



Section 1. Introduction
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Introduction¹

Sustainably managed forests make a vital contribution to society by providing economic, environmental and social benefits indispensable to the quality of life. A commitment to sustainable forest management means protecting water quality, soil, *wildlife*² and unique resources; promoting human health and safety; providing employee training and education; and communicating the benefits of the practice of *sustainable forestry* to the general public. The *SFI 2015-2019 Standard* reflects this commitment to social responsibility through its *principles, objectives, performance measures* and *indicators*.

The *SFI* program is based on the premise that responsible environmental behavior and sound business decisions can co-exist to the benefit of communities, landowners, manufacturers, shareholders, customers and the environment, today and for future generations. It was launched in 1994 as one of the forest sector's contributions to the vision of sustainable development established by the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). The *SFI* program was developed with multi-stakeholder input, including environmental non-government organizations, industry, scientists, academics, government agencies and professional organizations.

Following UNCED, many nations began to consider how they would measure and track their progress toward the goal of sustainability. In 1993, a United Nations committee convened an international seminar in Montréal, Quebec, on the sustainable development of temperate and boreal forests. This conference led to the formation of the Working Group on Criteria and Indicators for the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Temperate and Boreal Forest, also known as the Montréal Process. The Canadian and U.S. governments are signatories to the Montréal Process, along with Argentina, Australia, Chile, China, Japan, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Russia and Uruguay. These 12 countries represent 90 percent of the world's temperate and boreal forests, and 60 percent of the world's total forests.

By endorsing and working with the Montréal Process criteria and indicators, participating countries have made a national commitment to work towards the sustainable management of their forests. Montréal Process criteria and indicators are intended to track progress at a national level and provide an international reference for policy-makers. Many can be reinforced and supported at a local level and are, therefore, reflected in the *SFI 2015-2019 Standard's principles, objectives, performance measures, and indicators*.

¹ This introduction is informative, and as such, is not an auditable element.

² Note: Words in italics throughout the SFI requirement document are listed in section 13-Definitions

The Montréal Process criteria are:

1. Conservation of biological diversity.
2. Maintenance of productive capacity of forest ecosystems.
3. Maintenance of forest ecosystem health and vitality.
4. Conservation and maintenance of soil and water resources.
5. Maintenance of forest contribution to global carbon cycles.
6. Maintenance and enhancement of long-term multiple socio-economic benefits to meet the needs of societies.
7. Legal, institutional and policy framework for forest conservation and sustainable management.

Global Recognition

The *SFI* program has progressed steadily to become an independent, globally recognized North American (United States and Canada) standard composed of *principles, objectives, performance measures* and *indicators*. The *SFI Standard* is recognized by governments, corporations, and social and environmental groups across North America and globally. The *SFI Standard* setting process, certification and accreditation of *certification bodies* requirements are consistent with guidelines published by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), a worldwide federation of national standards bodies.

In 2005, the international Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC)³ first endorsed the *SFI* 2005-2009 Standard, and appointed the Sustainable Forestry Board to be the PEFC-US governing body. The *SFI* 2010-2014 Standard was re-endorsed by PEFC in 2011. Since 2007, *SFI Inc.* has served as the PEFC US national governing body. PEFC sets minimum benchmarks that national forest certification programs must meet or exceed to be endorsed. PEFC endorsement increases international recognition and enhances marketing opportunities for *SFI Certified Program Participants* around the world.

The *SFI Standard* is applied to larger forest operations, and *SFI Inc.* recognizes the *American Tree Farm System*[®] (ATFS)⁴ as the non-industrial landowner certification program in the U.S., encompassing thousands of family forest owners. ATFS has also been endorsed by the PEFC.

³ www.pefc.org

⁴ www.treefarmssystem.org

SFI Governance and Stakeholder Involvement

The *SFI program* is operated by *SFI Inc.*, a fully independent non-profit charitable 501(c) (3) organization. *SFI Inc.* is governed by an 18-member board of directors made up of three chambers with equal membership: environmental, social and economic. The diversity of the board members reflects the variety of interests in the *forestry* community. This multi-stakeholder board of directors is the sole governing body over all aspects of the *SFI program*, including the *SFI 2015-2019 Standard*, chain-of-custody, labeling and claims, marketing and promotion.

The *SFI External Review Panel*, comprising environmental, *conservation* and *forestry* experts, annually reviews the program's progress, and releases a report publicly. In 1997, the panel adopted an independent charter under which it selects its own members and develops its own agenda to represent the public interest as an outside observer of the *SFI program*.

Thirty-five *SFI Implementation Committees* across North America operate at the regional, state and provincial level to help promote the *SFI Standard* through targeted local actions. They involve public agencies, universities, local *forestry* associations, landowners, loggers, partnerships with *conservation* groups, and other community-based organizations. As part of the *SFI program*, *SFI Implementation Committees* promote forester and logger training *programs* to reach the thousands of independent contractors that are the key to the quality of forest management and harvesting operations.

Conservation Support

The *SFI program* has the support of *conservation* groups who recognize that *SFI certification* helps to protect and create *wildlife habitat*, *biological diversity* and other important forest values. Many of these *conservation* groups partner with *SFI Inc.* and *SFI Certified Program Participants* on research to advance understanding of *forestry*-specific issues, achieving mutual *conservation* goals and providing tangible, on-the-ground benefits for forests in North America.

Public Involvement

Public involvement, communication and public reporting in the *SFI program* is welcomed and reflected in the *SFI 2015-2019 Standard* under *Objectives* 18, 19, and 20. *Certified Program Participants* are required to support and promote mechanisms for public outreach, education and involvement related to forest management. In addition, on *public lands*, *Certified Program Participants* are required to participate in *public land* planning and management processes with appropriate governments and the public. On these *public lands*, *Certified Program Participants* are required to confer with affected indigenous peoples.

The *SFI program* requires an *SFI Certified Program Participant* to provide a report prepared by the *certification body* to *SFI Inc.* after the successful completion of a certification, recertification or surveillance audit to the *SFI Standard*. These reports are publicly available on the *SFI Inc.* website

(www.sfiprogram.org).

The public also has avenues to voice concerns related to the *SFI* program and its participants and have them addressed through an open, transparent complaint process.

Requirements for *Certified Program Participants*

The *SFI 2015-2019 Standard* applies to management of forests throughout North America where management intensities range from managed natural forests and plantation *forestry*, regardless of the forest products derived from management of such forests. Short rotation woody crop operations and other high-intensity *forestry* operations, are beyond the scope of the *SFI 2015-2019 Standard*.

SFI Certified Program Participants must comply with all portions of the *SFI 2015-2019 Standard* relevant to their operations, taking into account their local conditions and circumstances and the scope and scale of their operations. In addition, the *SFI 2015-2019 Standard* requires *Certified Program Participants* to take their commitment to responsible stewardship beyond the bounds of their own lands and operations by encouraging others to adopt the *principles* and *objectives* of the *SFI 2015-2019 Standard*. *Certified Program Participants* are required to work with their suppliers to make sure they are meeting program goals for *best management practices*. They are also required to invest in research to enhance the practice of *sustainable forestry*, add to scientific knowledge, improve *forestry* practices, and increase the overall *productivity* of forests.

SFI: the North American Standard with a Global Reach

SFI is the only single North American standard and is one of the largest and fastest-growing certification standards in the world. The hundreds of *Certified Program Participants* across North America include private landowners, public landowners and managers, *conservation* groups and universities.

There is one *SFI Standard* that applies to the United States and Canada. *Certified Program Participants* must comply with federal, provincial, state and local laws that cover a broad range of issues, and protect the environment, workers and people who live in the communities where they operate. They include federal, state, provincial or local *forestry*-related environmental laws and regulations found in the United States and Canada such as The Clean Water Act, The Endangered Species Act, The Species at Risk Act, The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and state or provincial forest practice laws. The social laws of the United States and Canada cover civil rights, equal employment opportunities, anti-discrimination and anti-harassment measures, workers' compensation, measures to protect indigenous peoples' rights, workers' and communities' right to know, wages and working hours, and occupational health and safety. Antitrust, business competition and other laws in the United States and Canada outline business procedures that must be followed.

The *SFI program* does not try to duplicate the comprehensive *sustainable forestry* laws and processes already mandatory in the United States and Canada. Both countries have mature legal systems that consistently discourage and punish illegal behavior. Given the wide range of due process and compliance mechanisms that ensure conformance with applicable laws, the *SFI Standard* purposefully focuses on continual improvement of the practice of *sustainable forestry*, forest *productivity*, environmental performance processes and community outreach that complements the existing legal framework.

When an *SFI Certified Program Participant* procures wood offshore (beyond North America), the *SFI 2015-2019 Standard* stipulates the need to avoid *controversial sources* of supply, including *illegal logging* and *fiber sourced from countries without effective social laws*.

Responsible Fiber Sourcing

Through its *fiber sourcing* requirements, the *SFI program* stands apart from other forest certification programs by supporting and promoting sustainable forest management practices on these lands.

Today, 10 percent of the world's forests are certified. In North America, while large tracts of public and industrial forest lands are certified, the majority of family forest land is not certified. *SFI Inc.* encourages certification of lands owned by small family forest owners but it is a fact that many family forest owners do not have the resources, nor do they perceive the need to incur the annual cost associated with maintaining a certified forest – especially those who own small acreages.

In the United States, more than 10 million family forest owners account for 60 percent of the forest land and more than 60 percent of the raw material used by *SFI Certified Program Participants*. In Canada, family forest owners in many regions provide a significant share of the raw materials used by *SFI Certified Program Program Participants*.

In North America, *SFI Certified Program Participants* who source fiber from uncertified lands must engage in private landowner outreach and logger training. They must have a *program* for the purchase of fiber from *certified logging professionals* and *qualified logging professionals*, and *programs* and provisions for the application of *best management practices* that protect water quality on those uncertified lands.

In addition, *SFI fiber sourcing* requirements promote the identification and *protection* of important *habitat* elements for *wildlife*, including *critically imperiled* and *imperiled* species and communities, and foster prompt *reforestation* of harvested sites. For *SFI Certified Program Participants*, these *fiber sourcing* requirements are audited by a *third-party* independent accredited *certification body*, which samples for evidence of logger training, landowner outreach, *reforestation*, conformance with applicable laws and adherence to *best management practices* on uncertified lands, as well as the other requirements set out in the *SFI fiber sourcing objectives*.

Certified sourcing labels do not make claims about certified forest content but they do make claims about *certified sourcing* practices for procured wood fiber. *SFI fiber sourcing* supports family forest owners and their efforts to keep forests as forests, while providing the marketplace with forest products from responsible sources.

From the Forests to the Market

Forest certification is often complemented with a chain-of-custody certification, which is a mechanism used to track wood from a certified forest, providing a link between the certified forest and the certified product.

The *SFI* program offers a suite of product and promotional labels that allow appropriately certified organizations to make claims about the content in the product they sell that comes from certified forests. So whether it is a paper, packaging or construction materials, a claim can be made regarding the certified forest content, similar to recycled content claims and labels seen on products. This helps customers and consumers of forest products identify and give preference to products from well-managed forests.

In this age of increased corporate social responsibility and consumer awareness, the *SFI* program provides the market with a valuable tool to buy responsibly – with labels for *certified forest content* as well as for *certified sourcing*. See Sections 3 and 4 of the *SFI* requirements document.⁵

Third-Party Independent Certification

The *SFI 2015-2019 Standard* requires *third-party* independent certification audits by competent and accredited certification bodies for all certifications: forest land certification, *fiber sourcing* certification and chain-of-custody certification. All certification bodies must be accredited by a North American member of the International Accreditation Forum, i.e. ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board (ANAB), American National Standards Institute (ANSI) or the Standards Council of Canada (SCC).

⁵ *SFI Chain-of-Custody Standard* (Section 3)
Rules for Use of SFI On-Product Labels (Section 4)