

Public Timber Procurement in the United Kingdom

There is some indication that procurement policies lead to increased demand and awareness of certified products, as the case of the UK public timber procurement policy shows.



Situation

The United Kingdom is the 4th largest timber importer in the world. Across government departments, the recognition of the sustainability attributes of timber was recognized early on, though the focus was on issues such as illegal logging and deforestation.

With national and local governments consuming an estimated 40% of the overall imports, the UK issued voluntary guidance for public procurement of timber as far back as 1997 and announced a binding policy in 2000. This policy required all government departments and their agencies to actively seek to buy timber and paper products from legal and sustainable sources.

Following the announcement of the policy, a consultation exercise was carried out and a report produced in 2002, which recommended the establishment of the Central Point of Expertise on Timber (CPET), funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to support the implementation of the policy.

The UK timber procurement policy was further strengthened in 2009 and have since 1 April 2009 been demanding that all timber and timber products should come from independently verifiable legal and sustainable or FLEGT licensed or equivalent sources only. In April 2010, social criteria were added to the procurement policy.

Activities

CPET provides free of charge support and guidance on implementation and compliance with the timber procurement policy to all public sector buyers and their suppliers via a helpline, a website, training workshops. CPET's main tasks include assessment of evidence of legality and sustainability

In an initial phase, completed in 2004, CPET established robust guidance on how to meet the UK Government's for legality and sustainability criteria, and assessed five forest certification schemes identified by government procurement staff as the most commonly encountered in the UK wood supply chain.

CPET undertakes biannual re-assessments of the certification systems to verify their continued compliance with the so called 'Category A' evidence requirements to ensure legality and sustainability.

Both global certification schemes, the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) are in compliance with the 'Category A' evidence requirements for legal and sustainable timber.

Results

While there is no comprehensive study of the impact of public procurement on private procurement, a 2009 report by the UK Timber Trade Federation and funded by the Department of International Development determined that "certification in the UK has moved strongly ahead in the period between 2005 and 2008. In all sectors and in all product groups, levels of certification are higher."

The proportion of certified products available to the UK supply chain is now close to 85 %. PEFC and FSC dominate certification in the UK, with each building upon their strengths in their specialist areas. PEFC's share of UK imports is around 50%, with FSC having a 30% share.

The certification schemes PEFC and FSC are very important tools, if not essential, in ensuring compliance with and thereby in the implementation of the policy. CPET's awareness raising and training of public buyers and suppliers consequently focus a lot on informing about the certification schemes.

There is some indication, that demand and awareness of certified products seems to be increasing and it can be claimed that efforts to raise awareness of certified timber are being rewarded.

The increased availability of certified products, both PEFC and FSC, makes it even easier for the public sector to meet the UK timber procurement policy requirements for sustainable timber and wood products.

The increased availability should be complemented by a further increase in demand for sustainable timber and CPET continues to raise awareness and support mandated central government departments and associated bodies in implementing the government's timber procurement policy.

Further Information

Central Point of Expertise on Timber ([CPET](http://www.cpet.org.uk)) – www.cpet.org.uk

Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs ([DEFRA](http://www.dfid.gov.uk)) -www.dfid.gov.uk

[UK Timber Industry Certification Report](http://bit.ly/9ja6Fh) - <http://bit.ly/9ja6Fh>