



## NEWS RELEASE

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# WEAK STANDARDS UNDERMINE FOREST CERTIFICATION

The credibility of forest certification as a tool to deliver sustainable forest management is at risk from the business-as-usual practices allowed by most certification schemes, according to a major new report launched by FERN<sup>1</sup> today.

*Footsteps in the forest: Current practice and future challenges in forest certification*<sup>2</sup> compares eight forest certification schemes currently in operation, and finds that the majority of schemes are certifying status quo practices in the forestry industry:

- **No independence:** Six out of eight schemes have standards primarily developed by the forestry industry with little or no participation from other stakeholders;
- **No transparency:** Half of the schemes do not make certification reports or standards freely available, allowing no public scrutiny of practices;
- **Rights ignored:** Social issues, specifically land and user rights, are not sufficiently addressed by any of the schemes, although one scheme is well ahead of its competitors.

The report concludes that the **Forest Stewardship Council** (FSC) remains the only credible scheme in operation.

*"Unless these schemes improve and tighten their procedures and practices, forest certification can achieve very little towards improving forest management. Forests are in crisis and certification has been sold as the panacea to all problems. In reality only the FSC label deserves the confidence of consumers as almost all other schemes allow business-as-usual practices to continue. This is de-valuing certification as a whole and needs to be addressed by policy makers who are trying to wish the problem away."* Said Saskia Ozinga, director of FERN.

In addition the report says:

- Forest certification should only be used in countries where forest laws are just and properly enforced. Elsewhere the positive impacts of forest certification are negligible.
- Forest certification is of only limited value in reducing illegal logging.
- Forest certification is fully compatible with WTO rules.

The eight schemes examined in the report are Canadian Standard's Association (CSA), Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), Australian Forestry Standard (AFS), Sistema Brasileiro de Certificação Florestal (CERFLOR), Certificación Forestal (Certfor) and the Malaysian Timber Certification Council (MTCC). *Footprints in the Forest updates* and expands on FERN's 2001 report *Behind the Logo* that compared four biggest certification schemes then in operation.

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<sup>1</sup> FERN promotes the conservation and sustainable use of forests and respect for the rights of forest peoples in the policies and practice of the European Union.

<sup>2</sup> The report and full case studies are available at [www.fern.org](http://www.fern.org)