



# Forest Certification Issues & Opportunities

## Forest Certification Systems

It was in the context of global deforestation—particularly tropical deforestation—and “international deadlock” regarding sustainable forestry that forest certification systems such as the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) were created (Pattberg, 2005: 362). Cashore et al. believe that “The advent of forest certification systems ushered in a new breed of sustainable development institutions outside of traditional governmental processes” (2004: 4). “Non-state market-driven governance systems” such as FSC, the Marine Stewardship Council, and Fair Trade (e.g., coffee, fruit, and cotton) are fundamentally different from regulatory systems, command and control systems, and other labeling systems such as EPA’s Energy Star or USDA’s Organic certification regimes.

The main attributes of “non-state market-driven governance systems” are:

- The role of the state: State sovereignty is not used to force compliance.
- The role of the market: Certified products are demanded by purchasers further down the supply chain
- The role of stakeholders: Authority is granted through an internal evaluative process.
- Enforcement: Compliance must be verified through evaluation (Cashore et al., 2004: 20).

The **American Forest Foundation’s “American Tree Farm System”** is the oldest forest certification system in the world. The American Tree Farm System has certified 29 million acres—about 5.2 percent of America’s total forested area<sup>1</sup>. Although the American Tree Farm System is the oldest forest certification system in the world, FSC is probably the most recognized certification system among green building proponents, environmental groups, and the general public. Formed in the early 1990s, FSC established ten principles (e.g., Indigenous People’s Rights, Environmental Impact) and over 50 criteria (e.g., maintenance of wide riparian zones) for sustainable forest management. FSC’s certification system creates a set of carrots (e.g., market access, the ‘promise of premiums’) and sticks (e.g., boycotts and negative publicity) throughout the supply chain that are supposed to drive the market toward sustainable forestry practices. Cashore et al. say that “The supply chain is the ultimate source of authority” (2004: 25) in the sense that market actors along the supply chain decide whether they are willing to support (e.g., pay the cost of the audit) and operate under the rules and procedures of FSC.

1 <http://www.treefarmssystem.org/cms/pages/29.html>

FSC does not perform audits for certification but rather accredits organizations such as SmartWood and Scientific Certification Systems to verify that these criteria are being met. Certifiers then issue a *Forest Management Certificate* and/or a *Chain-of-Custody Certificate*, depending on the context. An FSC label allows consumers to know that the forest product they purchase comes from sustainably managed forests. As of October, 2006, 258,667,758 acres of forests (about 2 percent of the world's forested area) have been certified around the globe according to FSC standards.<sup>2</sup> Over 57.5 million of those acres are in North America.

FSC has received strong support from environmental groups such as the National Wildlife Federation and institutional purchasers such as Ikea, but it has been received with skepticism, resistance and hostility from the forest products industry (Cashore et al., 2004; Hrabovsky and Armstrong, 2005). In a comparative study of forest certification choices in Canada, the United States and Germany, Cashore et al. found that “firms prefer FSC certification because they perceive it to confer environmental benefits, while those choosing another certification scheme do so on economic grounds” (2003: 53).

Several rival certification systems have been developed. FSC's main competitors include:

- **American Forest and Paper Association's "Sustainable Forestry Initiative" (SFI):** According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the AF&PA represents 95% of industrial forestland in the United States. The SFI has certified over 150,000,000 acres—or 1.5 percent of the world's total forested area—in the United States and Canada.<sup>3</sup>
- **Canadian Standards Association (CSA):** About 171,019,847 acres—around 1.8 percent of the world's total forested area—certified in Canada.<sup>4</sup>
- **Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (PEFC):** A European initiative that has certified 338,959,871 acres—approximately 3.5 percent of the world's total forested area—globally.<sup>5</sup>

Taken together, these various certification schemes covered about 10 percent of the world's forested area as of 2006.

On paper, FSC and its main competitor SFI, look roughly the same. However, the chief difference between FSC and other systems cited in the literature is that many of FSC's management rules are mandatory, 'on-the-ground' changes, while the other systems originally offered non-mandatory 'procedural' guidance (Cashore et al., 2004: 17). For example, an examination of changes that 129 SmartWood-certified operations in 21 countries were required to make found that, on average, fifteen different environmental, social, economic, forest management and system issues were required.

2 [http://www.fsc.org/en/whats\\_new/fsc\\_certificates/maps](http://www.fsc.org/en/whats_new/fsc_certificates/maps)

3 <http://www.aboutsfi.org/about.asp>

4 [http://www.csa-international.org/product\\_areas/forest\\_products\\_marking/certification\\_statistics/CSA\\_Stats.pdf](http://www.csa-international.org/product_areas/forest_products_marking/certification_statistics/CSA_Stats.pdf)

5 <http://register.pefc.cz/statistics.asp>

The most frequently cited issues needing attention were: worker safety, training, communication and conflict resolution with stakeholders, aquatic and riparian areas, sensitive sites and high conservation value forests, threatened and endangered species, management plans, monitoring, chain of custody, and inventory (Newsom and Hewitt, 2005: 2).

**Table 1. Nations with the Most Certified Acres (2000)**

Country	Acres Certified by All Systems	% of World's Certified Acres	% of Nation's Forests Certified	% of Forests FSC Certified
United States	64,566,165	32%	11.6%	10.9%
Finland	54,116,079	27%	99.8%	0%
Sweden	27,594,258	14%	41.2%	88.4%
Norway	13,837,901	7%	63.2%	0%
Canada	10,773,795	5%	1.8%	.7%
Germany	8,011,156	4%	30.2%	6.8%
Poland	6,778,101	3%	30.3%	100%
United Kingdom	2,367,270	1%	34.3%	100%
Total	188,044,725	94%		

Source: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2001. Global Forest Resources Assessment 2000; retrieved from WRI's EarthTrends portal.

To date, North America and Europe have been the regions where certification has been “the most debated, supported, and institutionalized” (Cashore et al., 2004: 4). In 2000 (the last period for which numbers are available for all forest certification systems by country from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), the United States, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Canada, Germany, Poland, and the United Kingdom accounted for 94 percent of all certified forests in the world (Table 1). However, except for the United Kingdom (100 percent FSC), Poland (100 percent FSC), and Sweden (88 percent FSC), most of the acres in these countries were certified either through SFI or PEFC in 2000. From 2000 to 2006, the United States, Canada, Germany and Poland each increased their FSC-certified acres by over 100 percent.

Hrabovsky and Armstrong suggest that certification has not slowed down tropical deforestation because poverty, subsistence agriculture, and dependence on wood for fuel drive logging operations (2005: 33). However, significant forest certification headway was made from 2000 to 2004 as FSC acreage around the world doubled. In that period, Chile, Venezuela, Argentina, Uruguay, Columbia, Uganda, Ecuador, Swaziland, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Namibia each had forests certified by FSC for the first time. Brazil's acreage under FSC more than doubled from 2000 to 2004 (WRI EarthTrends portal).

## Perspectives of Manufacturers and Landowners

The spread of forest certification systems, and especially FSC, has been hampered by the perspectives of manufacturers, landowners, and consumers. The literature on the perspectives of landowners and wood manufacturers about certification systems emphasizes:

1. Resistance and hostility toward FSC
2. Both a lack of consumer demand for certified wood products and an inadequate supply of certified wood products available
3. The absence of price premiums for certified wood products
4. A lack of awareness about certification systems among manufacturers and land owners

Several studies have emphasized that, although the area of certified forest land around the world has grown, FSC has not received much support from American forest products companies. American companies have instead focused “massive efforts and resources on creating and modifying the industry and landowner alternative programs” (Cashore et al., 2004: 7; Vlosky and Ozanne, 1998). In a study of primary wood manufacturers in Wisconsin, Hubbard and Bowe report that certified forest products were not perceived favorably by a majority of their respondents. Some respondents felt that certification will disappear over time. Others felt that extra costs, administrative hardships, and the fact that many customers are too disconnected from the sources of their forest products to understand sustainable forestry were barriers to the spread of certification systems. Many respondents felt they were already responsibly manufacturing and sourcing wood (2005: 35).

While consumers generally do not trust the forest products industry to certify itself, landowners in one study trusted certifying organizations least. Therefore, authors recommend that certification programs attempting to reach landowners should work with landowner groups and professional foresters—groups that landowners do trust (Newsom et al., 2003: 18).

According to one study, the presence of an ‘eco-label’ ranked 18th out of 19 important features of a lumber product according to American hardwood exporters (Hrabovsky and Armstrong, 2005: 32).

In a survey of American hardwood exporters, Hrabovsky and Armstrong found that only 26 percent of companies received requests for certified hardwood. These requests, however, represented less than 5 percent of the companies’ total export business. According to these exporters, the market for certified wood is centered in Northern Europe, especially the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium. China is increasingly manufacturing primary certified wood for export back to the United States, Europe, and other regions (2005: 28). Eighty-eight percent of the companies reporting requests for certified hardwood say that there is not an adequate supply available (Hrabovsky and Armstrong, 2005: 31). However, large companies that own their own forests report having no problem paying for certification, dealing with chain of custody documentation, or supply (Hrabovsky and Armstrong, 2005: 28).

The willingness of the forest products industry to pay a premium for certified products is miniscule to non-existent. Likewise, the studies cited here indicate that the forest products industry does not believe that customers are willing to pay a premium (Cashore et al., 2005; Cashore et al., 2004; Hrabovsky and Armstrong, 2005; Hubbard and Bowe, 2005; Newsom et al., 2003; Sedjo and Swallow, 1999; Vlosky et al., 2005; Vlosky and Ozanne, 1998). Hubbard and Bowe found that primary wood manufacturers in Wisconsin who became chain-of-custody certified did not receive price premiums on certified product offerings, increased market share and access, or operational and managerial improvements in their organizations. However, some of the organizations did say that they had

gained new knowledge and perceived enhanced credibility with the public by becoming certified (2005: 33). According to Sedjo and Swallow:

“...if demand for certified wood is small relative to overall demand, if the costs of certification are significant, and if the amount of new demand created by certification is modest, then the market is less likely to generate a price premium for the certified product, even if there are substantial numbers of consumers willing to pay a premium” (1999: 15).

Hubbard and Bowe found that the majority of Wisconsin’s primary wood products manufacturers are not familiar with chain of custody certification (2005: 35). In a study of non-industrial land owners in Alabama, Newsom et al. found that 78% (N = 352) had not heard of certification or were not sure what it was (2003: 5).

## Consumer Perspectives

Three main findings emerge from research into consumer’s perspectives on certified forest products:

1. Consumers do not trust the forest products industry to make accurate environmental claims
2. There is a significant difference between consumer’s attitudes toward the purchase of certified forest products and their actual purchasing behavior
3. There are niche markets for certified forest products, particularly in Europe and among liberal females in America.

As concern about environmental problems mount, “industry” is seen as having weak environmental credentials and is not trusted to monitor their activities (Ozanne and Vlosky, 2003: 13). The case for industry driven certification systems is further undermined by the fact that manufacturers expressed the least support for forest certification when compared to consumers, home center retailers, building contractors, and architects (Vlosky and Ozanne, 1998: 25).

Consumer willingness to pay more for environmentally friendly products is largely hypothetical (Hrabovsky and Armstrong, 2005: 34). For example, in a study comparing purchases of eco-labeled pencils and regular pencils on two college campuses, Anderson et al., found that pencil consumers “were largely indifferent to the presence of an eco-label. However, when the price premium for eco-labeled pencils was increased, more and more consumers purchased the cheaper non-labeled pencils” (2005: 19).

Anderson and Hansen (2004) found that when the price for virtually identical eco-labeled and non-labeled plywood products was equal, consumers purchased the eco-labeled product by about a 2:1 ratio. The ratio was reversed when the price of the eco-labeled product was raised by 2 percent.

Forsyth et al. (1997) interviewed 150 people outside home improvement stores in British Columbia and asked how important 11 product features were in their purchase of wood products. The three environmental features listed—environmental impact, certification, and the image of the retail-

er—ranked eighth, ninth, and tenth, respectively. Ozanne and Vlosky cite Home Depot and Collins Pine in the United States and J. Jainsbury in the United Kingdom as saying they have not seen significant demand from their customer base for certified products (2003: 14).

In 2000, Ozanne and Vlosky replicated a study of consumer understanding of certification that they had conducted in 1995. Their 2000 results indicated that overall consumer understanding of the concept of certification has increased since 1995. However, self-reported purchases of certified forest products declined since 1995 and the “perceived efficacy of certification, at least in tropical forests, is now questioned by consumers” (2003: 18).

As previously noted, the export market for certified forest products is mostly in Northern Europe, especially the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium. Southern Europe, Japan, Canada and China were also identified as markets (Hrabovsky and Armstrong, 2005: 31). However, the United States is the world’s largest producer and consumer of forest products and the successful development of a certified forest products market in the United States will require increased ‘buy-in’ from American manufacturers and consumers. Ozanne and Smith (1998) identified one consumer segment of approximately 25 million politically liberal, Democratic, well-educated female Americans that had very positive attitudes towards certified forest products and indicated that they would be likely to seek out such products.

The literature on forest certification indicates that raising awareness and increasing education for consumers, landowners, and manufacturers is crucial. In particular, proponents of forest certification need to do a better job of communicating the social, ecological and economic benefits of certification to consumers, landowners and manufacturers.

## Certification in Vermont

To date, forest certification has not caught on in Vermont. Approximately 3.9 percent of Vermont’s timberland is FSC-certified (Table 2). Vermont accounts for approximately 2.8 percent of the nation’s FSC certified forests. This is certainly a slight underestimate, as SmartWood’s database does not allow them to track exactly how much land is certified in each state. Their data is tied specifically to their client’s primary location (which usually means where their offices are). For example, it would be difficult to know how much land a client with a central office in New Hampshire has in Vermont.

Nevertheless, the small area of FSC certified forests in Vermont presents a challenge for ensuring an adequate supply of local, certified wood. According to Smartwood’s Forest Management Public Summary for Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, “very limited harvesting activity has occurred” since the National Park Service acquired the property (2005: 6). According to the National Wildlife Federation, Essex Timber Company forests are relatively young and will require light harvesting for a number of years as the forest ages. In their 2004 Annual Report, VFF identified a number of issues impacting their certified landowners: “the VFF certified pool of well managed forests is very limited in acreage and lacks an economy of scale... Forest landowners have infrequent harvests and these harvests often generate low volumes and a variety of species that require aggregation and sorting to improve economic value.” The extent of Fountain Forestry Incorporated’s (FFI)



Table 2. FSC Certification in Vermont

Organization Name	Area (acres)	Cumulative %
Essex Timber Company, LLC	85,768	49.6%
The Forest Conservancy	27,752	16.0%
The Forestland Group, LLC	23,891	13.8%
Fountain Forestry Incorporated	13,278	7.7%
Meadowsend Timberlands Limited/The Ecosystem Management Company	12,806	7.4%
Vermont Family Forests	5,407	3.1%
New England Forestry Foundation	2,540	1.5%
Redstart Forestry	995	.6%
Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park	555	.3%
Total	172,992	100%
As % of Total VT Timberland	3.9%	

Source: Kara Wires, Forestry Technical Coordinator, US Region, SmartWood

harvest of certified wood is not clear from their website. Finally, Atlas Timberlands and Chris W. Olson Forestry were FSC certified as recently as 2004 but their certifications have since lapsed.

Data sources on non-FSC certified forests in Vermont are limited. According to Kathleen Wanner of the Vermont Wood Manufacturers Association—the administrator of the American Tree Farm System in Vermont—there are between 800-950 Tree Farms in Vermont with about a half-million acres that could possibly be certified. However, the Tree Farm database is out of date and Wanner was not sure which farms were actually certified. 5,000 acres (.1 percent of Vermont's total forested area) are enrolled in SFI—a requirement for AF&PA membership—in Vermont, but these acres are not third-party certified.

Vermont now has 47 FSC chain-of-custody certified forest products businesses (27 through Vermont WoodNet), and several more that would stock certified material on request (Table 3).

Table 3. Vermont Businesses with FSC Chain-of-Custody Certification

Furniture	Architectural Millwork	Windows/Doors	Plywood/Panels	Lumber
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Beeken Parsons</li> <li>-Charles Shackleton Furniture</li> <li>-ClearLake Furniture</li> <li>-Cotswold Furniture</li> <li>-The Guild of Vermont Furniture Makers</li> <li>-Vermont WoodNet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Amoskeag Woodworking</li> <li>-Birdseye Building Company</li> <li>-Lucarelli Woodworks</li> <li>-Northfield Wood Products Company, Inc.</li> <li>-Shelburne Fine Woodworking</li> <li>-Stark Mountain Woodworking</li> <li>-TimberKnee</li> <li>-Vermont WoodNet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Green Mountain Window &amp; Door Company</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Vermont Plywood LLC</li> </ul>	<p><i>Hardwood:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Allard Lumber</li> <li>-Champlain Hardwoods</li> <li>-Gagnon Lumber, Inc.</li> <li>-S.A.W. Mill</li> <li>-Vermont Wild-Woods</li> <li>-Currier Farms Forest Products</li> </ul> <p><i>Softwood:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-S.A.W. Mill</li> <li>-Currier Farms Forest Products</li> </ul> <p><i>Siding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-S.A.W. Mill</li> </ul> <p><i>Flooring</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-S.A.W. Mill</li> <li>-TimberKnee</li> <li>-Currier Farms Forest Products</li> </ul>
<p><i>Upon Request:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Maple Corner Woodworks</li> <li>-Pompanoosuc Mills</li> <li>-Vermont Precision Woodworks</li> </ul>		<p><i>Upon Request:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-H. Hirschmann Ltd.</li> <li>-The Woodstone Company</li> </ul>		<p><i>Upon Request:</i></p> <p><i>Softwood</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Gagnon Lumber, Inc.</li> <li>-Baker Lumber</li> </ul> <p><i>Siding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Baker Lumber</li> <li>-Currier Farms Forest Products</li> </ul> <p><i>Flooring</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Baker Lumber</li> <li>-Northfield Wood Products</li> <li>-Lathrop's Maple Supply</li> <li>-Rex Lumber</li> </ul>

Note: Villanti & Sons, Printers, Inc. in Milton also carries FSC paper.

## Current Use Program

Vermont's "Current Use" Program, administered by the Vermont Department of Taxes, was designed to "keep agricultural and forest land in production, and to slow development of these lands." The ap-



peal of the Current Use Program is that taxation is assessed on the “use value” or productive value of agricultural or forest land rather than on the value for potential development. In 2005, the Department of Taxes calculates that the Current Use Program saved participants \$32,980,570 in taxes. To be enrolled in the program a parcel of land needs to consist of “At least 25 contiguous acres of forest land managed according to both state standards and a forest management plan approved by the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation.” If development (e.g., a housing subdivision) occurs on the parcel a land use change tax of 10 to 20 percent of the fair market value of the developed portion is assessed. Forest land not managed according to the forest management plan is penalized and the land owner must then pay the land use change tax for that portion of forest, and the entire plot of land becomes ineligible for the Current Use Program for five years.

In contrast to the small amount of forest land certified in Vermont, 13,677 parcels of land—1,995,646 acres—are enrolled in the Current Use Program. 1,483,937 acres of the acres enrolled in the program are forest land. This amount is equal to 32 percent of all of Vermont’s forested acreage. However, the standards for the Current Use program and FSC certification are said to differ “Hugely. On a scale of 1 to 10, it’s 10,” according to an interviewee knowledgeable about the standards for both the Current Use program and FSC certification. A Vermont county forester concurs, “The minimum requirements for the current use program, the template that’s available for landowners to fill out for the current use program, is not comparable at all with the standard set by FSC.”

## VSJF Sustainable Forestry Initiatives

Since 1997, VSJF has devoted significant funding to the development of an in-state market for Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified Vermont forest products. FSC certification ensures responsible forest management and promises that the chain-of-custody from forest to consumer is unbroken. To increase the supply of FSC-certified wood, VSJF worked with Vermont Family Forests and the National Wildlife Federation, to establish the “Vermont Family Forestry Partnership,” a multi-year effort to develop a community forestry organization, certify forests, and promote the manufacture and sale of certified forest products.

A \$20,000 grant was recently made to Redstart Forestry, a consulting forestry firm based in Corinth. Redstart aims to certify 1,100 acres and develop a management plan for its clients that will expand participation by landowners in the emerging certified forest products market. This grant will enable Redstart to show how consulting foresters can work with landowners to aggregate small parcels of land into a certified pool, from which customers seeking certified wood can draw for their green building projects.

On the demand side, VSJF initiated the Cornerstone Project, a ‘buy local’ campaign that connects institutional purchasers like Middlebury College, the State of Vermont and UVM with Vermont craftspeople. VSJF provided a vital link between supply and demand through Cornerstone Forest Products Coordinators Dan Davis (now owner of Vermont Plywood) and Doug Patterson. VSJF has also granted funding to Vermont Builds Greener, an initiative that developed a Vermont standard for residential construction now being used as a model for green building in the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System®. The VBG Scorecard promotes certified wood use, energy efficiency and reduced ecological footprints for the burgeoning green

building market.

One key element of the Cornerstone approach is building recognition of Vermont companies in the competitive landscape. The job of finding Vermont-made wood products for construction and building projects was made easier with the release of the *Vermont Wood Products Resource Manual*. The Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund (VSJF) and the Vermont Wood Manufacturers Association (VWMA) teamed up to produce this comprehensive, user-friendly guide for architects, builders and institutional purchasers throughout New England.

The *Resource Manual* gleams with sleek photos of everything from lustrous pine conference tables to graceful maple staircases and contains detailed information for well over 50 Vermont wood products manufacturers. The *Resource Manual* highlights Vermont wood products manufacturers that sell or are capable of selling to institutional or large volume buyers and has been mailed to over 700 architects, builders, and institutional purchasers throughout New England. It's also intended to help building professionals source FSC certified products for the growing number of LEED® building projects underway in the region.

## Opportunities

The combination of certified forest products and a buy local campaign theoretically provide new opportunities for the sustainability of Vermont's forests and forest products sector. However, the small area of FSC certified forests in Vermont presents a challenge for ensuring an adequate supply of local, certified wood. VSJF recently interviewed 30 chain-of-custody certified businesses and other Vermonters knowledgeable about issues surrounding forest certification. To expand the local supply of certified wood, the comments of interviewees suggest that proponents of certification need to:

- 1) Clarify and effectively communicate the benefits of certification to landowners and the general public;
- 2) Use consulting foresters to educate landowners;
- 3) Continue to build certification systems in Vermont;
- 4) Reduce the costs for landowners to certify their land;
- 5) Connect certification with buy local campaigns.

### 1) Communicate the Benefits

Most interviewees recognized the benefits of certification as consisting of healthy forests and sustainable timber production. However, the knowledge of land owners and the general public was questioned: "Say 'certification' to somebody- what does it mean? When it's organic food they know what it means. But when you say organic forestry, basically, they are clueless. I think we need to spend a lot more time in crafting the Vermont message of organic forestry."

Some interviewees believe that better visual presentations (e.g., DVDs, demonstrations, pilot projects) of projects that are "truly Vermont from stump to final delivery" can educate landowners and the general public about the benefits of certification.

Clear information on the costs and benefits of certification coming from a variety of sources in a variety of mediums can reduce uncertainty surrounding certification.

## 2) Use Consulting Foresters to Educate Landowners

A consulting forester feels that “certification just isn’t enough in the public consciousness to have a lot of impact here.” He believes that consulting foresters need to be engaged to encourage certification: “Most of the land in the state is broken up into small pieces. There are clients just like ours. The trusting relationships that those people have regarding their land are with their consulting foresters. So, unless there’s a real groundswell where they are pushing the consulting foresters to get involved, the message will have to come from the consultants.”

In December 2005, VSJF made a \$20,000 grant to Redstart Forestry. Redstart aims to certify 1,100 acres and develop a management plan for its clients that will expand participation by landowners in the emerging certified forest products market. This grant will enable Redstart to show how consulting foresters can work with landowners to aggregate small parcels of land into a certified pool, from which customers seeking certified wood can draw for their green building projects. Getting the state of Vermont to certify some state forest lands to raise recognition levels was also suggested as an option.

## 3) Continue to Build Certification Systems

Thinking systematically about FSC certification in Vermont means laying the groundwork so that landowners can be positioned to meet demand as the green building movement grows. The model that Redstart Forestry has created is “just to keep it really simple at first but make it so that it can grow fast. Because we can’t push it with 200 land owners by telling them there’s a market for the wood because there isn’t. But if we have the systems in place we can just flick a switch and add 100 or 200 clients when the market comes around, then I think we’ll be meeting everyone’s objectives that way.”

## 4) Bring the Cost of Certification Down

The cost of certification can be brought down by advocating group certification (e.g., as done by VFF and the plan proposed by Redstart Forestry). A report from the Rainforest Alliance states that the “majority of the group certifications fall in the \$200 to \$300 USD per owner range” rather than over \$1,000 for individual certification (Smith, 2002: 10).

## 5) Connect Certification with Place-based Production

Finally, in conjunction with a clear marketing campaign, proponents of FSC certification need to connect their message to place-based production. One interviewee said, “Certification is one piece. The answer is an assemblage of 100 different pieces.” While certification is viewed as a way to differentiate products in an undifferentiated commodity market, what really sells is the “Vermont brand”. In a recent report, Mark Lorenzo suggests an integrative strategy that connects and markets high production standards (e.g., FSC) and place of origin (e.g., the Vermont Quality Wood Products Brand)

as a way of sustaining Vermont's forest products sector (2006: 10).

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