

Finnish Forest Certification Council

Suomen Metsäsertifiointi ry
Finlands Skogscertifiering rf



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Finnish Forest Certification Council's (FFCC) comments 14 October 2004

"Certifying Extinction? – An assessment of the revised standards of the Finnish Forest Certification System", a report by Greenpeace, Finnish Association for Nature Conservation (FANC) and Finnish Nature League was released 11 October 2004 in Helsinki.

The report repeats opinions of the three ENGOs without saying anything new. The title of report is emotional, political and misleading. The endangered species are continuously monitored in Finland by the Ministry of the Environment and the results of the newest monitoring survey show that the state of endangered species in Finland is not getting worse: it has already stabilised between 1990 and 2000.

This positive development is due to the introduction of new close-to-nature oriented forest management in Finland since 1990. At the present there are 1500 endangered fauna and flora species in Finland and 35 % of these species live in forests. These figures are in the European context one of the most positive ones. This has been stated e.g. in the report of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forest in Europe.

The report mixes again the two different forest-related instruments: forest certification is aimed for multipurpose forest areas where also silviculture and logging activities take place, but the protection of forest areas is usually determined by legislation or other legal means and statues, as permanent setting-aside areas are compensated in Finland to the forest owner. Forest certification, as a voluntary system of the forest owners, promotes biodiversity protection within the Finnish multipurpose forest areas. Terms such as the old growth forest have been used in report on a very vague way without defining the content.

Comments to report's chapters 1-6:

Chapter 1. "Introduction" and Chapter 2. "Finland's forests"

Topics, such as forest legislation, role of the Regional Forestry Centres, old-growth forests and forest protection in south Finland, have been discussed in Finland on other forums recently. Yet this report is announced to deal with forest certification, which is a subject of private sector, the authors have wanted to communicate their opinions about Finnish forest policy and forest protection also in this report.

Please check the material in www.smy.fi/vanhatmetsat/ about Old-growth Forest Protection in Finland and in www.smy.fi/metso about Forest Conservation in Finland and the Forest Biodiversity Programme for Southern Finland, the so called METSO Programme.

The role of governmental Regional Forestry Centres is expressed in a totally incorrect way: the Forestry Centres are claimed to be the FFCS certificate holders, yet the role in FFCS certification deals just with data collection. As the Forestry centres offer training activities and other services to forest owners, they are committed to follow FFCS's requirements.

Chapter 3. "Development of Certification systems in Finland: FFCS and FSC"

This chapter includes a lot of the misleading information about the history of the FFCS and its structures. These factual errors are very much the same as has been published in former reports by these three organisations during recent years.

Chapter 4. "Environmental Criteria"

The FFCS environmental criteria has been interpreted and compared to the drafted Finnish FSC standard in a misleading way. An analysis of the changes between the current and revised FFCS standards is available in web www.ffcs-finland.org/workinggroup2002 (An assessment report ...)

Chapter 5. "Social criteria in relation to reindeer herding"

Regardless of the fact that both Sami parliament and Reindeer Herders' Association participated the FFCS Working Group on Forest Certification Standards in 2002-2003 and accepted the revised standard, the authors criticize also the criteria of Sami culture and reindeer husbandry. The FFCS revision process is described in web www.ffcs-finland.org/workinggroup2002/ (An introduction to the revision ...)

Chapter 6. "The exclusion of controversial timber"

The FFCS Chain-of-custody standards are seen inferior to the FSC practises, as according to the authors "in the FSC the companies have to take reasonable measures to exclude timber from controversial sources". The authors have totally neglected the fact, that at the moment the FSC has no ways to audit the origin of the wood that originates from non-certified sources.

The Finnish Forest Certification Council (FFCC) is the owner of the FFCS standards. In 2001 the FFCC took the initiative to start the revision of the FFCS standards. The revision was carried out by a Working Group on Forest Certification Standards in 2002-2003.