

## The Facts on Responsible Forestry – Plantations

There is a perception in the marketplace that FSC prohibits certification of plantations established after 1994 to be certified. In reality, both FSC and SFI allow for plantations to be certified.

### FSC Standards Allow Plantations and Conversions

FSC US notes that traditional plantation forestry in the United States does not have to meet FSC's "Principle 10 Plantation" requirements: "Conventional types of tree plantations—the vast majority of planting projects in the United States—are treated the same as natural forests under the FSC-US Standard."<sup>1</sup>

FSC International website says: "Natural forests alone are not able and should not be expected to supply the world's needs for wood and fiber. More intensive production systems are needed for this." It supports responsible use of natural forests as a complementary strategy to support conservation of the world's forests, but does not support conversion of natural forests to plantations.<sup>2</sup> In fact, there are more than eight million hectares of plantations or about seven percent of the total area certified to FSC globally.<sup>3</sup>

FSC International's website says plantations account for more than eight million hectares or about seven percent of the total area certified to FSC globally, primarily in Brazil, South Africa and the United Kingdom.<sup>4</sup>

- They often involve non-native (exotic) species primarily sitka spruce in the United Kingdom, lodgepole pine in Sweden, eucalyptus and radiata pine in Brazil, New Zealand, South Africa, Chile and others. Some FSC-certified plantations also use chemicals and clearcutting for final harvest.<sup>5</sup>

Despite these facts, FSC and their campaigners continue to create confusion in the market place regarding FSC "prohibiting plantations:"

- FSC Canada website states that FSC PROHIBITS the conversion of natural forests for plantations, mining, oil exploration or agriculture.<sup>6</sup>
- Meanwhile, FSC auditors have concluded that the most intensively managed forests in North America – planted loblolly pines in the Southern U.S. and planted conifers in Eastern Canada – still retain components of natural stands and are not "plantations." Therefore harvesting natural stands of mixed species and planting softwoods, a common practice under all certification standards, is not conversion prohibited by FSC.<sup>7</sup>
- Credible Certification website: "The FSC's forest management and conservation standards...Prohibit replacement of natural forests by ecologically-barren tree plantations, and require portions of existing plantations to be managed more naturally."<sup>8</sup>

### Bottom Line

All certification standards certify plantations, recognizing their contributions to supply the world's needs for wood and fiber and recognizing the need for responsible forestry on all forest types.

- Forest Resources of the United States 2007, published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture says about eight percent of U.S. forests are planted forests and plantations, and nearly all planted stands are established with native species.<sup>9</sup>
- All provisions of the SFI 2010-2014 Standard apply to plantations and managed natural forests alike: "The SFI 2010-2014 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 while they may serve a role in the production of bioenergy feedstocks, are beyond the scope of the SFI 2010-2014 Standard."<sup>10</sup>
- SFI Standard Objective 2 calls for: "Minimized plantings of exotic tree species, and research documentation that exotic tree species, planted operationally, pose minimal risk."<sup>11</sup>
- In 2010, SFI issued interpretation 2.2 regarding conversions of forest types stating: "Conversions are not allowed except in justified circumstances where the program participant can document that ecological impacts are not significant if managing for a different species mix after a final harvest."<sup>12</sup> In addition, conversions to plantations are never allowed if the forest type is old growth or rare and ecologically significant at the landscape level, if reforestation cannot be accomplished promptly, if there would be significant adverse impacts to special sites, threatened and endangered species or Forests of Exceptional Conservation Value and only where permitted by federal, state, provincial and local laws and regulations.

- <sup>1</sup> FSC-US Questions and Answers for Family Forest Owners: Forest Plantations. March 2011. [http://fscus.org/images/documents/standards/family%20forest%20program/FSC\\_Plantations\\_Q\\_A.pdf](http://fscus.org/images/documents/standards/family%20forest%20program/FSC_Plantations_Q_A.pdf) (page 1)
- <sup>2</sup> FSC International website: [FSC certification of plantations http://www.fsc.org/plantations.html](http://www.fsc.org/plantations.html)
- <sup>3</sup> FSC International website: [FSC certification of plantations http://www.fsc.org/plantations.html](http://www.fsc.org/plantations.html)
- <sup>4</sup> FSC International website: [FSC certification of plantations http://www.fsc.org/plantations.html](http://www.fsc.org/plantations.html)
- <sup>5</sup> FSC International website: [FSC certification of plantations http://www.fsc.org/plantations.html](http://www.fsc.org/plantations.html)
- <sup>6</sup> FSC Canada website [http://www.google.ca/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=fsc%20prohibit%20plantation&source=web&cd=4&ved=0CDsQFjAD&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsc.org%2Fdocs%2Ffactsheet\\_forestmanagement.pdf&ei=r9ZMT9WQGqeD4gTLzcXuAg&usq=AFOjCNGJAnH2wxLUIF0jS8V5pppyustWy7A](http://www.google.ca/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=fsc%20prohibit%20plantation&source=web&cd=4&ved=0CDsQFjAD&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fsc.org%2Fdocs%2Ffactsheet_forestmanagement.pdf&ei=r9ZMT9WQGqeD4gTLzcXuAg&usq=AFOjCNGJAnH2wxLUIF0jS8V5pppyustWy7A)
- <sup>7</sup> Neenah Paper Controlled Wood Compliance Summary (2008) <http://info.fsc.org/servlet/servlet.FileDownload?retURL=%2Fapex%2FPublicCertificateDetails%3Fid%3Da0240000005sVGDA2&file=00P40000003y41aEAA> (pages 18-25); FSC Forest Holdings Forest Certification System Transfer Audit Public Report (2010) <http://info.fsc.org/servlet/servlet.FileDownload?retURL=%2Fapex%2FPublicCertificateDetails%3Fid%3Da0240000006tLreAAE&file=00P400000077R0oEAE> (page 17)
- <sup>8</sup> Credible Certification website: [http://dontbuysfi.com/fsc\\_facts/fsc\\_attributes/](http://dontbuysfi.com/fsc_facts/fsc_attributes/)
- <sup>9</sup> Forests Resources of the United States 2007 [http://www.fs.fed.us/nrs/pubs/gtr/gtr\\_wo78.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/nrs/pubs/gtr/gtr_wo78.pdf) (page 67)
- <sup>10</sup> SFI 2010-2014 Standard Section 1 Intro [http://www.sfiprogram.org/files/pdf/Section1\\_sfi\\_requirements\\_2010-2014.pdf](http://www.sfiprogram.org/files/pdf/Section1_sfi_requirements_2010-2014.pdf) (page 2)
- <sup>11</sup> SFI Standard [http://www.sfiprogram.org/files/pdf/Section2\\_sfi\\_requirements\\_2010-2014.pdf](http://www.sfiprogram.org/files/pdf/Section2_sfi_requirements_2010-2014.pdf) (page 6)
- <sup>12</sup> SFI Interpretations 2.2 [http://www.sfiprogram.org/files/pdf/Interpretations\\_2010-2014\\_Requirements.pdf](http://www.sfiprogram.org/files/pdf/Interpretations_2010-2014_Requirements.pdf) (page 5)