



PEFC/02-1-01

Promoting Sustainable Forest Management –

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Finnish Forest Certification Council
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The Finnish Forest Certification System (FFCS) promotes sustainable forest management in a credible way

Most of Finland's forests already come under the umbrella of the FFCS certification system. Currently, activities are being focused on developing the forest certification system on the principle of continual improvement. The major environmental NGOs participated in the creation of the FFCS standard in 1996-97, when they also approved it. The environmental NGOs are welcome to participate in the work continually being done for the development of forest certification. The "Anything Goes? - Report on PEFC-Certified Finnish Forestry" report published by the Finnish Nature League and Greenpeace is a one step in pinpointing improvement requirements in the FFCS system.

The environmental NGOs have criticised the PEFC-endorsed (Pan-European Forest Certification Scheme) FFCS in their report "Anything Goes?". Although criticism from environmental NGOs is welcomed as a means to improving the system, regrettably there are objectives underlying the publication of this report that are directed elsewhere than at an improvement of the FFCS. However, the PEFC system is well suited to small-scale family forestry. All forest certification systems have the same goal, i.e. the promotion of sustainable forestry.

Improvements based on practical experience

The criticism levelled in the report is nothing new for the Finnish Forest Certification Council (FFCC). In fact, most of the considerations included in the report have already previously been brought out in conjunction with forest certification. Forest certification includes auditing by an impartial certification body to check for adherence to the criteria set for forest management. Should discrepancies be detected in this respect, a list of these is drawn up together with a programme of corrective actions for rectifying them. If the deviation in terms of the criteria as a whole is a major one, a certificate is not granted. If, however, there are only slight deviations from the requirements and these do not endanger the overall objectives of certification, a certificate is issued with provisions attached.

This has been the practice in Finland and, in point of fact, all the FFCS certificates awarded have contained some sort of provision. The provisions associated with the certificates have also been openly and publicly reported by their holders. In this respect, this custom in forest certification by the FFCS and the PEFC does not differ from that associated with any other kind of credible certification. A lot of new background material of the FFCS and Finnish silviculture can be found in web-site http://www.ffcs-finland.org/eng/esittely/ajankohtaista_e.htm.

Forest protection is not a certification issue

Another motive for the report is the environmental NGOs' recent striving to have the amount of protected forest in Finland increased. Recently, a broad spectrum working group has been appointed in Finland in accordance with the National Forest Programme to determine the need for further forest protection. The NGOs make the criticism that the FFCS does not in their opinion prevent the logging of ecologically valuable biotopes. Based on statements from experts engaged by the environmental authorities, many of the biotopes mentioned in the report have been omitted from previous protection programmes and the Natura 2000 programme. In Finland, decisions on forest protection are made by democratic parliamentary means

and not by e.g. forest certification, which is meant primarily to influence the standard of management of production forests.