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End the battle of FSC vs. SFI wood i

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End the battle of FSC vs. SFI wood in LEED

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Enough already! For the past decade, the USGBC has given the Forest Stewardship Council a monopoly on wood from its forests being used in **LEED projects**. It's time for the USGBC to open the door to other wood certification programs.



Consider this: Sixty percent of FSC-certified wood comes from outside the U.S. and Canada. Why does the USGBC encourage the importation of FSC wood from thousands of miles away, when at the same time it offers a credit for using locally produced materials—the so-called "500-mile rule"?

Wouldn't it be more environmentally beneficial to use locally grown wood, shipped over much shorter distances? Between them, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) have 373 million acres of certified forests. SFI alone has about 80% of the certified woodlands in North America, while FSC has only 18%. Building Teams in the U.S. and Canada are being forced in many cases to go overseas instead of being able to use certified wood from their own backyards.

Here's another inconsistency: Why doesn't the USGBC require other building products to "prove" their environmental bona fides to the same extent that it does wood products? Why do steel and glass and ceiling tiles and hundreds of other building products get a pass, while wood has to go through 49 mandatory benchmarks to be considered for use under LEED? Are all these products and materials so environmentally pure?

Take cement, the key ingredient in the manufacture of concrete, without which not a whole lot of building would get done. But did you know that the cement industry produces about 5% of all carbon emissions globally, a fact I was first made aware of by Scot Horst, for years chair of the LEED Steering Committee and now the USGBC's SVP of LEED?

I would bet that very few of the 130,000 or more LEED Accredited Professionals out there would hesitate to use cement-containing concrete in their **LEED projects**. But are they aware that, in doing so, they are contributing to global warming, with its deleterious impact on the environment and human health?

I don't mean to single out the cement and concrete industry, which (at least outside of China and India) is working hard to reduce its emissions. But the question remains: Why isn't the USGBC devoting the same rigorous attention to other building products that it has so diligently bestowed on wood products?

Green Globes, the U.K.'s BREEAM, Built Green Canada, Japan's CASBEE, and the ANSI National Green Building Standard recognize SFI and other wood certification standards. Australia's Green Building Council recently rescinded its FSC-only restriction.

Could it be that the anti-lumber industry lobby within USGBC simply cannot bear the fact that SFI, CSA, and other certifications are just as good as FSC's? —*Robert Cassidy, Editor-in-Chief*

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