

Central Point of Expertise on Timber

UK Government Timber Procurement Policy

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

September 2004

Note: the content of this document is the same as the version of the criteria entitled 'UK Government Timber Procurement Policy: Criteria for Assessing Certification Schemes' Version 6, 15 September 2004

Purpose and development of the criteria

The UK Government's procurement policy on timber and timber products was announced in July 2000. The policy on wood is now a binding commitment on all Government departments and agencies. A new 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 (January 2004)¹ advises central departments of the new procedure for purchasing legal and sustainable timber.

A number of ways of implementing the new 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 a number of different timber certification schemes available, the government recognised that it needed a framework for assessing which ones deliver its timber policy. 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:

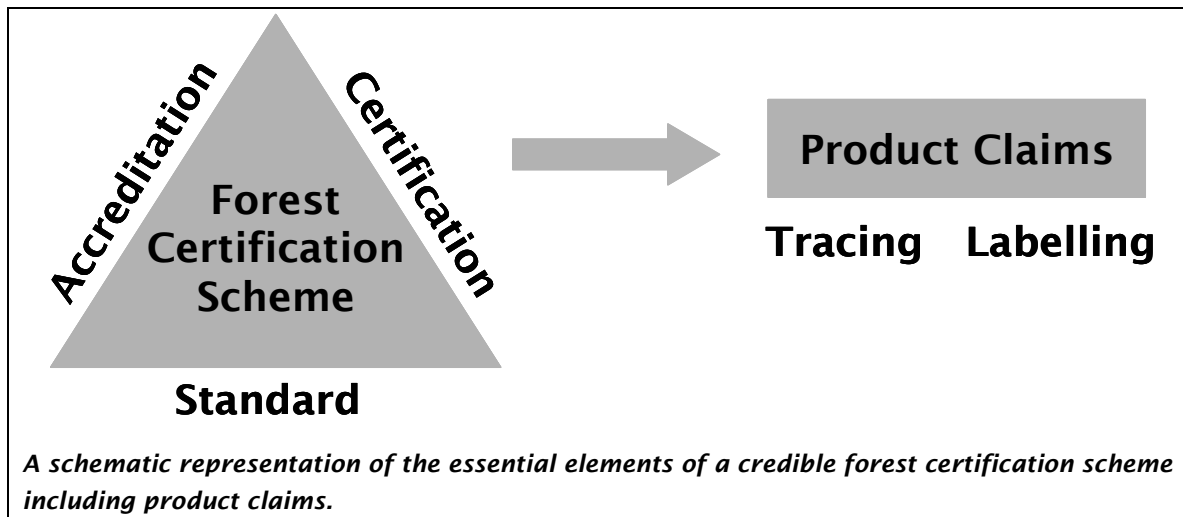
- **Standard:** this sets out the requirements which must be met and against which certification assessments are made. Standards are developed by *standard-setting bodies*.
- **Certification:** this is the process of establishing whether or not the standard has been met, usually carried out by a *certification body* or *certifier* (also referred to as a *registration body* or *registrars* 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:

¹ <http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/sdig/improving/partf/greenbuy/24a.htm>

- **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 (Guide 61);
- 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 key requirements of the UK Government for legality and sustainability are set out within the contract requirements for legal timber and the variant specification for

sustainable timber. 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.
- Notes on the origin of the requirement and, where appropriate, guidance on interpretation.
- An indication of whether compliance is required for legal compliance, sustainability or both.

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, proposals 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 ²	S
1.1.1 The standard requires that the forest owner/manager holds legal use rights to the forest	Contract ³ clause 4.1 Where legal use rights are clear this may be implicit in a requirement for legal compliance, but should be explicit where rights are not clear.	✓	
1.1.2 The standard requires compliance from both the forest management organisation and any contractors with local and national laws and codes of practice including those relevant to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest management • Environment • Labour and welfare • Health & safety 	Contract clause 4.1 It is now recognised in some countries laws may be unclear or conflicting making clear definition of legality difficult to achieve. The FLEGT ⁴ 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	Contract clause 4.1	✓	
1.1.4 The standard requires compliance with the requirements of CITES.	Contract clause 2. For standards which can only be applied in CITES signatory countries this can be implicit under legal requirements, but it must be explicit if the scheme can be used in non-signatory countries which have CITES-listed species.	✓	

² L: required to meet requirements for legal, S: required to meet requirements for sustainable variant

³ 'Contract' is used throughout to refer to the UK Government Timber Procurement Policy Model Contract General Conditions of Contract.

⁴ 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 based on a widely accepted set of international principles and criteria defining sustainable or responsible forest management at the forest management unit level, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intergovernmental processes designed for use at FMU level • ITTO Criteria • FSC P&C 	<p>It is not possible to define a 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.</p>		✓
<p>1.2.2 The standard should be performance-based.</p>	<p>There are performance and management system based requirements. Only performance-based requirements provide a guarantee of performance or characteristics of forest management. The forest management standard shall include performance based requirements.</p>		✓
<p>1.2.3 The standard must ensure that harm to ecosystems is minimised. In order to do this the standard should include requirements for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate assessment of impacts and planning to minimise impacts; • Protection of soil, water and biodiversity; • Controlled and appropriate use of chemicals and use of Integrated Pest Management wherever possible. • Proper disposal of wastes to minimise any negative impacts. 	<p>Clause 1.2 of the variant specification⁵ requires that harm to ecosystems is minimised.</p> <p>Where issues such as waste disposal are adequately covered by legal requirements this need not be explicit.</p>		✓

⁵ 'Variant specification' is used throughout to refer to the UK Government Timber Procurement Policy Model Contract Variant Specification for Timber from a Sustainable Source.

Criteria	Guidance on interpretation	L	S
<p>1.2.4 The standard must ensure that productivity of the forest is maintained. In order to do this the standard should include requirements for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management planning and implementation of management activities to avoid significant negative impacts on forest productivity. • Monitoring which is adequate to check compliance with all requirements, together with review and feedback into planning. • Operations and operational procedures which minimise impacts on the range of forest resources and services. • Adequate training of all personnel, both employees and contractors. • Harvest levels that do not exceed the long-term production capacity of the forest, based on adequate inventory and growth and yield data. 	<p>Clause 1.2 of the variant specification requires that forest productivity is maintained.</p>		✓
<p>1.2.5 The standard must ensure that forest ecosystem health and vitality is maintained. In order to do this the standard should include requirements for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management planning which aims to maintain or increase the health and vitality of forest ecosystems • Management of natural processes, fires, pests and diseases. • Adequate protection of the forest from unauthorised activities such as illegal logging, mining and encroachment. 	<p>Clause 1.2 of the variant specification requires that forest vitality is maintained.</p> <p>Pan-European criteria for sustainable forest management – Criterion 2 Maintenance of forest ecosystem health and vitality.</p>		✓

Criteria	Guidance on interpretation	L	S
<p>1.2.6 The standard must ensure that biodiversity is maintained. In order to do this the standard should include requirements for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of safeguards to protect rare, threatened and endangered species. • The conservation/set-aside of key ecosystems or habitats in their natural state. • The protection of features and species of outstanding or exceptional value. 	<p>Clause 1.2 of the variant specification requires that forest biodiversity is maintained.</p>		✓

1.3. Standard-setting process

Criteria	Guidance on interpretation	L	S
<p>1.3.1 The standard-setting process should meet the requirements of <i>ISO Guide 59: Code of Good Practice for Standardisation</i>, the <i>ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards</i> or equivalent.</p>	<p>Clause 2.1 of the variant specification ISO Guides provide useful guidance for good standard setting.</p> <p>The ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards also provides useful guidance.</p>	✓	✓
<p>1.3.2 The standard-setting body must include balanced representation of economic, environmental and social interest categories.</p>	<p>There is no universally accepted definition of 'sustainable forest management' but it has been widely accepted that it must be based on an appropriate combination of economic, environmental and social interests. In practice this means making compromises between competing interests. The only way this can be done is through balanced participation.</p>		✓
<p>1.3.3 The decision-making process adopted by the standard-setting body should ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No individual person or organisation can veto the process; • No single interest can dominate the process; • No decision can be made in the absence of agreement from the majority of an interest category. 	<p>The way in which decisions are made is as important as who is in the standard-setting group since balance is so critical.</p> <p>Decisions should be made with no single interest able to dominate and no major stakeholder group left out. This can be achieved in practice by a consensus-based process or by a voting system which ensures balanced weighting between stakeholder groups.</p>		✓

2. Certification

Criteria	Guidance on interpretation	L	S
<p>2.1 Certification is undertaken by an individual or body whose organisation, systems and procedures conform to appropriate ISO guidance, or publicly available equivalent. ISO guidance includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ISO Guide 62:1996 General requirements for bodies operating assessment and certification/registration of quality systems • ISO Guide 65: 1996 General Requirements for bodies operating product certification systems • ISO Guide 66: 1999 General requirements for bodies operating assessment and certification/registration of environmental management systems (EMS). 	<p>Contract clause 6.2</p> <p>Note if this is not delivered by the scope of the accreditation, then the checklist in Annex 1 must be completed.</p>	✓	✓
<p>2.2 Certification is undertaken by an individual or body which is accredited to evaluate against forest management standards.</p>	<p>Contract clause 6.2</p>	✓	✓
<p>2.3 The certification audit 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>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>	<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>		✓

Criteria	Guidance on interpretation	L	S
2.5 A summary of the results of the certification audit (excluding confidential information) is publicly available to interested parties.	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.		✓
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
3.1 Accreditation must be undertaken by a national or international body whose organisation, systems and procedures conform to ISO Guide 61: 1996 General Requirements for Assessment and Accreditation of Certification Bodies or equivalent.	Contract clause 6.2 Note if this is not provided by the requirements of the certification system, or through membership of IAF (International Accreditation Forum) or another appropriate body then the checklist in Annex 2 must be completed.	✓	✓

4. Chain of custody

4.1. Criteria for all products

Criteria	Guidance on interpretation	L	S
4.1.1 Assessment of chain of custody must be undertaken by a certification body or auditor operating in accordance with ISO Guide 65 or equivalent and accredited by an accreditation body operating in accordance with ISO Guide 61 or equivalent.	Contract clause 6.2 Chain of custody certification must be undertaken by an accredited competent third-party just as for forest management certification.	✓	✓
4.1.2 There must be a certified chain of custody in place from the forest of origin to the final product.	Contract clause 5.1 This means that there must be an appropriate and valid chain of custody certificate or equivalent for each organisation in the chain from forest to final product which owns or processes the material in any way.	✓	✓

Criteria	Guidance on interpretation	L	S
4.1.3 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.	If claims are not controlled, then the veracity of any claim made is in question. Note ISO 14020 contains general guidance on environmental labels and declarations.	✓	✓

4.2. Criteria for certified and non-certified mixed products

Criteria	Guidance on interpretation	L	S
4.2.1 If recycled material is used there must be a verifiable system in place to ensure that recycled material is from the following categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-consumer recycled wood and wood fibre or industrial by-products but excluding sawmill co-products • Post-consumer recycled wood and wood fibre • Drift wood 	Contract clauses 3.1 and 7.1	✓	✓
4.2.2 If mixing of certified and uncertified material is permitted then there must be a verifiable system in place which ensures that all uncertified material used is from legal sources to meet the contract requirements for legal timber.	Contract clause 5.1. Mixing occurs whenever the following approaches are used: percentage labelling, volume accounting, input-output or processor certification.	✓	
4.2.3 If mixing of certified and uncertified material is permitted then there must be a verifiable system in place which ensures that all uncertified material used is from sustainable sources to meet the variant specification requirements for sustainable timber.	Contract clause 5.1. Mixing occurs whenever the following approaches are used: percentage labelling, volume accounting, input-output or processor certification.		✓

The criteria for assessing certification schemes have been developed by ProForest and ERM Ltd under contract to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Annex 1

Checklist for assessing compliance with Guide 65 Requirements

Note – this checklist should be used in conjunction with ISO Guide 65:1996 *General requirements for bodies operating product certification schemes*.

Annex 2

Checklist for assessing compliance with Guide 61 Requirements

Note – this checklist should be used in conjunction with ISO Guide 61:1996 *General Requirements for Assessment and Accreditation of Certification Bodies*.