



A BRIEF INTRODUCTION FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

HOW DOES HAVING A TIMBER PROCUREMENT POLICY HELP LOCAL AUTHORITIES?

Local Authorities, as major purchasers of forest products, can certainly have a positive impact on the world's forests. Each time a product is purchased, it can reinforce standards that deliver benefits to communities and habitats around the world, securing resources for the long term, and so providing us all with a more sustainable future.

Forests provide vital functions – they are lungs of the Earth, helping to regulate climate. Forests play two roles in mitigating climate change: they absorb atmospheric CO₂ through photosynthesis process and store it as solid wood: almost 50% of the dry weight of a tree is carbon. When forests are destroyed they release large quantities of CO₂ into the atmosphere, a major contributor to climate change. They deliver freshwater to vast areas. They also can supply products like timber, paper, furniture and building materials, to name a few. But many forests are being logged either illegally, or managed in a way that means production cannot be sustained in the long term. The good news is that solutions do exist to make sure forests are managed in a way that can meet our needs today while preserving their ecological integrity and production capacity for future generations – and it is possible to ask for specific details about your products to ensure these are the ones you use for your business.

Our choices make a difference to the future of forests worldwide. Having a procurement policy and checking systems in place to avoid procuring potentially illegal timber is a vital step to take in improving our choices. Demonstrating commitment to environmentally responsible purchasing of forest products can deliver other benefits too - positive relationships can be developed with external stakeholders, such as suppliers, by being clear on what standards are expected in delivery of services and goods to Local Authorities. Staff can also feel proud of the work they undertake to make sure that Local Authority business is doing its best for a better future for us all. Adopting a responsible timber procurement policy is also a way of making sure you don't buy illegal timber and provides an opportunity to be a leader in sustainable procurement, which is increasingly a priority for public organisations.

WHY IS CHAIN OF CUSTODY IMPORTANT?

Knowing exactly where your product first came from is key to demonstrating that your business is taking action for environmentally responsible purchasing of forest goods. There is a mechanism called “Chain of Custody” which can help identify this information for many products, and is associated with forest certification systems which work to deliver responsible forest management.

Chain of custody is defined as ‘the path taken by raw materials, processed materials or finished products from the forest to the consumer including each stage of transformation, manufacturing, storage and transport where progress to the next stage involves a change of ownership of the materials or products’.

A secure chain of custody provides assurance to buyers that forest products genuinely originate from a certified source and have not been mixed with uncertified material. A secure chain of custody provides assurance to buyers that forest products genuinely originate from a certified source. Please note that some certification schemes allow for a portion of legally verified timber from non controversial sources to be mixed with certified timber.

