

LOOPHOLES IN THE SFI

Forest certification should help consumers choose wood and paper products from forests managed to exemplary environmental and social standards. Yet consumers can *not* trust that *Sustainable Forestry Initiative* products come from well-managed forests. The SFI is still the product of its creators—the timber industry’s American Forest & Paper Association.

The SFI does not adequately protect old growth, endangered forests, water quality, wildlife, and other environmental values. The SFI also certifies business-as-usual logging, including massive clearcuts and excessive herbicide spraying, and fails to restore forests degraded by past logging. Large loopholes also exist in the SFI’s product label and wood procurement policies.

SFI = Weak or Missing Protections For Imperiled Forests and Wildlife

- Virtually no protection required for old growth forests, including on companies’ own lands. No protection for roadless wildlands, biodiversity hotspots, and many other endangered forests in North America, where SFI companies are most active. Unclear and incomplete protections for such forests in the tropics.
- No protection for some important categories of imperiled fish, wildlife, and plants. Companies are certified despite destroying threatened and endangered species’ habitats. No requirement to help restore habitats for endangered wildlife, to enable the species’ recovery.
- Natural forests are not protected from being reduced to tree plantations that lack biological diversity. Restoration not required for any portion of existing plantations.
- Natural forests are not protected from being replaced by subdivisions and non-forest land uses.

SFI = Weak Environmental Protections

- Inadequate requirements and implementation to manage for natural forest characteristics, including those needed for wildlife and ecosystem processes. For example, there is no clear requirement to maintain a natural diversity of tree species and tree age classes.
- Inadequate protection for water quality in states with weak “best management practices.”
- Toxic chemicals can be repeatedly applied across entire forests. It is unclear if water sources, neighboring landowners, and rare plants are adequately protected from chemicals.
- Entire forests can be rapidly logged by clearcuts each averaging 116 football fields in size.
- No prohibition on using genetically modified trees and other GMOs.
- No concrete protection measures to guard against illegal logging in countries like Indonesia. Most forms of illegal logging outside North America also not covered.
- Public lands are certified under logging-oriented standards designed for private industry lands, despite the need for more conservation-oriented management of public forests.
- No requirement to grow mature trees, to reduce the frequency of logging and its impacts while improving timber quality and yields.

- Inadequate requirements for verifying on-the-ground compliance with forestry and environmental laws.

SFI = Fox Guarding the Henhouse

- The SFI was created by the timber industry's American Forest & Paper Association. AF&PA companies and industry allies comprise the majority of the SFI's board. All board members were appointed by the AF&PA or its appointees to the board. Some board members also receive large payments from SFI certified companies.
- The SFI is funded primarily by the timber companies it certifies.
- Timber companies can have excessive influence over the certification process, including by altering the standards for their assessments.

SFI = Misleading Marketing

- The SFI certifies some of North America's most environmentally destructive timber companies and forestry practices.
- 100% of the wood in any SFI labeled product line can be from forests that aren't SFI certified.
- 100% of the wood in products with SFI "fiber sourcing" labels can be from virtually any source.
- Wood from most types of illegal and other controversial non-certified logging can be used in any product with SFI labels.
- Chain of custody monitoring is not required for all SFI products. Verification of suppliers' documentation and wood supplies' geographic origins also not required for any SFI products.

SFI = Weak Social and Economic Standards

- Inadequate protections for indigenous peoples' rights
- No requirement to pay competitive wages or reinvest in local communities.
- No requirement for verification of compliance with social laws and policies.

SFI = Weak Certification Process

- Many SFI standards only require companies to develop programs and policies, and do not require the plans to achieve any particular outcomes.
- No requirement for certifiers to consult with independent scientists, conservationists, and communities during audits.
- Independent peer review of certification reports and decisions not consistently required.

Other loopholes in the SFI's forestry, label, and chain of custody standards also exist.

Alliance for Credible Forest Certification

www.dontbuysfi.com