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Central Point of Expertise on Timber

# **UK Government Timber Procurement Policy**

**Criteria for Evaluating  
Certification Schemes  
(Category A Evidence)  
Second Edition**

May 2006

## Purpose and development of the criteria

The UK Government's procurement policy on timber and timber products was announced in July 2000. This policy is a binding commitment on all Central Government departments, agencies and sponsored bodies. A procedure for procuring timber including a contract condition to ensure supply of timber from legal sources and a variant specification for the option of supplying sustainable timber has been developed. The Timber Procurement Advice Note<sup>1</sup> advises central departments of the procedure for purchasing legal and sustainable timber.

A number of ways of implementing the procedure in practice have been identified. One of the most straightforward is the purchase of timber from certified sources provided that the certification scheme involved delivers the government requirements for legality or sustainability. As there are a number of different timber certification schemes available, the government recognised that it needed a framework for assessing which ones provide assurance that its contract requirements for legal and sustainable timber sources are being delivered. These criteria have been developed to provide that framework.

## Elements of a certification scheme

In order to understand the development and layout of the criteria it is useful to understand how certification schemes function. This is discussed below.

Certification has been widely used in a range of sectors as a tool for providing independent verification that a defined set of requirements is being met. As a result of the experience gained, all certification schemes, including those for forestry, are usually made up of three elements:

- **Standard:** this sets out the requirements which must be met and against which certification assessments are made. Standards are developed by *standard-setting bodies*.
- **Certification:** this is the process of establishing whether or not the standard has been met, usually carried out by a *certification body* or *certifier* (also referred to as a *registration body* or *registrar* especially in North America).
- **Accreditation:** this is the mechanism for ensuring that the organisations which undertake certification are competent and produce credible, consistent results, sometimes described as 'certifying the certifiers'. Accreditation is undertaken by an *accreditation body*.

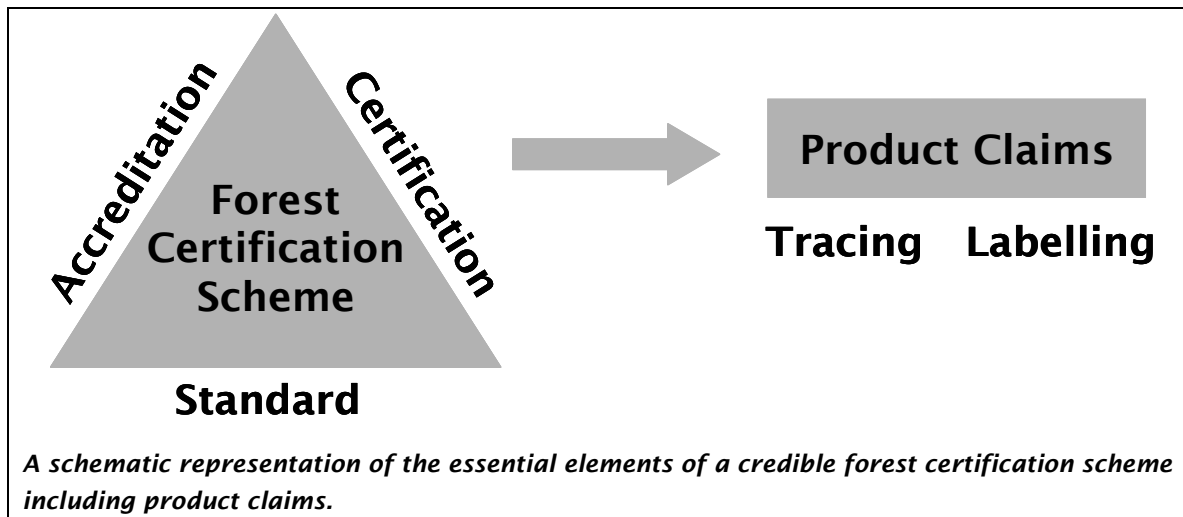
To emphasise the importance of each of these elements to the certification scheme as a whole, they are often shown schematically as the three sides of a triangle which represents the certification scheme, as shown in the Figure below.

- **Product claims,** In addition, if the scheme is going to be used as a basis for identifying products from certified forests and for making product claims then a mechanism for controlling this also needs to be in place. This requires:

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.proforest.net/cpet/uk-government-timber-procurement-policy/timber-guidance/>

- **Tracing:** the material may go through many production and logistical stages between the forest and the final product. There must be a mechanism for tracing it from the certified forest through each stage to provide certainty that the product or product line about which the claim is being made is linked to a certified forest. This process is often referred to as *chain of custody*.
- **Claims and Labelling:** it is essential to ensure that any claims made about a forest or a product or any labels are clear, credible and honest. This requires a set of rules to be followed by those making claims or labelling products.



## The International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

ISO is a non-governmental organisation made up of a network of the national standards bodies from more than 140 countries in all regions of the world. As well as co-ordinating and managing the development of hundreds of international standards for different industry sectors, ISO has also produced a number of Guides to help with the development of certification schemes. The Guides provide guidance on:

- The development and use of standards (Guide 59);
- Certification bodies and certification (Guides 62, 65, 66);
- Accreditation (ISO 17011);
- Environmental labels and declarations (the 14020 series of guides)

There is also a range of guidance relating to claims. These ISO Guides, which are based on several decades of experience, usually provide excellent baseline requirements and are also important because ISO is one of a number of international standards groups recognized by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in trying to ensure that certification requirements comply with WTO agreements and do not become technical barriers to trade.

## The UK Government Criteria

The criteria are divided into four sections reflecting the four main components of a forest certification scheme as discussed above and include:

- The requirement which must be met by a scheme.

- Guidance on interpretation and scoring together with notes on the origin or purpose of the requirement where this might help with interpretation.
- An indication of whether compliance is required for legal compliance, sustainability or both.

The requirements for the content of standards reflects the requirements of the UK Government for legality and sustainability which are set out in the document '*UK Government Timber Procurement Policy: Definition of 'legal' and 'sustainable' for timber procurement*' First Edition, October 2005.

## Scoring

Compliance with the requirements of each criterion will be scored on a 3-point scale:

0: Inadequately addressed and not acceptable.

1: Partially addressed.

2: Acceptable.

For assessing certification schemes' overall compliance with the requirements of the UK Government Timber Procurement Policy the following rules have been adopted:

**Legal:** a minimum score of 1 for each criterion identified as relating to legal requirements.

**Sustainable:** a minimum score of 1 for each criterion identified as relating to sustainable requirements, and an overall score of 75% of the total possible score for criteria relating to sustainable requirements.

**Progressing to sustainable:** Although not specifically addressed within the Timber Procurement Advice Note, recommendations commissioned by the government included an additional category for schemes progressing or moving towards sustainability. This category could be introduced for certification schemes based on a minimum score of 1 for each criterion identified as relating to sustainable requirements.

## Glossary of abbreviations

ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
EMS	Environmental management system
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade
FMU	Forest management unit
FSC P&C	Forest Stewardship Council Principles and Criteria
ISEAL	International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance

# 1. Forest Standards

## 1.1. Content of standards for legal compliance

Criteria	Guidance on interpretation	L <sup>2</sup>	S
1.1.1 The standard requires that the forest owner/manager holds legal use rights to the forest	If schemes are only applicable to countries where legal use rights are clear then an explicit requirement for legal compliance is sufficient for a score of 1 even if legal use rights are not explicitly addressed. However, if the scheme can be applied in countries where legal use rights are not clear, there must be an explicit requirement.	✓	
1.1.2 The standard requires compliance from both the forest management organisation and any contractors with local and national legal requirements including those relevant to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forest management</li> <li>• Environment</li> <li>• Labour and welfare</li> <li>• Health &amp; safety</li> <li>• Other parties' tenure and use rights</li> </ul>	In general, compliance with the law means compliance with all relevant laws. However, it is now recognised in some countries laws may be unclear or conflicting making clear definition of legality difficult to achieve. The FLEGT <sup>3</sup> process has proposed that in such countries it will be necessary to have or develop a practical working definition of 'legal' or a set of core laws which must be met which has support from major stakeholder groups. This can be done through a national standard-setting process or other appropriate means.	✓	
1.1.3 The standard requires payment of all relevant royalties and taxes	Where payment is clearly required by law, then an explicit requirement for legal compliance is sufficient for a score of 1.	✓	
1.1.4 The standard requires compliance with the requirements of CITES.	For standards which can only be applied in countries which are CITES signatories and have incorporated the requirements into national law this can be implicit under legal requirements. However, it must be explicit if the scheme can be used in non-signatory countries or countries which have not incorporated CITES requirements into national law.	✓	

<sup>2</sup> L: required to meet requirements for legal, S: required to meet requirements for sustainable variant

<sup>3</sup> Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade is the European Union's response to the problem of illegal logging and trade in associated timber products. The process of developing a working definition of 'legal' has been initiated for Indonesia.

## 1.2. Content of standards for sustainable variant

Criteria	Guidance on interpretation	L	S
<p>1.2.1 Certification standards must be consistent with a widely accepted set of international principles and criteria defining sustainable or responsible forest management at the forest management unit level.</p>	<p>It is not possible to define a detailed global standard for forest management because of the huge variation in climate, vegetation, topography, socio-economic context etc. Therefore, certification standards need to be adapted to local conditions, but to ensure consistency and avoid trade barriers, it is important to base each standard on accepted international principles such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intergovernmental processes designed for use at FMU level, for example the Pan-European Operational Level Guidelines (PEOLG).</li> <li>• Requirements developed by an international organisation such as the ITTO Criteria</li> <li>• International principles developed explicitly for forest certification such as the FSC Principles and Criteria</li> </ul> <p>Such international principles can be developed either to guide national planning and reporting, or to guide management at the scale of the forest management unit. As certification applies at the latter level it is appropriate to base certification standards on international principles designed for this use. However, use of a set of appropriate international criteria developed for national reporting or other uses is sufficient for a score of 1.</p>		✓

Criteria	Guidance on interpretation	L	S
<p>1.2.2 The standard must be performance-based.</p>	<p>There are two types of requirements - performance and management system. Only performance requirements guarantee a defined level of performance. Therefore, only standards which include performance requirements (which may be in addition to system requirements) can provide the basis for the delivery of the UK government requirements for legal compliance or sustainability.</p> <p>To score 2, the standard must address all of the requirements set out in 1.2.3 - 1.2.6 as performance elements, not as issues to be addressed by a management system without any minimum threshold of performance. To score 1, each of the criteria 1.2.3 - 1.2.6 must be at least partially addressed.</p>		✓
<p>1.2.3 The standard must ensure that harm to ecosystems is minimised. In order to do this the standard must include requirements for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Appropriate assessment of impacts and planning to minimise impacts;</li> <li>b. Protection of soil, water and biodiversity;</li> <li>c. Controlled and appropriate use of chemicals and use of Integrated Pest Management wherever possible.</li> <li>d. Proper disposal of wastes to minimise any negative impacts.</li> </ul>	<p>The first sentence sets out the goal of the criterion. Compliance will be assessed against the list of requirements.</p> <p>To score a 2, each requirement must be adequately addressed. Where this is not achieved, but there are no major omissions, a score of 1 can be awarded.</p> <p>Where an issue (for example, waste disposal) is adequately covered by legal requirements in all countries where a scheme can be used, it need not be explicit provided that legal compliance is required by the standard.</p>		✓

Criteria	Guidance on interpretation	L	S
<p>1.2.4 The standard must seek to ensure that productivity of the forest is maintained. In order to do this the standard must include requirements for:</p> <p>a. Management planning and implementation of management activities to avoid significant negative impacts on forest productivity.</p> <p>b. Monitoring which is adequate to check compliance with all requirements, together with review and feedback into planning.</p> <p>c. Operations and operational procedures which minimise impacts on the range of forest resources and services.</p> <p>d. Adequate training of all personnel, both employees and contractors.</p> <p>e. Harvest levels that do not exceed the long-term production capacity of the forest, based on adequate inventory and growth and yield data.</p>	<p>The first sentence sets out the goal of the criterion. Compliance will be assessed against the list of requirements.</p> <p>To score a 2, each requirement must be adequately addressed. Where this is not achieved, but there are no major omissions, a score of 1 can be awarded.</p> <p>Where an issue is adequately covered by legal requirements in all countries where a scheme can be used, it need not be explicit provided that legal compliance is required by the standard.</p>		✓
<p>1.2.5 The standard must seek to ensure that forest ecosystem health and vitality is maintained. In order to do this the standard must include requirements for:</p> <p>a. Management planning which aims to maintain or increase the health and vitality of forest ecosystems</p> <p>b. Management of natural processes, fires, pests and diseases.</p> <p>c. Adequate protection of the forest from unauthorised activities such as illegal logging, mining and encroachment.</p>	<p>The first sentence sets out the goal of the criterion. Compliance will be assessed against the list of requirements.</p> <p>To score a 2, each requirement must be adequately addressed. Where this is not achieved, but there are no major omissions, a score of 1 can be awarded.</p> <p>Where an issue is adequately covered by legal requirements in all countries where a scheme can be used, it need not be explicit provided that the standard assures legal compliance.</p>		✓

Criteria	Guidance on interpretation	L	S
<p>1.2.6 The standard must seek to ensure that biodiversity is maintained. In order to do this the standard must include requirements for:</p> <p>a. Implementation of safeguards to protect rare, threatened and endangered species.</p> <p>b. The conservation/set-aside of key ecosystems or habitats in their natural state.</p> <p>c. The protection of features and species of outstanding or exceptional value.</p>	<p>The first sentence sets out the goal of the criterion. Compliance will be assessed against the list of requirements.</p> <p>To score a 2, each requirement must be adequately addressed. Where this is not achieved, but there are no major omissions, a score of 1 can be awarded.</p> <p>Where an issue is adequately covered by legal requirements in all countries where a scheme can be used, it need not be explicit provided that the standard assures legal compliance.</p>		✓

### ***1.3. Standard-setting process***

Criteria	Guidance on interpretation	L	S
<p>1.3.1 The standard-setting process must be consistent with the requirements of <i>ISO Guide 59: Code of Good Practice for Standardisation</i> or the <i>ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards</i> or equivalent.</p>	<p>Consistency or equivalence can be assessed by reference to the list of key requirements in Annex 1.</p>		✓

<p>1.3.2 The standard-setting process must seek to ensure balanced representation and input from the economic, environmental and social interest categories.</p>	<p>It is widely accepted that ‘sustainable forest management’ is management which delivers an appropriate combination of economic, environmental and social benefits. In practice it is rarely possible to deliver all possible benefits all of the time so it is necessary to find appropriate compromises between competing interests.</p> <p>The only way to achieve balanced representation in practice is to ensure that the range of issues and viewpoints of the different stakeholder groups making up the economic, environmental and social interest categories are fed into and influence the standard-setting process.</p> <p>Major stakeholder groups include such groups as forest owners and managers, processors, buyers, governments, academics, conservation organisations, NGOs, workers, forest users, indigenous groups, and communities.</p> <p>To score 2 the process must actively seek to ensure that the full range of stakeholder groups within each interest category are engaged and involved. A score of 1 can be achieved if the range of stakeholder groups within each interest category have access to the standard-setting process.</p>		✓
<p>1.3.3 The standard-setting and decision-making process adopted must seek to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No single interest can dominate the process;</li> <li>• No decision can be made in the absence of agreement from the majority of an interest category.</li> </ul>	<p>The way in which the process is run and decisions are made is as important as the range of interests represented since an appropriate compromise will only be achieved if all the interest categories are able to influence the standard-setting and decision-making process.</p> <p>To achieve a score of 2 the standard-setting process must be designed to ensure that all three interest categories can influence the process equally and that the standard cannot be finalised in the</p>		✓

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<sup>4</sup> If a process provides a genuine opportunity for any major stakeholder group to influence the content of the standard, but a group chooses not to participate, this would not constitute a failure.

	<p>absence of agreement from a majority of an interest category. In practice this can be achieved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A process based on consensus where this means that a decision cannot be reached if any major stakeholder group sustains a strong objection; or</li> <li>• A process based on majority voting within each of the three interest categories.</li> </ul> <p>Where neither of these approaches is followed, in order to achieve a score of 1 the scheme must ensure<sup>4</sup> that it would not be possible for a standard to be finalised if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It would be possible for a major stakeholder group to be involved in the process but not able to significantly influence the content of the standard; and</li> <li>• The stakeholder group was strongly opposed to the content of the standard.</li> </ul>		
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## 2. Certification

Criteria	Guidance on interpretation	L	S
<p>2.1 Certification must be undertaken by a body whose organisation, systems and procedures conform to applicable ISO guidance, or publicly available equivalent.</p>	<p>Applicable ISO guidance includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ISO Guide 62:1996 General requirements for bodies operating assessment and certification/registration of quality systems</li> <li>• ISO Guide 65: 1996 General Requirements for bodies operating product certification systems</li> <li>• ISO Guide 66: 1999 General requirements for bodies operating assessment and certification/registration of environmental management systems (EMS).</li> </ul> <p>Note if this is not delivered by the scope of the accreditation, then the checklist in Annex 2 must be completed.</p>	✓	✓
<p>2.2 Certification is undertaken by a body which is accredited to evaluate against forest management standards.</p>	<p>The scope of the accreditation should include the elements set out in 2.3 – 2.6.</p>	✓	✓
<p>2.3 The requirements for certification audits must include assessment of systems and documentation together with verification of outcomes in the forest adequate to ensure that both system and performance requirements in the standard are being met.</p>	<p>The make-up of the team, the sampling strategy and the amount of time spent carrying out the audit are all important in ensuring that sufficient objective evidence of compliance with the standard is collected to make the final decision robust.</p> <p>The possible scores against this criterion are either 0 or 2.</p>	✓	✓

Criteria	Guidance on interpretation	L	S
2.4 The certification audit must include sufficient consultation with external stakeholders to ensure that all relevant issues are identified relating to compliance with the requirements of the standard.	<p>Consultation with external stakeholders is very important to establish whether there are any issues which might prevent full compliance with the standard which the audit team has not identified (eg seasonal issues not evident at the time of the audit, ongoing social conflicts) and to ensure that any interpretation of the requirements of the standard for the immediate local conditions is appropriate.</p> <p>To score 2, the stakeholder consultation must be designed to ensure identification of all relevant issues. To score 1, there must be some provision for consultation.</p>		✓
2.5 A summary of the results of the certification audit (excluding confidential information) must be publicly available to interested parties.	<p>Sustainability can only be delivered by an appropriate balance of economic, social and environmental imperatives. It is important that representatives of each of these groups can monitor certification to make sure that the appropriate balance is being delivered.</p> <p>The information must, at a minimum, provide a summary of the findings with respect to conformance with the requirements of the forest management standard.</p> <p>To score 2, the public summary must be available on a relevant website. To score 1, the summary must be electronically available to any interested party on request within a defined timescale.</p>		✓
2.6 There is an accessible and functioning mechanism for dealing with complaints and disputes which is open to any interested party.	It is widely accepted good practice to ensure that any issues or concerns are dealt with efficiently and transparently, whatever their origin.	✓	✓

### 3. Accreditation

Criteria	Guidance on interpretation	L	S
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Criteria	Guidance on interpretation	L	S
<p>3.1 Accreditation must be undertaken by a national or international body whose organisation, systems and procedures are consistent with ISO 17011:2004 <i>Conformity assessment -- General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies</i> or equivalent.</p>	<p>Note if this is not provided by the requirements of the certification system, or through other mechanisms such as the International Accreditation Forum's Multilateral Recognitions Arrangements then the checklist in Annex 3 must be completed.</p>	✓	✓

## 4. Chain of custody

Criteria	Guidance on interpretation	L	S
4.1 Assessment of chain of custody must be undertaken by a certification body operating in accordance with ISO Guide 65 or equivalent and accredited by an accreditation body operating in accordance with ISO 17011 or equivalent.	Chain of custody certification must be undertaken by an accredited competent third-party just as for forest management certification.	✓	✓
4.2 There must be a certified chain of custody in place from the forest of origin to the final certified product which provides a link between the certified material in the product or product line and certified forests .	<p>This means that each organisation in the chain from forest to final certified product which owns or processes the material in any way must have been audited to confirm that they are implementing chain of custody requirements and have a valid chain of custody certificate.</p> <p>The possible scores against this criterion are either 0 or 2.</p>	✓	✓

Criteria	Guidance on interpretation	L	S
<p>4.3 If mixing of certified and uncertified material in a product or product line is allowed, the uncertified material must be covered by a verifiable system which is designed to ensure that it is from legal sources.</p>	<p>This requirement is relevant when mixing of certified and non-certified material is allowed. Mixing occurs whenever the following approaches are used: percentage labelling, volume accounting, input-output or processor certification.</p> <p>In such cases, in order to meet UK government requirements for legality, there must be a system in place which provides assurance that the uncertified material is from a legal source.</p> <p>The UK government requires all timber and wood products to be from legal sources. Therefore, if mixing of certified and uncertified material is allowed, in order to meet UK government requirements for legality, there must be a system in place which provides assurance that the uncertified material is from a legal source.</p> <p>If the certification system does not include requirements to ensure that the uncertified material is from legal sources, then only products which are 100% certified can be accepted as providing assurance of legality.</p> <p><b>NB If a scheme scores 0 for this criterion, it only affects acceptance of products containing uncertified material.</b></p>	<p>✓</p>	

Criteria	Guidance on interpretation	L	S
<p>4.4 If mixing of certified and uncertified material in a product or product line is allowed and the proportion of uncertified material can exceed 30%, then the uncertified material must be covered by a verifiable system which ensures that it is from sustainable forest sources where the requirements for sustainability set out in criteria 1.2.3 – 1.2.6 above are being met.</p>	<p>This requirement is relevant when mixing of certified and non-certified material is allowed. Mixing occurs whenever the following approaches are used: percentage labelling, volume accounting, input-output or processor certification.</p> <p>The UK government requires that 70% of the material in a product or product line is from sustainable sources. To meet this requirement, if the proportion of uncertified material is more than 30% then there must be a system in place which provides assurance that the uncertified material is from a sustainable source.</p> <p>If such a system is not in place, then only material which contains 70% or more certified material can be accepted. Examples of approaches which provide such information include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Segregation: material from a certified forest is kept separate from uncertified material throughout the production process.</li> <li>• Percentage-based claims: the percentage of material in the product or product line from a certified forest is reported.</li> <li>• Mass-balance: the proportion of product sold as certified is equivalent to the proportion of certified raw material entering the process.</li> </ul> <p><b>NB If a scheme scores 0 for this criterion, it only affects acceptance of products or product lines containing more than 30% uncertified material.</b></p>		✓
<p>4.5 There is a clearly defined mechanism for controlling all claims made about the certified nature of products which ensures that claims are clear and accurate and that action is taken to prevent any false or misleading claims.</p>	<p>If claims are not controlled, then the veracity of any claim made is in question.</p> <p>Note ISO 14020 contains general guidance on environmental labels and declarations.</p>	✓	✓

Criteria	Guidance on interpretation	L	S
<p>4.6 If recycled material is used there must be a verifiable system in place which is designed to ensure that recycled material is from the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-consumer recycled wood and wood fibre or industrial by-products but excluding sawmill co-products</li> <li>• Post-consumer recycled wood and wood fibre</li> <li>• Drift wood</li> </ul>	<p>Further guidance needs to be developed.</p> <p>NB If a scheme scores 0 for this criterion, it only affects acceptance of products containing recycled material</p>	✓	✓