

Frequently Asked Questions: SFI 2010-2014 Standard January 2010

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- [An Overview of the Requirements for the SFI 2010-2014 Program](#)
- [Summary of Significant Revisions in the New SFI 2010-2014 Standard](#)

What is the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) program?

SFI is an independent third-party forest certification program that works with environmental, social and industry partners to promote sustainable forest management in the United States and Canada and responsible fiber sourcing globally.

The SFI forest standard is based on principles and measures that promote sustainable forest management and consider all forest values. At the start of 2010, more than 180 million acres/73 million hectares were certified to the SFI 2010-2014 Standard, making it the largest single forest standard in the world.

SFI chain-of-custody certification tracks the percentage of fiber from a certified forest and/or from responsible sourcing in a specific product. The SFI program's unique fiber sourcing requirements promote responsible forest management on all suppliers' lands in the United States and Canada.

SFI Inc. is a fully independent, registered non-profit organization with a 501(c)(3) status in the United States. An 18-member Board of Directors, representing environmental, social and economic interests equally, governs all aspects of the SFI program.

How many organizations are certified to SFI standards?

More than 1,000 organizations meet the SFI program's forest certification standard, and/or track the source of their fiber through its chain-of-custody certification, and/or apply its comprehensive fiber sourcing requirements. The more than 250 program participants certified to the SFI forest standard include forest products companies, industrial and family forest owners, conservation groups, universities, and public agencies.

What sorts of organizations work with the SFI program?

The SFI program and its program participants work with anyone who shares our passion for responsible forest management – including conservation groups, professional and government organizations, community and social organizations. Thousands of individuals and organizations work directly with us, providing tangible, on-the-ground benefits for forests and communities.

Who recognizes SFI?

The SFI program is recognized by many influential organizations around the world, including:

- The United Kingdom's Central Point of Expertise on timber, which confirmed the SFI program meet its government's requirements for 'legality' and 'sustainability'.
- The international Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC), which endorsed the SFI forest standard after a thorough application, independent assessments and a public review process.

- The Canadian Council of Forest Ministers, which issued a statement saying: "The forest management standards of the Canadian Standards Association (CSA), the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) are all used in Canada. Governments in Canada accept that these standards demonstrate, and promote the sustainability of forest management practices in Canada."
- The U.S. General Services Administration, which encourages the use of wood or wood products certified to a credible third-party sustainable forest certification program, including SFI.
- Terrachoice Environmental Marketing, which lists the SFI label as a credible eco-label in its 2009 Seven Sins of Greenwashing.

Tom Hinton, President and CEO of the American Consumer Council, says: "We support the good work of SFI and applaud the positive and progressive things SFI is doing, including their new labels. When it comes to environmentally friendly claims, consumers want to see the proof and not just the sizzle."

Many green building tools, including the National Home Building Standard™ in the United States and Green Globes recognize SFI-certified wood products as a sound environmental choice.

Is the SFI program supported by environmental groups?

Yes. The SFI program has the support of and works in partnership with numerous conservation groups, including The Conservation Fund, Ducks Unlimited (US), NatureServe Conservation International and others.

Conservation groups demonstrate their support for the SFI program in a number of ways. They have representatives on the SFI Board of Directors and the SFI External Review Panel, are involved in activities to improve forest management and meet conservation objectives, and help to improve the SFI Standard and its implementation through pilot projects and by providing comments through the standard review process.

How was the new SFI 2010-2014 Standard developed?

The new SFI 2010-2014 Standard is the result of an 18-month open review that began in June 2008. It included two public comment periods and seven regional workshops.

The process encouraged on-line comments, which were posted on the SFI website along with revised drafts of the standard. SFI Inc. publicized the process at every step, and invited about 2,000 individuals and organizations to submit comments.

Michael Goergen, executive vice-president of the Society of American Foresters and chair of the independent SFI External Review Panel, which monitored the review process, called it "a model of open, transparent, and responsible consideration of public input, scientific and economic factors, and conflicting demands."

What parts of the SFI standard are audited?

The SFI 2010-2014 Standard is based on 14 core principles that promote sustainable forest management, including measures to protect water quality, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, species at risk, and Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value. It has five more principles than the previous standard, including separate principles for protection of special sites, biodiversity, aesthetics and recreation, and new principles for responsible procurement practices in North America, avoidance of controversial sources offshore, research, training and education, and public involvement.

The new standard has several layers of requirements, including 20 objectives, 39 performance measures and 114 indicators – this is up from 13 objectives, 34 performance measures, and 102 indicators in the previous standard. To be certified, forest operations must be third-party audited to these requirements by independent, objective and accredited certification bodies.

Who conducts the third-party audits?

Independent certification bodies evaluate planning, procedures and processes in the forest, in the mill or in the plant to ensure they conform to requirements in SFI standards – whether it is forest management, chain of custody or fiber sourcing. They must be objective, and have the knowledge and skills needed to conduct the audit.

For forest management audits, they must have expertise in a wide range of disciplines such as silviculture and hydrology, as well as knowledge of labor standards and applicable laws and regulations. The SFI 2010-2014 Standard includes provisions that there must also be expertise in plant and wildlife ecology as well as knowledge of a region's socio-demographics and cultural issues.

Depending on the scope of the certification audit, the certification body must have completed an accreditation program through internally recognized accreditation bodies such as the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), the ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board (ANAB) and/or the Standards Council of Canada (SCC).

What changes are in the new SFI 2010-2014 Standard?

Key revisions in the new SFI 2010-2014 standard will help to:

- improve conservation of biodiversity in North America and offshore, and recognize emerging issues such as climate change and bioenergy;
- strengthen unique SFI fiber sourcing requirements, which broaden the practice of sustainable forestry in North America and avoid unwanted offshore sources;
- complement SFI activities aimed at avoiding controversial or illegal offshore fiber sources, and embrace Lacey Act amendments to prevent illegal logging;
- expand requirements for logger training and support for trained loggers and certified logger programs.

How has the new standard improved conservation of biodiversity?

The previous forest standard required, among other things, that biodiversity and old growth are conserved, that water quality and wildlife habitat are protected, that harvested areas are replanted promptly and that chemical use is minimized.

Some of the revisions in the new standard include:

- Improved conservation of biodiversity and forest management activities in the United States and Canada. For example, there are requirements for protection of vernal pools of ecological significance and management considerations for Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value.
- Requirements that raise awareness globally on the importance of conserving biodiversity. Program participants sourcing fiber outside of North America must continue to use well-established sources of data to reduce the risk that fiber procurement compromises area of concern, including those identified by Conservation International. This has been expanded to include new sources of information from the Alliance for Zero Extinction, World Wildlife Fund, World Resources Institute and International Union for Conservation of Nature.
- Enhanced provisions to avoid controversial and illegal sources of supply globally.

What are Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value?

Since 2002, the standard has required that program participants protect lands with ecological, geological, historical or cultural significance. The new standard makes it clear that Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value includes areas with critically imperiled or imperiled species and ecological communities. In the United States and Canada, SFI program participants can use a database created by NatureServe to identify species and communities for protection.

How has the new standard strengthened fiber sourcing requirements?

Unique SFI fiber sourcing requirements, which broaden the practice of sustainable forestry in North America and avoid unwanted offshore sources, further support the crucial role all forest landowners play in managing North America's forests, including millions of family forest owners who supply wood fiber to SFI program participants.

The previous standard encouraged program participants to support family forest owners in protecting threatened and endangered species, promoting reforestation and strengthening best management practices to protect water quality. The new standard explicitly requires this valuable assistance, with expanded outreach requirements that include biodiversity, utilization, afforestation, invasive exotic plants and animals, special sites, and encouragement to participate in forest management certification programs.

These requirements address the fact that all forest landowners play a crucial role in maintaining the long-term health and sustainability of forests – and that less than 10 percent of the world's forests are certified.

How does the new standard address illegal logging?

Illegal logging is a critical issue in developing countries where it can lead to the loss of wildlife habitat and public revenues. When forests are logged illegally, this undermines good forest governance and reduces their potential to contribute to sustainable livelihoods in developing countries and countries in transition.

The SFI program only certifies lands in the United States and Canada where illegal logging is not considered a problem because comprehensive laws are enforced. It does not try to duplicate these laws, instead it focuses on ways to improve forestry practices at home through activities that complement and build on the existing legal framework, and requires that program participants buying fiber from offshore avoid controversial sources of supply.

The new standard strengthens illegal logging provisions, which require program participants to perform risk assessments on offshore fiber supplies to avoid controversial sources such as illegal harvesting operations or areas of civil unrest. It includes a definition of illegal logging consistent with amendments to the Lacey Act in the United States. Requirements in the SFI 2010-2014 Standard are built on a foundation of responsible sourcing and legality, and are supported by the SFI Inc. Policy on Illegal Logging.

How has the new standard addressed logger training?

Logger training requirements have been expanded to address invasive exotic plants and animals, special sites, and emerging technologies and markets such as carbon offsets and bioenergy. Since 1995, more than 117,000 loggers have been trained through programs supported by SFI Implementation Committees.

The new standard refers to logger certification programs – what is this?

The new standard recognizes the emergence of performance-based logger certification programs. These involve a third-party audited certification of a logging operation's business, safety and harvest practices, acknowledging the professionalism of both individual loggers and the business of logging.

Where possible, SFI program participants must promote and support certified logger programs, and SFI Implementation Committees must establish basic criteria – including verification of performance on the ground – to recognize these programs.

How does the new standard recognize climate change?

The SFI 2010-2014 Standard is a research and science-based standard that takes careful consideration of social, economic and environmental issues related to forest management as well as the interests in the marketplace. New requirements are often built into the standard that reflect new information and science as it becomes available.

The SFI 2010-2014 Standard recognizes the fact that sustainable forestry makes an important contribution to addressing climate change and adapting to changing ecosystems. Provisions were added related to carbon management and bioenergy feedstock, tempered by the recognition that these are topics where both science and regulatory frameworks are still evolving.

The new standard addresses opportunities for program participants, individually or through cooperative efforts with SFI implementation Committees, to broaden the awareness of climate change impacts on forests, wildlife and biological diversity. The efforts of SFI program participants in researching, monitoring and promoting awareness of the effects of climate change will inform future versions of the standard.

How does the standard recognize bioenergy?

The standard makes it clear that the same performance measures, objectives and indicators related to forest management must be met regardless of the final product – whether it is solid wood, paper or bioenergy feedstock.

When does the new standard take effect?

The new SFI 2010-2014 Standard took effect on Jan. 1, 2010, and program participants have up to one year to implement these changes.

How often is the SFI standard updated?

It is reviewed through an open public process every five years, and is subject to continuous improvement so it can incorporate the latest scientific information and respond to emerging issues.

For more information about the SFI program, visit our website www.sfiprogram.org.