



December 5, 2000

Backgrounder — Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) Certification

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative program is one of the world's largest sustainable forestry certification systems and is the fastest growing sustainable forest management program in North America. By the end of 2000, over 12 million hectares will be third party certified and by the end of 2001 this figure will have risen to over 20 million hectares.

The SFI program is rapidly gaining acceptance in the marketplace. For example, Centex Homes, one of the largest homebuilder in the U.S., and 84Lumber, one of the largest wood retailers in the U.S. have both recently announced environmental purchasing policies giving preference to SFI along with other credible forestry certification systems. Highlights of the SFI program: - Program is controlled by a multi-interest independent, neutral, Sustainable Forestry Board (SFB). It is composed of 15 members, 60 percent of whom are from diverse interest groups including environmental/conservation organizations, agency representatives, professional/academic groups, landowners and logging professionals.

- Independent audits are conducted to assess applicants performance against 11 forest management objectives and 35 mandatory performance measures. Included is a requirement that harvest levels be sustainable.
- The program currently involves U.S. companies and licensees representing 90% of the industrial timberland, 84% of paper production and 50% of solid wood production. The program was extended to Canada this year.
- The program is very disciplined and since inception, 16 companies have been expelled for non-compliance and 22 have been suspended.
- Program participants have spent \$317 million US on research related to wildlife, biodiversity, ecosystem management, and the environment.
- Training in sustainable forestry practices is a requirement of the program and in 1999, 44,000 independent loggers and foresters have been trained and an additional 33,000 have partially completed training programs.
- Local implementation committees have spent \$14 million US on landowner outreach and logger training.
- The program has received several prestigious national awards, the latest being from the U.S. Renew America/President's Council on Sustainable Development.
- Continual improvement is a requirement, and periodic independent audits assess progress and achievements.



- Extensive consumer perception research has been completed to test various on-product labels and claims to ensure that labelling under the SFI program is effective and credible.
- The program is supported by 10 important U.S. organized labour unions who are actively promoting the SFI program within the U.S., and are working with organized labour around the world to ensure that there is mutual recognition of sustainable forest management certification programs.

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