



FSC Chain of Custody Accreditation

MAY 2009

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is an international organisation with a strong certification framework that protects forests and ensures that timber and timber products are derived from forests that are managed responsibly. This means that forest habitats around the world are protected as well as the rights of indigenous peoples and forest workers.

FSC certified wood products are tracked from forest floor to shop shelves and only products with a Chain of Custody (CoC) certificate are able to display the well-recognised tree and tick mark FSC Logo. The FSC logo can be seen on a wide range of products from toilet tissue to garden furniture, as well as office paper and books. Leading environmental groups support FSC including WWF and Greenpeace.

Who Needs Chain of custody Certification?

Any business or organisation that takes legal ownership and is invoicing for a product at any stage leading to a product carrying a FSC logo or a FSC claim requires FSC CoC certification.

FSC CoC tracks products from the forest through all stages of processing and distribution. FSC labelling includes recycled materials where the CoC tracks products from the reclamation plant through the chain.

Small enterprises may have the capacity to join a group of operations and apply for group CoC certification. This is especially beneficial if the investment in becoming certified would seem cost-prohibitive.

Box 1. Steps to Certification

1. Make contact with a number of FSC accredited certification bodies to obtain quotations on the cost and time required for the certification process. The certification body will need some basic information about your operation and will provide you with information about the requirements you need to fulfil for FSC certification.
2. It is your choice as to which certification body you would like to work with. It is a good idea to obtain a couple of quotes. Once you have made your decision you sign an agreement with your chosen certification body.
3. A certification audit takes place to assess your company for certification.
4. A certification decision is made.
5. If the certification decision is positive, you receive your FSC certificate. If the audit revealed that your operation is not yet in full compliance with FSC requirements you can apply for further audits after you have made the changes suggested in the certification report.

Details of certifying bodies are available at:
www.irishforestcertification.com/links/IFCI.html
or www.accreditation-services.com/Certification-Bodies.htm

Larger companies operating at multiple locations may choose to apply for multi-site CoC certification, subject to certain conditions.

FSC project certification can be advantageous in having unique or complex products FSC certified without each of the participants in the project having to become certified. Project certification is orientated towards building projects.

Exceptions to Chain of Custody

The following operations do not need Chain of Custody:

- Companies who pack non-forest products into cartons produced by FSC certified printers, even though they may buy the cartons and sell on the packed products to the retailer.
- Outsourced companies who do not take ownership of the products.
- Shippers or transport companies handling goods owned by a CoC company.

The Chain of Custody Standard FSC-STD-40-004

The requirements for CoC certification are detailed in the CoC standard FSC-STD-40-004 which is available to download from www.fsc.org (see page 4).

The standard defines the requirements under a CoC management system and includes:

1. Quality management: responsibilities, procedures and records
2. Product scope: definition of product groups and outsourcing arrangements
3. Material sourcing: material specifications
4. Material receipt and storage: identification and segregation

5. Production control: control of quantities and determination of FSC claims
6. Sales & delivery: invoicing and transport documentation
7. Labelling: application of FSC labels on-product and labelling thresholds

Once these elements are successfully implemented, organisations can gain CoC certification to sell and label products as FSC 100%, FSC Mixed, or FSC Recycled.

Control Systems

There are three types of control systems; transfer control, credit system, and percentage system.

Transfer system

The transfer system is suitable for trading activities relating to finished products, and for the production of FSC Pure product groups. The lowest FSC claim for the product group is carried forward e.g. with an input of mixed claims of FSC Pure and FSC Mixed 70% the FSC Claim is FSC Mixed 70%.

Use the transfer system if:

- You are using 100% FSC wood as a raw material
- You are using only FSC Mixed Sources raw material (from credit or percentage system)
 - You are using 100% verified post-consumer reclaimed material
- You are trading in, or packing, finished products
 - You are combining within a single product, materials covered by different FSC claims but do not want to make complex calculations – e.g. if you produce books with FSC Mixed Sources text, FSC Recycled cover and FSC 100% endpapers, you can simply use the FSC Mixed Sources label as ‘lowest common denominator’



FSC Label Examples

There are three types of FSC label; FSC 100%, FSC MIXED SOURCES, and FSC RECYCLED.

FSC 100% label



For products where 100% of the fibre comes from an FSC-certified forest. Products with the FSC Claim of 'FSC Pure' qualify for this label.

FSC MIXED SOURCES label

Identifies products that are manufactured using a mixture of FSC-certified material with recycled fibre, and/or Controlled fibre. Products with the FSC Claim of 'FSC Mixed Credit' or 'FSC Mixed XX%', where XX% is equal to or higher than 50% (70% as of Jan. 1, 2010) qualify for this label.



Product groups from well-managed forests, controlled sources and recycled wood or fibre.



Product groups from well-managed forests, controlled sources and recycled wood or fibre including percentage of post-consumer recycled material.



Product group from well-managed forests and other controlled sources.



Product groups from well-managed forests and recycled wood or fibre



Product groups from well-managed forests and recycled wood or fibre including percentage of post-consumer recycled material.

FSC RECYCLED label



This label represents where 100% of the fibre is recycled.

For more details, see Part II, section 7 of the Standard FSC-STD-40-004

Percentage System

Under the percentage system all outputs can be sold with a percentage claim that corresponds to the proportion of input material in comparison to the total input, e.g., if the input percentage is 80%, then all (100%) of the outputs may be sold with an 'FSC Mixed 80%' claim

For the product to be sold with the FSC Mixed Sources label under the percentage system it must contain a minimum of 70% FSC-certified/post consumer reclaimed input material. If this cannot be achieved the FSC Mixed Credit claim would be more suitable (if there is sufficient credit available on the credit account for the product group).

Any material that is not FSC Certified or post-consumer reclaimed must be controlled wood or in the case

of FSC Recycled, pre-consumer reclaimed material. See page 4 for information on the Controlled Wood standard.

Use this if

- You can achieve a rolling average input of 70% FSC (or FSC + post consumer reclaimed) material.
- You want to be able to label, or claim, all your production in a product group as FSC Mixed Sources.
- For more details, see Part II, Section 8 of the Standard.

Credit system

The credit system works like a bank account. FSC credits accumulate based on the quantity of FSC certified and/or post consumer inputs. The quantity of products sold (output) with FSC Credit claims cannot exceed the input credit balance. The remainder of output material (i.e. without an FSC Credit claim) cannot carry an FSC label.



As with the percentage system, input material in a product group that is not FSC Certified or post-consumer reclaimed must be controlled wood or in the case of FSC Recycled, pre-consumer reclaimed material. See page 4 for information on the Controlled Wood Standard.

Use the credit system if

- You cannot obtain enough FSC (or FSC plus post-consumer) material to reach the 70% labelling threshold
- Not all your customers want an FSC labelled product
- For more details, see Part II, Section 9 of the Standard.

NOTE: with this system, you can only label a volume of your product group equal to the amount of FSC (or FSC + post consumer recycled) input.

What is FSC Controlled Wood?

FSC Controlled Wood must meet the following basic requirements: 1) the origin of the material is known; and 2) the wood must not come from sources classified as controversial by the FSC. In particular, the Controlled Wood standard (FSC STD 40 005) specifies the following five unacceptable origins:

- Illegally harvested wood
- Wood harvested in violation of traditional and civil rights
- Wood harvested in forests in which High Conservation Values (defined as) are threatened through management activities
- Wood harvested from conversion of natural forests
- Wood harvested from areas where genetically modified trees are planted

What is an FSC claim?

An FSC claim is made on invoices for FSC-certified material or FSC Controlled Wood that specifies the material category and, for FSC Mixed and FSC Recycled products, an associated percentage claim or

credit claim. The appropriate FSC claims for each product group and Chain of Custody control system are presented below:

Product groups	Control system	FSC claim
Pure	Transfer system	FSC Pure
Mixed	Percentage system	FSC Mixed x%
Mixed	Credit system	FSC Mixed Credit
Recycled	Percentage system	FSC Recycled x%
Recycled	Credit system	FSC Recycled Credit
Controlled Wood	Transfer system	FSC Controlled Wood

Useful Resources:

All of the documents listed below are available to download from the FSC international website at www.fsc.org/resourcescenter.html. Alternatively contact FSC Ireland at the address below.

Chain of Custody Standard - FSC STD 40 004

Controlled Wood Standard (company evaluation) - FSC STD 40 005

Controlled Wood Briefing Sheet - [Controlled_Wood_friendly_user_guide.pdf](#)

Group CoC Policy - FSC POL 40 002

Multi-site CoC - FSC STD 40 003

Project CoC - FSC STD 40 006

Certifying bodies -

www.irishforestcertification.com/linksIFCI.html or www.accreditation-services.com/CertificationBodies.htm

FSC Ireland website: www.irishforestcertification.com

FSC International website: www.fsc.org