

FINANCIAL SERVICES
AGRICULTURE

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2401

May 19, 2010

Mr. Rick Fedrizzi, President and CEO
US Green Building Council
2101 L Street NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20037

Dear Mr. Fedrizzi:

Mississippi has a strong and deep commitment to environmental sustainability and appreciates the efforts of the U.S. Green Building Council to promote energy efficiency and environmental conservation. Our state is especially proud of its well-managed forests and its vibrant forest products industry, which directly and indirectly employs over 71,000 people.

I have been disappointed to learn that the USGBC's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system discriminates against wood products produced in our own backyard and prohibits the two largest sustainable forest certification programs in the U.S. – the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and the American Tree Farm System (ATFS) – from gaining credit by recognizing only Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified wood. More than 3.4 million acres of forests in Mississippi are certified to SFI or ATFS, ten times the amount of forests certified to FSC in the state. If the USGBC maintains the status quo and does not recognize SFI or ATFS, many LEED builders will turn away reputable third-party SFI and ATFS certified wood which is locally grown and instead, will turn to FSC certified wood, the majority of which, comes from foreign countries whose standards do not meet those in the United States. Furthermore, since the USGBC does not require other building products, such as steel and concrete, to have third-party environmental certification to achieve a credit, USGBC is discriminating against a product that is energy efficient and provides additional benefits such as climate mitigation.

I understand that the USGBC has developed draft benchmarks to evaluate forest certification programs but that the process has largely ignored the need to address its exclusive recognition of FSC certified wood. Products from SFI and ATFS certified forests continue to be ineligible for the LEED forest certification. This is bad news for forest products produced in Mississippi and the communities and jobs that depend on them.

I urge you and your organization to re-evaluate your approach to forest management certification systems and to accept all credible forest management certification systems for qualification under the LEED program. Doing so will help ensure strong markets for domestic lumber producers and our forest landowners, which is vital to the future of our forests and our forest industry workers.

Sincerely,



Travis W. Childers
Member of Congress

Cc: Tim Cole, Forbo Flooring Systems, Chair, USGBC