

PRESS RELEASE

Forest Certification Standards From Around The World Weigh In As **Global Pressure Mounts for US Green Building Council to Accept Multiple Forest Certification Programs**

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Forest certification standards from twelve nations have called on the USGBC to end its discrimination against wood and accept all credible sustainable forest certification standards. The certification programs pointed out that wood is one of the best environmental choices for construction the best environmental choices for construction, as long as it is from a responsible source – and that fibre certified to the 26 national forest certification programs recognized by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) meets this demand.

Currently, the USGBC's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating tool only recognizes wood certified to Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standards. The USGBC is involved in a process to evaluate forest certification programs, and recently released a fourth round of draft benchmarks for public comments.

“Less than 10 per cent of the world's forests are certified, yet LEED does not recognize the more than two thirds of the world's certified forests that meet PEFC's Sustainability Benchmarks,” said PEFC International Secretary General Ben Gunneberg. “The United Nations has warned that by giving exclusive recognition to one forest certification brand, green building standards may help drive demand for these brands at the expense of wider appreciation for the environmental merits of wood.”

Standards from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Malaysia, the Slovak Republic, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States, along with forest industry associations and companies from many of these countries, have joined North American elected and government officials, professional foresters and other leaders who have told USGBC that in order to increase the use of wood in buildings, all credible certification systems, including PEFC and FSC, need to be accepted.

More than 5,800 people from around the world, including countries such as Australia, Austria, the Netherlands, Sweden, Italy, Malaysia, Spain and the United Kingdom, have signed an on-line petition (www.ipetitions.com/petition/leed) posted by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative program, a PEFC member that has forests across Canada and the United States certified to its forest management standard.

Non-profit PEFC is an umbrella organization that endorses national forest certification systems developed through multi-stakeholder processes and tailored to local priorities and conditions that meet PEFC's rigorous requirements. About 543 million acres/220 million hectares are certified to national standards endorsed by PEFC, and none are eligible for the LEED credit. This includes the 377 million acres/152 million hectares – about 68 per cent of the total – located in North America.

Mr. Gunneberg said today that USGBC must recognize the benefits of building with wood if it wants to demonstrate environmental leadership. "This means encouraging the use of wood through LEED by allowing credits for wood certified to all standards recognized by PEFC and FSC, and by increasing the number of credits builders can score for using timber," he said. "To qualify for one LEED credit, wood must comply with 81 individual benchmarks – something no other building material is required to demonstrate."

Buildings are of fundamental importance in the climate change debate as they account for almost 40 per cent of the total carbon dioxide emissions in the United States. Studies estimate that carbon dioxide emissions wood-based buildings are 20 to 50 per cent lower than emissions associated with comparable steel- or concrete-based buildings.

Antonio Brunori, National Secretary of PEFC Italy, told USGBC his organization has been working since 2001 to promote wood from responsibly managed sources as one of the best environmental choices for construction. "If the USGBC wants to demonstrate real leadership it will finally do the right thing and accept all credible forest certification programs, allowing builders and architects choice when it comes to building sustainably," he said.

Some of the certification programs noted that green building rating tools in their countries promote the use of wood by accepting all credible certification programs. "The Green Building Council of Australia made the right decision when it determined that both the FSC and PEFC satisfy the essential criteria identified as necessary to be eligible for its Green Star Timber credit," said Kayt Watts, Chief Executive Officer of the Australia Forestry Standard Ltd. "It's time for the U.S. Green Building Council to do the same."

Further Information

PEFC is the world's largest forest certification system and the certification system of choice for small- and family-forest owners. An international non-profit, non-governmental organization, PEFC is dedicated to promoting Sustainable Forest Management through independent third-party certification. More info: www.pefc.org

Contact

Thorsten Arndt

Head of Communications

PEFC International

Tel: +41 22 799 4540

Email: info@pefc.org

