

The Facts: Forest Certification Schemes

Certification schemes are voluntary and involve independent assessment against criteria that ensure legal and sustainable forest management.

They have specific provisions that generally address:

- A commitment to planning and monitoring
- Adherence to laws and rights to the land
- Consideration of indigenous, community and worker rights, values and benefits
- Protection of environmental and ecological values
- Assurance of ongoing forest yields.

Forest certification schemes certify management systems in the forests. The associated Chain of Custody Certification (CoC) is the formal process of tracking wood and timber products from a certified forest to consumers (see *TQ Fact Sheet: Chain of Custody Certification*).

Although there are numerous certification schemes internationally, this table summarises the features of the two most likely to be encountered in Australia. A key feature of the schemes is that neither formally recognises certified material from the other.

Parameters	Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)	Australian Forestry Standard AS4708 (AFS)
Background	Private company governed by members. Board of Directors represent forest and wood products industry sector, environmental groups, community groups. Supported by World Wildlife Fund, Greenpeace and The Australian Conservation Foundation.	Non-profit public company. Board of Directors comprising government forest agencies, forest and wood product products industry sector and unions.
Certification Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest Management Certification • Chain of Custody Certificate <p>FSC uses interim forest management standards in Australia, but is committed to developing a national FSC standard for Australia.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Forest Management Certification (AS 4708) • Chain of Custody Certification (AS 4707) <p>AFS uses forestry standards that were developed specifically for Australian conditions by a Technical Reference Committee.</p>
Certified Australian area (approx)	0.5 million hectares consisting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plantation: 0.5 million ha • Native Forest: very small area. <p>5% of Australian certified forests.</p>	8.7 million hectares consisting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plantation: 0.7 million ha • Native Forest: 8.0 million ha <p>95% of Australian certified forests.</p>

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International linkages	FSC is an international certification scheme with over 100 million ha of forests certified in 78 countries.	There is mutual recognition between AFS and PEFC (Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes), which recognises over 200 million ha of forests certified under 28 national schemes.																																						
Certification cover	<p>Australian product is mostly based on plantation grown softwoods, with a range of imported timber and timber products sourced from both native forests and plantations.</p> <p>FSC also certifies paper and paper products</p>	<p>Australian products from native forests and plantations and some imported products labelled under PEFC.</p> <p>AFS / PEFC also certify paper and paper products.</p>																																						
System coverage	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>FSC principles of forest stewardship</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">1</td><td>Compliance with laws and FSC principles</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">2</td><td>Tenure and use rights and responsibilities</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">3</td><td>Indigenous peoples' rights</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">4</td><td>Community relations and worker's rights</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">5</td><td>Benefits from the forest</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">6</td><td>Environmental impact</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">7</td><td>Management plan</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">8</td><td>Monitoring and assessment</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">9</td><td>Maintenance of high conservation value forests</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">10</td><td>Plantations</td></tr> </table> </div> <div style="width: 10%; text-align: center;"> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Main linkages</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>AFS criteria for sustainable management</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">1</td><td>Management system</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">2</td><td>Public participation</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">3</td><td>Protect and maintain biological diversity</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">4</td><td>Forest productive capacity</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">5</td><td>Forest ecosystem health and vitality</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">6</td><td>Protect soil and water resources</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">7</td><td>Contribution to carbon cycles</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">8</td><td>Natural, cultural, social, religious & spiritual values</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">9</td><td>Social and economic benefits</td></tr> </table> </div> </div> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;">Source: FWPA 2006</p>		1	Compliance with laws and FSC principles	2	Tenure and use rights and responsibilities	3	Indigenous peoples' rights	4	Community relations and worker's rights	5	Benefits from the forest	6	Environmental impact	7	Management plan	8	Monitoring and assessment	9	Maintenance of high conservation value forests	10	Plantations	1	Management system	2	Public participation	3	Protect and maintain biological diversity	4	Forest productive capacity	5	Forest ecosystem health and vitality	6	Protect soil and water resources	7	Contribution to carbon cycles	8	Natural, cultural, social, religious & spiritual values	9	Social and economic benefits
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Distinctive features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very limited native hardwood certified in Australia • Greater emphasis on stakeholder consensus • Any wood mixed with certified product must meet a number of criteria, including legality, • Endorsed by major environmental groups • Qualifies for points under the GBCA Green Star rating scheme • Recognised in Queensland Government procurement policies • More restrictive requirements regarding chemical use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant area of native hardwood certified in Australia • Less emphasis on stakeholder consensus • Any wood mixed with certified product needs to be legal • Limited support from major environmental groups • Does not qualify for points under the Green Star rating scheme, although scheme is under review • Recognised in Queensland Government procurement policies 																																						

For more information see Timber Queensland Fact Sheet “Chain of Custody Certification”.

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