

More about Paper Certification

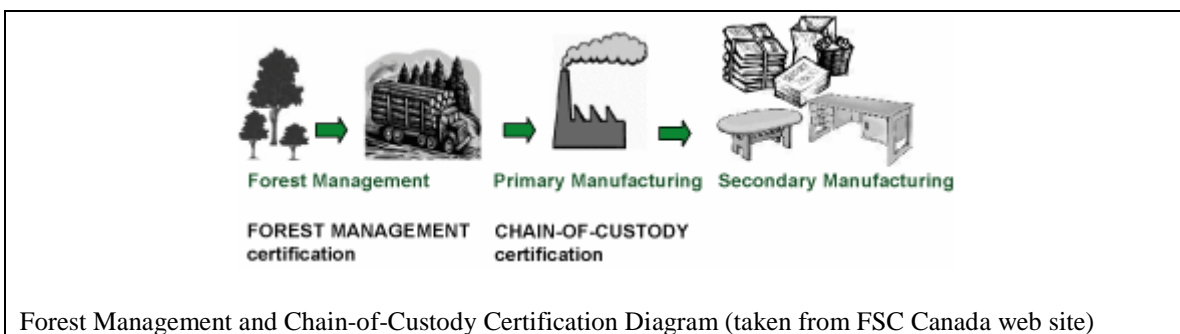
The first step in “green” printing involves guaranteeing the environmental integrity of source papers. Printers must ensure that their papers are not harming forest ecosystems through the loss of biodiversity and the build-up of greenhouse gasses.

Forestry certification systems are the primary means by which printers can guarantee that their papers come from responsible sources. One such system has been developed by the Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC), an international, membership-based, non-profit organization that supports environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests.

Founded in 1993, FSC consists of representatives from environmental groups, the timber industry, the forestry profession, Aboriginal organizations, and community forestry groups. In 2004, the organization’s membership consisted of more than 550 members from 67 countries. The Canadian branch of FSC is FSC Canada (www.fsccanada.org).

As a part of its mandate to support the responsible management of the world’s forests, FSC has developed 10 principles and 57 criteria for forest management. These guarantee the ecological wellbeing of the forest itself, as well as the social and economic prosperity of forest workers and local communities, including Aboriginals. Forestry companies must meet these rigorous environmental and social standards if they wish to be considered a producer “FSC-certified” wood products.

In addition to forest management certification, the FSC has also developed a “chain of custody” certification by which producers and manufacturers all along the supply chain (including printers) can ensure that the final product bearing the FSC logo actually originated from an FSC-certified forest.



FSC chain-of-custody certification begins when a company applies to an FSC accredited auditor,* which evaluates a company on its tracking and handling processes to guarantee that FSC-certified products are not mixed with non-certified products. The chain-of-custody certification process can take up to four to six weeks from assessment to

* A complete list of accredited companies is available on the FSC Canada web site.

certificate and once complete, a company is authorized to use FSC labels on all of its certified products.

FSC is not the only organization that provides a forestry certification system. The International Standard of Standardization (ISO) also certifies forests with its ISO-14001 system. In fact, ISO-14001 and its derivatives surpass the FSC in terms of certified forest areas. In the United States, several large companies passed external verifications against the standards of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI). In addition, two large Canadian companies, Weldwood and Weyerhaeuser, have received certification through the Canadian Standards Association (CSA).

However, certifications by ISO, SFI and CSA do not offer chain of custody systems or product labels, and are generally considered insufficient by environmental groups. FSC remains the only system with a chain of custody process. With endorsements by major international environmental groups such as WWF, Greenpeace, the World Resource Institute, as well as multinational corporations such as The Home Depot and IKEA-International, the World Bank and the International Federation of Building and Wood Workers (IFBWW), FSC continues to be the most widely-respected choice for printers seeking to “go green” in their sourcing of paper products.

A “Green” Printer’s Checklist*

1. Find a reliable source of FSC-certified paper and check the validity of the FSC chain of custody certificate of the supplier. (visit www.fsc-info.org);
2. Request a copy of the FSC-certification from the supplier;
3. Keep in a database the quantities and qualities of paper purchased and the corresponding FSC certification numbers for each job. Produce monthly summaries;
4. Identify critical control points in the printing facility where a mix with non FSC paper is possible during the various steps of the printing process. Develop instructions to minimize these risks, train the operators accordingly and keep records of the training;
5. Ensure that the purchasing department is making references to FSC paper on relevant documentation (purchasing documents need to refer to FSC paper);
6. Suppliers' documentation needs to refer to FSC paper and needs to clearly display the valid FSC certificate number on both delivery documents and the paper packaging;
7. All documentation related to the chain-of-custody must be archived at least 5 years;
8. The FSC logo needs to get approval from the certifier (auditing company) prior to any use.

* Taken from the FSC Canada web site.