

Good news for big brands and the world's forests

A new agreement to create a network of certified suppliers was agreed upon at the recent Green Building Council of SA (GBCSA) Conference. As consumers increasingly want to buy sustainably sourced products, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and allied industries are issuing a declaration about forest protection and management. This is aimed to assure consumers of good practice and attract more leading brands - such as H&M and Stella McCartney who already subscribe to this agreement - to follow suit and endorse the initiative.



Nicolas Raymond via [pixabay](#)

FSC certified building products, such as decking and timber for housing, are now more readily available and large brands are increasingly sourcing packaging from FSC certified paper mills. Everyday items in use like Tetra Pak boxes for juice and milk are currently also FSC labelled.

Sustainable production

More and more international fashion figures consider this labelling scheme as the benchmark for ecologically sustained forestry, and the product output for items such as paper bags, fashion catalogues, and rubber shoes and materials from forest fibres are being bought from these ethical supply chains.

Of the world's 4 billion hectares of forests, over 183 million hectares of forests are currently under FSC management and the goal is to have 20% of the world's forests under management in the next five years (800 million hectares). In South Africa most of forestry plantations are FSC certified. The FSC makes sure forests are managed in such a way that they meet the needs of society today, while ensuring they are around for generations to come. FSC does this by protecting biodiversity in the forests, and by ensuring the rights of all people that live and work in the forest are respected.

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is a global council of forest stewards with the most reliable third party verification to enable foresters and their supply chains to deliver the world's most well-known and trusted wood product label to enable businesses, public authorities and consumers to make product choices that do not result from deforestation.

Improving relationships

The stories of community support and reduced social conflict around forest edges as a result of FSC management tell of improved relationships between forestry companies and communities. Timber, often from plantations smaller than a

hectare, is the major income source in the Manguzi and Ozwathini areas in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal.

During a consultation with FSC and Mondi Zimele to assess how to certify smaller producers, FSC smallholder support manager Annah Agasha said "the market for these growers is at their doorstep, waiting for smallholders to supply FSC-certified tree products. For me, this is a model that should successfully work."

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