if
they are identified.**

Since your European customers are purchasing wood products from you, they are therefore likely to ask you for additional information about the timber you are supplying, in order to carry out due diligence. This information will be used assess the risk of illegal timber in the supply chain, in accordance with the requirements of the EUTR.

? What is certified timber?

Forest certification is a system of inspecting and tracking timber, paper, pulp and other forest products to make sure they've been harvested according to a strict set of guidelines. It's about more than just which trees are cut down. Forest certification is also about the well-being of workers and local communities.

Certification begins in the forest and continues through the entire timber trading chain to the sales outlet. The aim is to provide the consumer confidence that you're buying a responsibly-harvested forest product.

Certification is designed to provide an independent assessment of the

management of forests against well-defined standards. Timber certification may also include two main components: certification of sustainability of forest management; and chain of custody. Certification of forest management covers forest management practices like planning, harvesting, environmental issues, workers' rights, health and safety, as well as the rights of communities and indigenous people's rights to forest resources. Chain of custody certification is then used to trace the wood through the different stages of processing and transport until the final product is sold to the consumer.





€ Should I buy certified timber?

Although the **European Timber Regulation** does not include an automatic “green lane” for certified products, it does recognize the value of certification as a tool for risk assessment and mitigation. The European Commission explains that companies **“may rate credibly certified products as having negligible risk of being illegal, i.e. suitable for placing on the market with no further risk mitigation measures, provided that the rest of the information gathered and the replies to the risk assessment questions do not contradict such a conclusion”**.

If I buy certified, what do I still need to do?

Even where you are able to provide your customer with certified timber, they are likely to still ask you for information to help them carry out due diligence. In addition to your general sales information such as quantity (expressed in volume, weight or number of units), your name and address and the name and address of the trader used, if applicable, they will also need the following information:

1. Which country/countries the timber was harvested

2. What species the product contains – common names will suffice unless these lead to ambiguity, in which case the scientific names will also be needed

3. Documents or other information indicating compliance of those timber and timber products with the applicable legislation.

The FSC system will help you to provide the information about the country of harvest and the species to your customer. If your supplier does not automatically provide you with information about country/concession of harvest or species they are obliged to if you ask them for it (according to ADVICE-40-004-10: Access to information regarding species and origin of timber). If this supplier does not have that information, he or she is obliged to use the Advice Note to go further up the supply chain until he or she has obtained the information for you.

Regarding the documents or other information indicating compliance of

those timber and timber products with the applicable legislation, some of the applicable legislation is covered by the FSC Forest Management Certification schemes. Therefore, the information indicating compliance is the certificate itself. One area not covered by the FSC Forest Management Scheme are Trade and Customs laws. If your supplier does not automatically provide you with information about compliance with trade and customs laws, they are obliged to do so if you ask them for it (according to ADVICE-40-004-11: Trade and customs laws).



However... Not all certification schemes are created equal

The EUTR Guidance document contains four questions that companies may use to assess the credibility of a third-party certification system.

1. Are all the requirements in Article 4 of the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 607/2012 fulfilled?
2. Is the certification or other third party verified schemes compliant with international or European standards (e.g. the relevant ISO-guides, ISEAL Codes)?
3. Are there substantiated reports about possible shortcomings or problems of the third party verified schemes in the specific countries from which the timber or timber products are imported?
4. Are the third parties that are making the checks and verifications referred to in Article 4 (b), (c) and (d) of the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 607/2012 independent accredited organisations?

There are many certification and legality verification schemes operating internationally, these include:

CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS:

- FSC Certification: www.info.fsc.org
- PEFC Certification: <http://register.pefc.cz/search1.asp>

LEGALITY VERIFICATION SYSTEMS:

- LegalSource Certification: www.nepcon.net/legalwood
- Rainforest Alliance VLO and VLC: www.rainforestalliance.org/forestry/verification/transparency/verification-clients
- SCS LegalHarvest Verification: www.scs-certified.com/nrc/legal_harvest_verified_clients.php
- CertiSource Verified Legal: www.certi-source.co.uk
- Bureau Veritas OLB: www.bureauveritas.com/wps/wcm/connect/bv_com/group/services+sheet/olb-certification_14483dP.dpuf

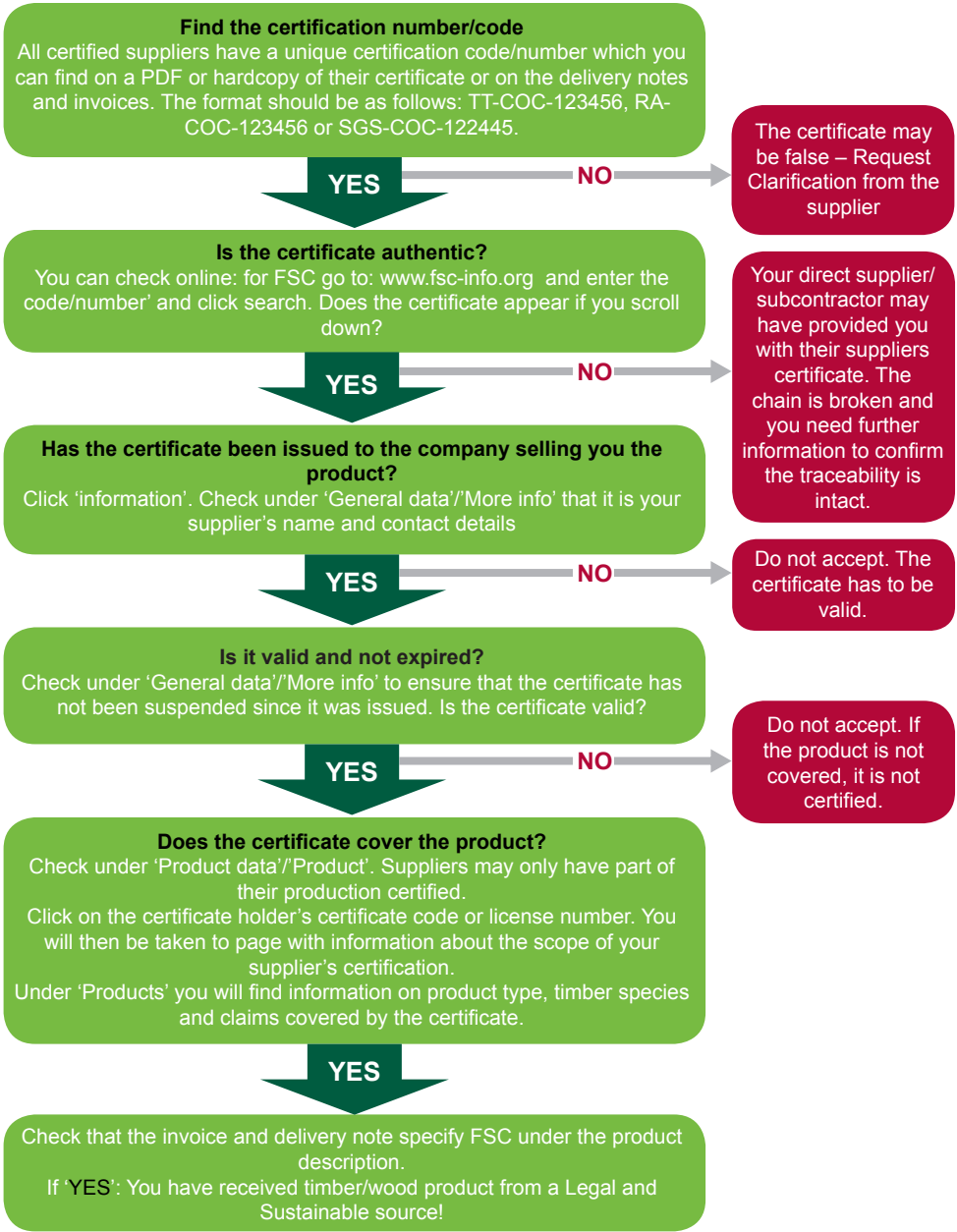


If you are buying FSC Certified – check it's legitimate

Are you sure that you are buying certified? An FSC logo on your supplier's website or invoice does not automatically prove this. Here's a simple guide on how to check the certification status of products that you are buying.

The following tips are useful for any buyer who seeks to buy certified, for example in order to comply with procurement policies.

Note: FSC certificate holders are obliged to regularly verify the validity and scope of their suppliers' certificate.





Increasing Capacity of CSOs and SMEs to Implement FLEGT Requirements

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