



The Australian Forestry Standard

**Assessing and certifying
sustainable forest management**

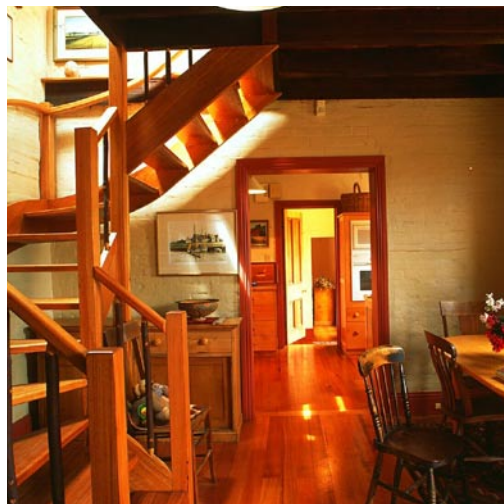


A SUMMARY OF THE
COMPATIBILITY OF THE
AUSTRALIAN FORESTRY
STANDARD WITH MAJOR
OVERSEAS CERTIFICATION
SYSTEMS

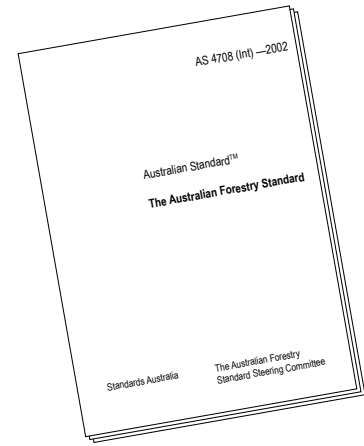


Australia's forest industries now have a national standard to assess and certify sustainable forest management.

Benchmarked against international certification schemes, the Australian approach has been rated “excellent” for its forest management approach.



Australia's forestry standard Wins benchmark approval against Overseas Systems



Australia's national sustainable forest management standard, the Australian Forestry Standard ("AFS"), has been confirmed as compatible with the major international sustainable forest management schemes.

The assessment means that Australian sustainably-produced timber has a similar standing to timber certified under other world certification schemes.

A variety of certification schemes and detailed standards make up the global marketplace for environmental sustainability certification.

Most major nations have at least one sustainable forest management certification standard, and the US and Canada have several.

The certification schemes with the largest market presence are the **PEFC** group of standards, covering most of Europe, and the **FSC** network, prominent in Scandinavia but covering many other countries.

To assess compatibility with overseas systems, Australia's Forest and Wood Products Research and Development Corporation commissioned an independent study of the AFS.

The AFS was designed by a broad group of forest experts and stakeholders and released in 2002.

The development of the AFS followed the rules of Standards Australia for open and

An **independent study** has concluded that the Australian Forestry Standard is compatible with the major international forest certification systems.

transparent participation, consultation and decision-making.

The AFS had extensive expert input into its drafting and development, giving it strong scientific credibility.

Australia's Commonwealth and State governments have all endorsed the AFS.

But mutual recognition with overseas standards is of vital importance.

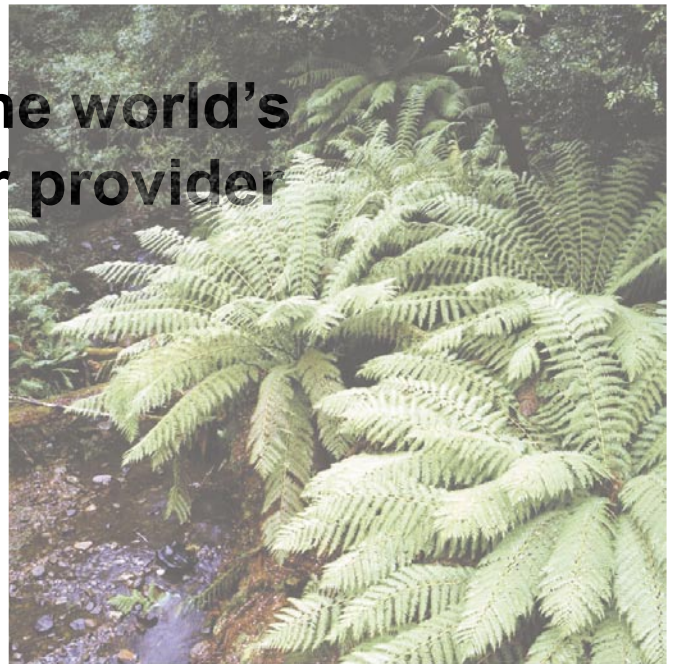
The comparative study, by Finnish experts Indufor Oy, examined how the standard-setting and technical criteria of the AFS compare to those of the PEFC and FSC.

The study concluded that the AFS is compatible with both the major groups of overseas sustainability standards.

On procedural issues such as the participation of stakeholders, definitions of sustainability, transparency and consensus decision-making, all AFS procedures were regarded as "*substantially equivalent*" to the larger schemes.

The AFS also won strong recognition for its environmental systems.

Comparison 1: Australia and PEFC - the world's leading certified timber provider



European nations have been in the forefront of setting national standards for good forest management.

The Pan-European Forest Certification Council (“PEFC”) is a mutual recognition system for around 20 European sustainability standards.

In recent years European and non-European national have joined PEFC, making the network the world’s largest supplier of certified wood products.

The AFS forest management approach was cited as “excellent”

Comparing AFS to PEFC, the Indufor study found that *“equivalent criteria [had] been used as the basis for the Standard’s development and [they] are highly compatible with those of the [PEFC system].”*

On substantial issues such as maintenance of forests and environmental issues, the AFS is equivalent to and sometimes better than PEFC standards

The AFS was rated a world-leader in the framework it required for forest management, with the study finding that *“the consistent and comprehensive management system required by the AFS for a forest management unit provides an excellent basis for the implementation of the AFS requirements.”*

“In this respect the AFS requirements exceed those presented in many other national certification schemes, that merely rely on the existing management frameworks.”

On the key sustainability issue of maintaining rather than exploiting forests, the study found that *“the AFS requirements regarding enhancement of forest resources emphasise the*

maintenance of the productive capacity of the forests.”

“The AFS criteria on the maintenance of forest productive capacity and restrictions on land conversion also implies strongly the maintenance of forest area.”

“In addition the AFS also addresses carbon balance, which is an issue that will have an importance in the future development of certification.”

On ecological and environmental issues, the AFS requires the *“maintenance of natural resources and species mixes and use of native regeneration”*, and focuses on *“the conservation of significant biodiversity values”*.

AFS also had comprehensive coverage of socio-economic and cultural values of forests.

“The AFS addresses in a comprehensive manner the recognition of the traditional uses of forests as well as the socio-economic benefits that forests and timber processing may have to local communities.”

Comparison 2: Australia and the forest stewardship council system



The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) - the world's first certification scheme, founded in 1993 - sponsors a variety of national and subnational forest management standards, based on a common set of principles and criteria.

Comparing AFS to the various FSC standards, the study found that *“the performance requirements [of the AFS] are adapted to regional circumstances and largely compatible with the FSC principles and criteria.”*

“Regional ecological, social and economic circumstances are widely taken into consideration in the formulation of the AFS criteria and requirements as well as their implementation within the forest management unit level.”

The study confirmed that the AFS was compatible with FSC on environmental performance standards.

“The compatibility of the AFS with the FSC [environmental impact] principle is at a high level regarding the conduct of environmental impact statements, protection of species and their habitats, maintenance of ecological functions and values of forests, and conversion of natural forest cover to plantations.”

“The AFS focuses on conservation of significant biodiversity values as identified under the national forest reserve criteria, and on the protection of the water and soil resources.”

“The AFS definition for significant biological diversity values is detailed and comprehensive.”

The AFS has “detailed and comprehensive” coverage of biological diversity”

The Independent study:

The independent study was commissioned by the Forest and Wood Products Research and Development Corporation, a national statutory body.

The study was carried out by the Finnish firm Indufor Oy, experts in sustainability certification.

To obtain copies of the full Indufor study, or for more information on the Corporation, visit fwprdc.org.au or call +61 03 9614 7544.