Market leaders know their choice of wood, paper and packaging products has a direct impact on forests and communities at home and around the world – today and into the future. That’s why so many companies include forest certification in their environmental value statements and procurement policies.

But finding a secure supply of certified products is often a challenge since only 10% of the world’s forests are certified. And while North America accounts for over half of this certified land, a significant amount of land and many manufacturing operations in the United States are not certified.

**SFI Forest Partners® Program**

In 2012, four market leaders – Time Inc., the National Geographic Society, Macmillan Publishers and Pearson – stepped forward and became SFI Founding Forest Partners, investing in the future of our forests by making five-year commitments to increase the source of certified forest products.

SFI Forest Partners are investing in the future of our forests. Their decision to work directly with the diverse SFI community, through the SFI Forest Partners Program, will help achieve the goal of bringing together forest landowners, manufacturers, customers, conservation groups and government agencies across North America to ensure current and future generations can enjoy the many ecosystem services and forest products provided through responsible forestry.

The program will begin with state-based or regional projects in the Southern United States, and will expand across the United States.
In September, 2013 the SC State Forests and Clemson University Experimental Forest were certified as project participants of the SFI Forest Partners Program. With the support of its Forest Partners, SFI continues to work with landowners, mill operators & wood procurement organizations to attain SFI certification in South Carolina.

South Carolina

SFI has a strong working presence in South Carolina with over a million acres certified and an active SFI Implementation Committee. And while South Carolina is growing, demonstrated by positive trends that include BMP compliance and forest certification, there is still lots of opportunity to gear up for current and future marketplace shifts that are increasingly favoring certified products. That’s why the SFI Forest Partners Program is making it easier for forest products companies and landowners in South Carolina to certify to the SFI Standards. By providing information, tools and regional expertise for smaller, family-run businesses and medium-sized landowners to develop the appropriate certification system for their situation, SFI Forest Partners Program is continuing to help landowners and mill operators take advantage of becoming certified. With the support of SFI’s Forest Partners, this approach produces a unique and cost effective opportunity to enter certified forest product markets globally.

The SFI Forest Partners Program has three objectives:

Objective 1: Build on experiences of the Maine Pilot Project by continuing to find innovative approaches to group and coordinated certification for smaller and medium-sized mills and forest ownerships, seeking opportunities for collaboration, cost effectiveness and incentives for certification.

Objective 2: Facilitate the uptake of fiber from certified forestlands through the supply chain to buyers of forest products by increasing chain-of-custody certification of small and medium-sized mills, and to influence responsible forestry beyond those lands through fiber sourcing certification.

Objective 3: Grow the certified forestland base by five million acres by the end of 2014, beginning in the Southeast United States, and by 10 million acres by the end of 2017.

“The South Carolina Forestry Commission supports sustainable forest management and responsible wood procurement practices in South Carolina. We believe forest certification is one tool that can be used to promote and demonstrate responsible forestry. Our decision to join the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) Forest Partners® Program… highlights the importance we place on providing leadership in forest and environmental sustainability in our state. These actions will demonstrate to the global marketplace that South Carolina landowners and businesses are leaders in forest sustainability.”

— Gene Kodoma, South Carolina State Forester (April 4, 2013)

“Sustainable management of our natural resources contributes to the long-term success of South Carolina’s forestry industry which significantly impacts employment and manufacturing activity. This successful public-private enterprise reinforces our state’s commitment to landowners and timber managers by investing in responsible forest management.”

— South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley September 18, 2013 announcement of SC State Forests certification