

August 22, 2008

SFI Inc. article for Woodland Steward Newsletter and Indiana Hardwood Lumbermen's Association newsletter

**By Kathy Abusow
President and CEO, Sustainable Forestry Initiative Inc.**

It's no surprise that the Indiana State Fair chose "Year of Trees" as its theme. Every day more people are realizing what those of us in the forest sector have known for so long – forest products come with an immense environmental pedigree, and that's an important consideration today.

There is also greater awareness that these environmental benefits are realized only if the products come from a well-managed forest. With global markets, it can be a challenge to make sure fiber from less-than-desirable sources does not slip into the supply chain for our wood and paper products. The Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) program is well positioned to meet the challenge, which is why much of your state-owned land is certified to the SFI Standard.

The SFI label is a visual cue for people who want to buy products from legal and responsible sources – similar to the recycling symbol. Customers know that when they see the SFI label on a product, whether it is hardwood flooring or veneer, that they are supporting forest operations that conserve biodiversity, protect wildlife habitat, and so much more.

The other critical factor for brand trust is getting the word out – raising awareness of the value of SFI certification so customers look for the SFI mark and are confident in their choice. A national survey by Gfk Roper Public Affairs & Media and the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies shows that efforts to promote the SFI brand are working. One in five of those polled from the U.S. general population said they are familiar with the SFI label. While a larger percentage of respondents recognized other labels, such as Energy Star, the SFI label rated the highest among the major forest certification standards in the United States (19 per cent compared with 12 per cent for the Forest Stewardship Council). This is a great benchmark to have as we move forward.

And because the SFI program is a North American standard, we understand and address the specific needs of a state such as Indiana where 87 per cent of forestland is privately owned, much of it by small family landowners. Like other certification standards, we have a chain-of-custody certification that tracks the percentage of wood fiber from certified forests, uncertified forests, and recycled sources of supply.

But where the SFI program truly stands apart from the rest is that we address the reality that 60 percent of the fiber in products manufactured in the United States comes from small family-owned forests that are often not certified. Under our unique procurement requirements, SFI program participants sourcing fiber from forests that are not certified in North America must promote responsible forest management on those lands. Outside of North America, they must take measures to ensure the fiber is from known and legal sources.

This commitment to responsible forestry acknowledges that all forest landowners play a critical role in ensuring the long-term health and sustainability of our forests, and in

meeting our fiber needs. SFI program participants practice responsible forestry on the nearly 150 million acres they manage, and also influence millions of additional acres.

Indiana has shown its leadership through the Classified Forests program – it is no doubt the reason why you have a lot more timberland today than you did 20 years ago. Landowners with Classified Forests have the added advantage of being able to enrol through the state in the American Tree Farm System (ATFS). ATFS was recently endorsed by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC), the world's largest forest certification umbrella organization. As a result, fiber from ATFS-certified forests meets all SFI labelling requirements. This gives recognition to the thousands of family forest owners who have been responsibly managing their forests for generations.

The SFI program also responds to diverse local needs and issues across North America through 37 SFI Implementation Committees at the state, provincial or regional level. Your Indiana State Implementation Committee is involved in outreach activities in cooperation with local organizations to provide landowners information on important forest topics such as invasive species, forest regeneration, best management practices, and wildlife management.

I would encourage you to learn more about the committee and support its work. You don't have to be an SFI program participant to take part; you just have to share our passion for responsible forest management in Indiana. Since 1995, more than 110,000 resource and logging professionals have been trained in responsible forestry practices across North America – including more than 250 in Indiana last year alone, and over 800 since training inception.

At SFI Inc., we understand it is important to have both a rigorous, science-based standard and an open, inclusive program. We have started the public review process that will lead to the SFI 2010-2014 Standard – I would encourage you to look for details on our website and become involved. We are also exploring multi-site SFI forest certification that could allow medium-sized forest landowners to reduce their costs by working together to plan and implement forest certification.

There has never been a better time to take a closer look at SFI certification. More buyers want proof that forest products are from well-managed forests and legal sources. More governments and companies are developing procurement policies that give preference to products made with fiber from third-party certified forests.

Recently, Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels issued an executive order calling for all new state buildings to be designed, constructed, operated and maintained to achieve maximum energy efficiency. Efficiency must be demonstrated by achieving an appropriate rating from a system accredited by the American National Standards Institute. This includes the Green Building Initiative's Green Globes™ green building assessment and rating system, which provides points for wood-based materials certified to the SFI Standard.

For more information about the SFI program, visit www.sfiprogram.org or call Amy Doty Manager, Community Outreach, at 703-875-9500. For more information about the Indiana State Implementation Committee, contact Chair David James at 270-927-7203, the Indiana Forest Industry Council at 800-640-4452, or visit www.ificsfi.org.

About SFI Inc.

Kathy Abusow is President and CEO of SFI Inc., a non-profit, charitable organization that is solely responsible for maintaining, overseeing and improving the Sustainable Forestry Initiative program (www.sfiprogram.org). SFI is an internationally recognized sustainable forestry certification program and is among the largest in the world. Across North America, more than 150 million acres are certified to the SFI 2005-2009 Standard, which is based on principles and measures that promote sustainability, including measures to protect water quality, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, species at risk and forests with exceptional conservation value.