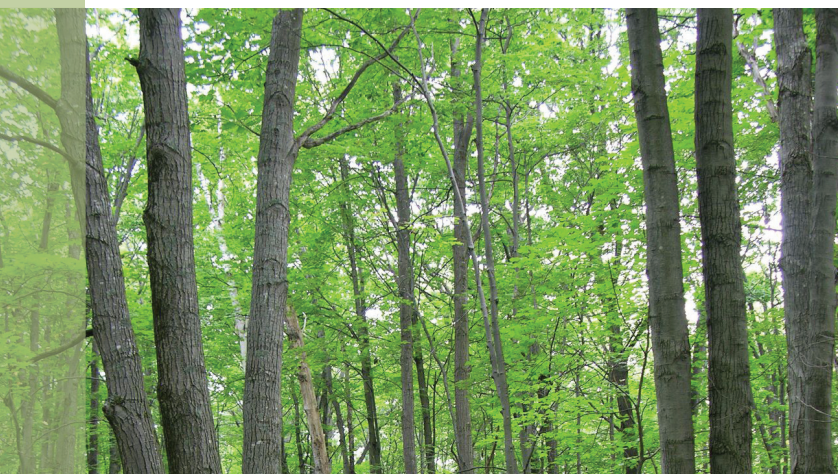


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State of Resources Reporting

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Forest Certification in Ontario



Forest certification is a market-oriented tool promoting well-managed forests. More than 24 million hectares of Ontario's publicly owned forests are certified.

What is forest certification?

Forest certification is a system used to identify well-managed forest areas. It recognizes that forest management planning and forestry practices have met a forest management standard set by a certification body. Forest certification bodies are independent organizations external to government and the forest industry. Forest certification promotes forest products and helps to gain access to markets that require forest products to be sourced from certified forests.

The origins of forest certification

In the 1980s, environmental non-government organizations (ENGOs) raised public concern about deforestation, particularly in developing countries in South America. In 1992, a global effort to address environmental and sustainable development issues led to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development – the Earth Summit, in Brazil. While criteria for sustainable forest management were being formalized at the Earth Summit, a coalition of ENGOs formed to promote environmentally responsible, socially beneficial and economically viable management of the

world's forests. This coalition, the Forest Stewardship Council, became the first organization to certify forests. There are now several forest certification organizations and systems.

The basics of certification

A forest certification system recognizes well-managed forest areas that have been assessed by independent auditors. Certification bodies issue certificates for forest operations and management practices that comply with a forest management standard. Forest management standards are developed according to certain environmental, economic and social values.

Forest certification is intended to assure consumers that forest products come from responsibly managed forests. Forest certification systems are based on standards that support sound forest management practices. These practices protect the long-term health of forests, enabling trees to be harvested for a variety of wood products while ensuring the forests continue to provide environmental goods and services, such as wildlife habitat and protection of water quality.

There are two forms of certification:

- Forest management certification, and
- Chain-of-custody certification.

Forest management certification requires a forest manager (in Ontario, usually a forest company) to have independent verification that their forest management planning and forestry practices meet the standards of a recognized forest certification system.

Chain-of-custody certification is an accounting process that tracks and verifies the production of a forest product from the forest, through the manufacturing process, to the end consumer. Forest management certification can be complemented by a chain-of-custody certification.

Companies with chain-of-custody certification can apply a trademark or ecolabel to wood products. The label indicates that the product has been sourced from a well-managed forest. The labels may also identify the percentages of certified and recycled materials, and the acceptability of any non-certified sources.

The basics of the forest certification process and phases of the audit cycles are outlined in Figure 1 below. The cycle begins with a company selecting a forest certification standard. The company’s forest practices are the focus of the initial certification audit. Once a certificate is awarded, annual surveillance audits are conducted to verify that forest practices continue to meet the certification standard and to report progress on findings and recommendations from previous audits. A recertification audit renews the certification and the audit cycle is then repeated.



Figure 1. Components of the certification audit cycle.




Who is involved in the certification of Ontario's forests?

In Ontario there are three widely used forest certification systems. These three systems have been developed by the Canadian Standards Association (CSA), the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI). Table 1 provides an overview of the three systems.

All three certification systems:

- are voluntary
- can apply to public or private lands
- have optional product labels
- strive to be current and relevant, and to maintain an open revision process that includes public input

Table 1. Forest certification systems.

CSA - Canadian Standards Association	FSC - Forest Stewardship Council	SFI - Sustainable Forestry Initiative
<p>The CSA forest certification standard is based on the criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management developed by the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers. Six criteria are used to assess the environmental, social, and economic benefits derived from forests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biological diversity • Ecosystem condition and productivity • Soil and water • Role in global ecological cycles • Economic and social benefits • Society's responsibility 	<p>FSC-certified forests are evaluated against FSC's Principles and Criteria for responsible forest management. The FSC's Principles and Criteria form the guiding framework for developing regional forest stewardship standards appropriate to local social, ecological and economic conditions. The revised principles below were approved in principle in 2012.</p> <p>The ten principles of responsible forest management are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with laws • Workers' rights and employment conditions • Indigenous peoples' rights • Community relations • Benefits from the forest • Environmental values and impacts • Management planning • Monitoring and assessment • High conservation values • Implementation of management activities 	<p>The SFI standard is based on 14 principles and 20 objectives. Each objective includes performance measures and indicators. The principles include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable forestry • Forest productivity and health • Protection of water resources • Protection of biological diversity • Aesthetics and recreation • Protection of special sites • Responsible fibre sourcing practices in North America • Avoidance of controversial sources including illegal logging in offshore fibre sourcing • Legal compliance • Research • Training and education • Public involvement • Transparency • Continual improvement 

- attempt to balance social, economic and environmental interests, and
- require independent third-party audits on a regular basis.

Forest certification standards are created and administered by the CSA, FSC and SFI. Standards for each system are developed by a technical committee or group with expertise in a range of fields, such as forestry, ecology, socio-economics and wildlife management. These groups often include Aboriginal peoples and government representatives. The groups ensure that the standards use relevant scientific and technical information.

The development process also includes the opportunity for stakeholder and public involvement. An approved standard is normally reviewed every five years. The review process provides the opportunity to examine new knowledge, address issues and incorporate efficiencies.

The forest company selects a forest certification system (CSA, FSC or SFI), chooses an audit firm and participates in an audit of its forest management practices. If the company's practices meet the system's standard, the forest is certified.



Management of forests owned by the province, known as Crown forests, is highly regulated by the Ontario government. The province's forest management framework encompasses most of the basic requirements of the three widely accepted forest certification systems. This helps forest companies who manage Crown forests achieve certification.

The Ontario government supports certification by:

- developing policies and a legislative framework for forest management on Crown lands
- encouraging the forest industry to pursue forest certification and monitoring the status of forest certification in Ontario
- participating in the development of forest certification standards, and
- advising parties involved in forest certification about forest practices in Ontario.

All three of the forest certification systems have accredited third party auditors. Auditors perform on-site audits to verify that requirements of the certification standard are being met. The audit organizations act as the registrars of the programs.

What is the status of forest certification in Ontario?

Ontario has more than 32 million hectares of Crown forests. Areas of Ontario Crown forest were first certified in 2002, and by 2013 more than 24 million hectares of Crown forests were certified. Forests on private lands in Ontario are also certified.

Canada has more than 310 million hectares of forest and more than 150 million hectares of it are certified. Meanwhile, of the four billion hectares of forest around the world, about 340 million hectares are certified. In 2013, about 40 per cent of the world's certified forests were in Canada.

Key factors in the status of forest certification in Ontario include:

- commitment by members of the Forest Products Association of Canada to achieve certification
- demand in the marketplace, especially from European Union countries, for products manufactured from well-managed forests, and

- encouragement from the Ontario government for licence holders to pursue forest certification of Crown forests, including changes to the Crown Forest Sustainability Act in 2007.

The high standards of forest management and legal requirements for sustainable management in Ontario also facilitate forest certification.

With over 24 million hectares of Crown forests certified in Ontario, an increasing percentage of forest products – including lumber, veneer, pulp, paper and oriented strandboard – from Ontario’s forests bear forest

certification labels. Some forests are certified to more than one standard. Figure 2 shows the growth and status of forest certification in Ontario.

Economic challenges faced by the Ontario forest industry in recent years have resulted in some forest certificates lapsing or being suspended, mainly as a result of company bankruptcies. Some Crown forests are being certified for the first time, but the economic situation has resulted in a slight net loss of certified forests. This trend is depicted in Figure 2. Figure 3 shows the management units in Ontario that were certified by the end of 2013.

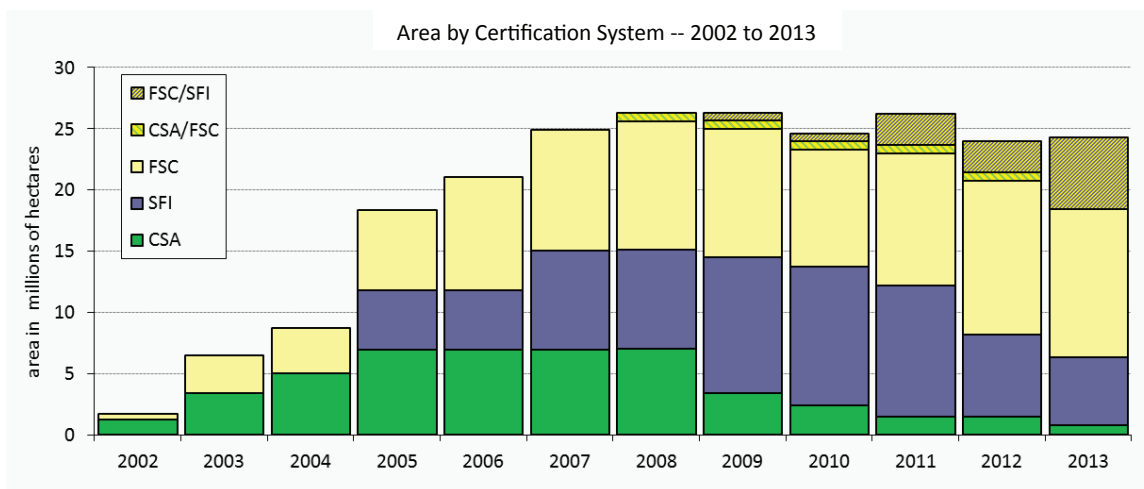


Figure 2. Ontario Crown forest area by certification system

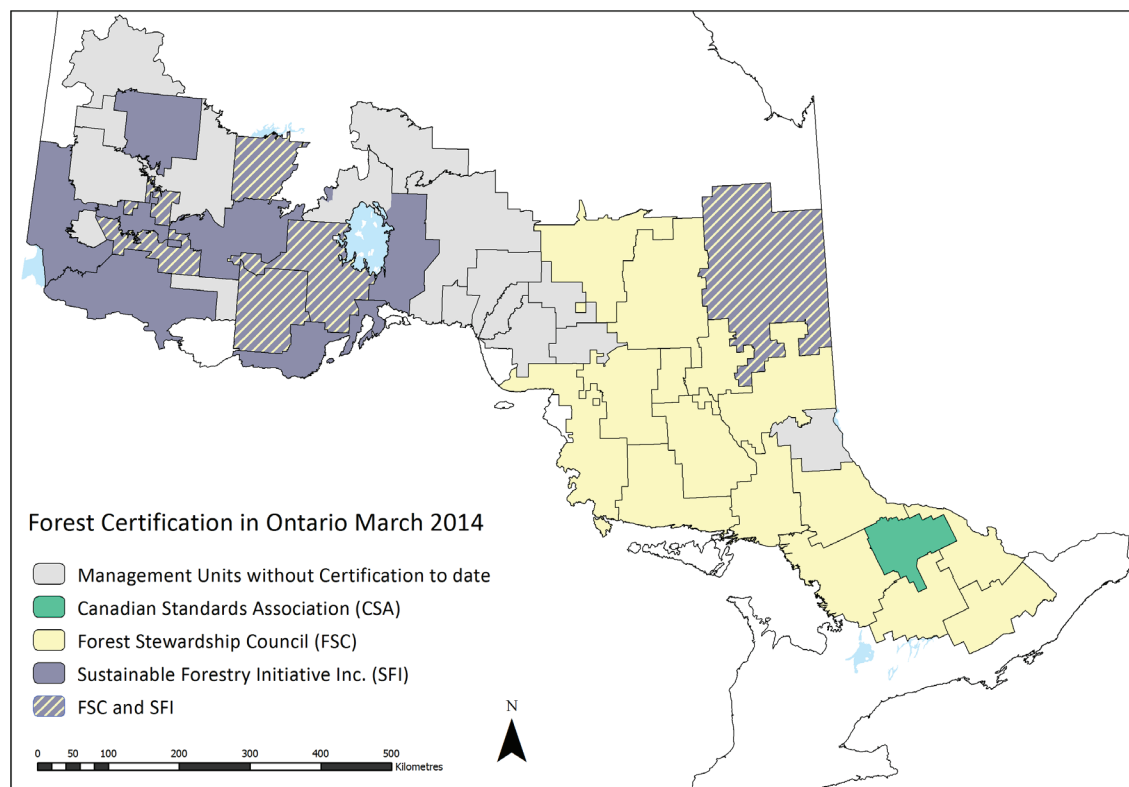


Figure 3. Management unit forest certification.

Outlook for forest certification in Ontario

Ontario's forest management framework provides a strong base for meeting forest management certification standards. The forest industry is well positioned through forest certification to promote environmentally sound forest practices and remain competitive in the global marketplace.

Forest certification levels and interest in certification may increase in Ontario. Forest certification has generally become part of the Ontario forest industry's business practices and marketing approaches. A number of factors support the continuation of forest certification programs in Ontario:

- Green building programs such as LEEDS and Green Globes include credits for using wood products sourced or made from certified forest.
- Demand for certified forest products is often expressed by retailers and consumers. For example, large retailers such as Lowes, Rona, Home Depot, Staples and the Office Depot have announced the exclusive sale of certified forest products.
- High-volume consumers of paper products such as Time Inc., Limited Brands, The New York Times and various financial institutions use paper from certified forests.
- Interest in the origins of forest products to support initiatives like forest carbon management is increasing.
- Governments and large institutions have procurement policies requiring certified forest products.

Many interest groups pressure retailers and manufacturers to develop procurement policies that recognize forest certification as a way of ensuring high environmental standards.

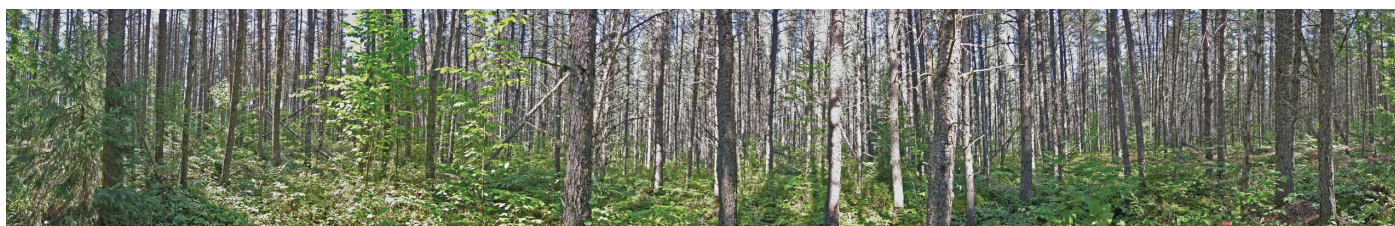
What can you do to ensure that forest products you buy are from well-managed forests?

Ontario has a highly regulated forestry framework that ensures Crown forests are managed using some of the best forestry practices in the world. Because Ontario's forests are well-managed, Ontarians can be assured that the province's forests will remain healthy and continue to provide environmental, economic and social benefits. Members of the public can also be involved in the forest management planning process for Crown forests.

As a consumer, when you ask for and buy certified forest products, you're encouraging suppliers and manufacturers to continue to certify forests and forest products. Certifying forests can provide forest companies with a competitive advantage or expand market opportunities for their products.

As an Ontario citizen and consumer, you can:

- Buy forest products sourced from Ontario Crown forests.
- Support forest products that have the Ontario Wood logo – see ontariowood.ca.
- Request that local retailers provide forest products that come from Ontario forests.
- Learn more about forest certification programs and certified product labels.
- Get involved in forest management on Crown lands.



Information Sources

Nussbaum, R. and Markku, S. (2005). The Forest Certification Handbook. London: Earthscan.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (2010). Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010 – Main Report.

Related Links and Organizations

- [FSC](#)
- [SFI](#)
- [CSA](#)
- [Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification \(PEFC\)](#)
- [MNR - Forests](#)
- [Forest Products Association of Canada - Forest Certification](#)
- [Forest Products Association of Canada - Publications](#)
- [Sustainable Forest Management in Canada](#)
- [Ontario Wood](#)



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More information

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