



Department
of Energy &
Climate Change

Timber Standard for Heat & Electricity:

Woodfuel used under the
Renewable Heat Incentive
and Renewables Obligation

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URN 14D/025

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Introduction

1. On 22 August 2013, the UK Government announced its decision to bring in sustainable forest management criteria for the use of feedstocks that are virgin wood or made from virgin wood from April 2014 under the Renewables Obligation (RO)¹. Likewise, on 27 February 2013, the UK Government confirmed its intention to bring in biomass sustainability criteria, including land criteria², for the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI). The Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive - Improving support, increasing uptake, published on 4 December 2013³, confirmed that land criteria consistent with those of the RO are expected to come into force in April 2015, subject to Parliamentary timings.
2. As set out in previous publications, the Timber Standard for Heat & Electricity, covering the sustainable forest management criteria for woodfuel, will draw upon the principles set under the UK Government Timber Procurement Policy (UK-TPP). These principles, and the wider UK-TPP, were developed for central Government and public bodies for use when purchasing timber and wood products, including woodfuel. The principles cover a range of social, economic and environmental considerations that are part of good sustainable forest management practices and are based on internationally agreed criteria⁴. The principles also include a requirement for evidence demonstrating that the wood supplied is from legal and sustainable sources, and should include chain of custody from the forest source to the end user.
3. The requirement for evidence can be met either through the use of wood that is suitably certified (known as 'Category A' evidence) or through the use of bespoke evidence (known as 'Category B' evidence). The UK Government funds the Central Point of Expertise on Timber (CPET) which provides an advisory service for public sector buyers

¹ DECC (2013) *Government Response to the sustainability requirements for solid biomass feedstocks used for electricity under the Renewables Obligation (RO)* : https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/231102/RO_Biomass_Sustainability_consultation_-_Government_Response_22_August_2013.pdf

² DECC (2012) *Government Response to non-domestic Renewable Heat Incentive consultation* https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/128679/Gov_response_to_non_domestic_July_2012_consultation_-_26_02_2013.pdf

³ DECC (2013) *The Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive - Improving support, increasing uptake* https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/265856/Non-Domestic_Renewable_Heat_Incentive_-_Improving_Support_Increasing_Uptake_-_PUBLISHED.pdf

⁴ The Pan-European Criteria and Indicators, and Operational Level Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management, as endorsed by the Lisbon Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (June 1998), the UNCED Forest Principles (Rio de Janeiro, June 1992) and the ITTO criteria and guidelines for sustainable forest management.

and their suppliers on ways to meet the UK-TPP requirements in practice. Guidance on the UK-TPP is available from www.cpet.org.uk.

4. Although the principles used for the sustainable forest management criteria applied under the RO and RHI are based on the same set of principles as the UK-TPP, covering the same social, environmental and economic issues, the process of bespoke evidence assessment will not be the same. Wood purchased for construction or solid furniture is high value, and can be readily sourced in sufficient volume and at an acceptable cost from certified forests. In contrast the wood used for fuel is typically low value, and a significant proportion is expected to be sourced from forests in North America that are not yet certified. Therefore the option of providing suitable bespoke evidence, in the case of woodfuel sourcing, is likely to be a widely-used means of demonstrating sustainability, at least in the short-term while markets develop.
5. Reflecting these practical concerns, the process of assessment of sustainable forest management criteria set out in this document is designed to act as a transitional phase that will raise the reporting and monitoring activity in forests supplying biomass. Our long-term goal is to align with the full UK-TPP assessment processes as well as its principles which already align with international standards.
6. The UK Government also announced in August 2013 that it would set out how the Timber Standard for Heat & Electricity, which would draw on the same principles as the UK-TPP, will apply with respect to woodfuel used under the RO and other renewable financial incentives. This would be a separate document to current guidance for government procurement, so as to be in a format, suitable and adapted, for use under the RO, RHI and Contracts for Difference (CfDs). This document meets that commitment.
7. The term 'woodfuel' refers to solid fuel that is wood, or is derived from wood. It does not include waste wood which is considered to be wood that has been previously used for another purpose, such as recovered construction timber or wood pallets.
8. **Section 1** sets out the Timber Standard for Heat & Electricity. It is based on the UK-TPP's principles including legality as set under the EU Timber Regulation and 10 criteria for sustainability (S1-S10). **Section 2** covers demonstrating compliance by the sourcing of wood that meets an approved Forest Certification Scheme such as Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and PEFC (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC)).
9. **Section 3** covers the alternate route of providing other suitable bespoke evidence that demonstrates compliance. **Section 4** covers the use of a combination of bespoke and certification evidence.
10. Although based on the UK-TPP principles, the Timber Standard for Heat & Electricity is not identical to the UK-TPP in all aspects. Therefore, it will not automatically change with any future changes to the UK-TPP. However, the Standard can be updated, separately from the UK-TPP, if required.

11. The UK Government intends to review the UK Bioenergy Strategy in 2015/16 and publish an updated Strategy in 2017. As part of this review the UK Government intends to consider the effectiveness of the Timber Standard for Heat & Electricity, and our ambition to align its sustainability controls with the UK-TPP and wider principles of sustainable forest management.

Section 1: The Timber Standard

- 1.1. Woodfuel meets the Timber Standard for Heat & Electricity if it *originates from an independently verifiable legal and sustainable source and appropriate documentation is provided to prove it.*

Definition of Legal and Sustainable

- 1.2 This section of the document sets out the definition of ‘Legal’ and ‘Sustainable’. To be treated as originating from a *legal* source, the woodfuel must be legally harvested in accordance with the EU Timber Regulation. To be treated as originating from a *sustainable* source, the woodfuel must come from a forest that is managed in a way that meets the sustainability requirements listed in S1 to S10 below.

Definition of legal

- 1.3 Woodfuel originates from a legal source if it has been legally harvested. For this purpose, ‘legally harvested’ has the same meaning as in Article 2 of the EU Timber Regulation (EUTR)⁵ which is:

“Harvested in accordance with the applicable legislation in the country of harvest”.

“‘Applicable legislation’ means the legislation in force on the country of harvest covering the following matters:

- *rights to harvest timber within legally gazetted boundaries,*
- *payments for harvest rights and timber including duties related to timber harvesting,*
- *timber harvesting, including environmental and forest management including forest legislation and biodiversity conservation, where directly related to timber harvesting,*
- *third parties’ legal rights concerning use and tenure that are affected by timber harvesting, and*
- *trade and customs, in so far as the forest sector is concerned.”*

- 1.4 EUTR is enforced in the UK by the Timber and Timber Products (Placing on the Market) Regulations 2013 which came into force on 3rd March 2013. The EUTR applies to timber or timber products – including woodfuel - whether these are used for energy generation or for any other purpose. The EUTR applies irrespective of whether a generator is seeking financial support such as RO and RHI or chooses not to.

⁵ Regulation (EU) No. 995/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2010 laying down the obligations of operators who place timber and timber products on the market (OJ L 295, 12.11.2010, p.23).

- 1.5 The EUTR makes it an offence to place illegal timber on the EU market. It requires those companies that place timber or timber products on the EU market for the first time to assess the risk that those products may have come from an illegal source and to mitigate any risks. This is known as due diligence and must happen before the product is bought. It has to be undertaken even if the product is certified (e.g. FSC or PEFC).
- 1.6 If you buy woodfuel from within the EU and for which due diligence has taken place you must keep records of whom you bought the product from and, where applicable, to whom you have sold the woodfuel. This information must be kept for at least five years, and be provided for checks if requested.

Definition of sustainable

- 1.7 Woodfuel originates from a sustainable source if it comes from a forest which is managed in accordance with a definition of sustainable that meets the requirements set out below:
- S1.** The definition must be consistent with a widely accepted set of international principles and criteria defining sustainable or responsible forest management at the forest management unit level.
- S2.** The definition must be performance-based, meaning that measurable outputs must be included and cover all of the issues set out in S5 to S10.
- S3.** The process of defining sustainable must seek to ensure balanced representation and input from the economic, environmental and social interest categories.
- S4.** The process of defining sustainable must seek to ensure:
- a. no single interest can dominate the process for setting or changing the policy; and
 - b. no decision on the contents of the policy can be made in the absence of agreement from the majority of an interest category.
- S5.** Management of the forest must ensure that harm to ecosystems is minimised. In order to do this the policy must include requirements for:
- a. appropriate assessment of impacts and planning to minimise impacts;
 - b. protection of soil, water and biodiversity;
 - c. controlled and appropriate use of chemicals and use of Integrated Pest Management wherever possible; and
 - d. proper disposal of wastes to minimise any negative impacts.
- S6.** Management of the forest must ensure that productivity of the forest is maintained. In order to achieve this, the policy must include requirements for:
- a. management planning and implementation of management activities to avoid significant negative impacts on forest productivity;

- b. monitoring which is adequate to check compliance with all requirements, together with review and feedback into planning;
- c. operations and operational procedures which minimise impacts on the range of forest resources and services;
- d. adequate training of all personnel, both employees and contractors; and
- e. harvest levels that do not exceed the long-term production capacity of the forest based on adequate inventory and growth and yield data.

S7. Management of the forest must ensure that ecosystem health and vitality is maintained. In order to achieve this, the definition of sustainable must include requirements for:

- a. management planning which aims to maintain or increase the health and vitality of ecosystems;
- b. management of natural processes, fires, pests and diseases; and
- c. adequate measures to protect the forest from unauthorised activities such as illegal logging, mining and encroachment.

S8. Management of the forest must ensure that biodiversity is maintained. In order to achieve this, the policy must include requirements for:

- a. implementation of safeguards to protect rare, threatened and endangered species;
- b. the conservation/set-aside of key ecosystems or habitats in their natural state; and
- c. the protection of features and species of outstanding or exceptional value.

S9. The forest management organisation and any contractors must comply with local and national legal requirements relevant to:

- a. labour and welfare; and
- b. health and safety.

S10. Management of the forest must have full regard for:

- a. identification, documentation and respect of legal, customary and traditional tenure and use rights related to the forest;
- b. mechanisms for resolving grievances and disputes including those relating to tenure and use rights, to forest (or land) management practices and to work conditions; and
- c. safeguarding the basic labour rights and health and safety of forest workers.

Section 2: Approved Certification Schemes

- 2.1 Evidence that the woodfuel originates from a legal and sustainable source can be provided through the use of independent certification of the wood by any of the forest certification schemes that cover the requirements S1 to S10 ('the Criteria'), together with the evidence of legality as required by the EUTR. This is known as 'Category A' evidence⁶ under the UK-TPP.
- 2.2 Table 1 below shows the forest certification schemes that have been assessed so far under the UK-TPP, as meeting the Criteria. Acceptable schemes must ensure that at least 70% (by volume or weight) is from a legal and sustainable source with the balance from a legal source.

Certification Scheme	Legal	Sustainable	Details
Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC)	Yes	Only products or product lines containing >70% certified or recycled raw material.	Websites: http://www.pefc.org http://www.pefc.co.uk/
Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)	Yes	Only products or product lines containing >70% certified or recycled raw material.	Websites: FSC UK: http://www.fsc-uk.info FSC International: http://www.fsc.org/ FSC Databases: http://www.fsc-uk.org/?page_id=87

Table 1: Certification Schemes assessed as meeting the Criteria

- 2.3 There are assessment exercises, run typically every few years, that assess forest certification schemes against the UK-TPP principles. If these identify additional schemes that meet these Criteria then the list of approved certification schemes will be updated to include these schemes.

⁶ Further guidance on Category A evidence is available from <http://www.cpet.org.uk/uk-government-timber-procurement-policy/evidence-of-compliance/cpet-s-assessment-of-evidence/assessment-of-certification-schemes-category-a>

- 2.4 Generators using an approved certification scheme as evidence of compliance for a woodfuel consignment will be able to use the mass balance approach across the feedstock supply-chain as well as within the fuel storage bunkers at the generating station or heat installation. The Mass Balance Approach (MBA) requires that, at each step in the chain, parties can only use/sell biomass with the same sustainability characteristics and in the same volume as the biomass they took in originally, less any biomass they have recorded as being used or sold previously.

Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC)

- 2.5 The Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) schemes is an international umbrella organisation for the mutual recognition of independent national or sub-national forest certification schemes. 34 national schemes have been endorsed, including the Canadian Standards Association scheme (CSA) and the North American Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI).
- 2.6 The PEFC is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, founded in 1999 which promotes sustainably managed forests through independent third party certification. The PEFC provides an assurance mechanism to purchasers of wood and paper products that they are promoting the sustainable management of forests.
- 2.7 PEFC provides chain of custody certification and a common PEFC Logo for labelling of those products which originate in forests certified according to the PEFC-endorsed schemes.

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

- 2.8 The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is an international forest certification programme.
- 2.9 FSC is an independent, non-governmental and non-profit organisation. The membership consists of a diverse group of over 800 representatives from environmental and social groups, the timber trade and the forestry profession, indigenous people's organisations, community forestry groups and forest product certification organisations from around the world.
- 2.10 FSC certified forests meet FSC approved forest management standards, assessed against the FSC 'Principles and Criteria' for responsible forest management. FSC Chain of Custody serves as a guarantee that suppliers, manufacturers and merchants are selling at least one or more timber and wood derived products that come from certified forests.

Types of evidence to be provided as proof of certification

Certificates

- 2.11 When a forest has been found to comply with the requirements of a certification scheme, it is issued with a Forest Management or 'FM' certificate.

- 2.12 Normally, when purchasing from a certified supplier, the purchaser will be provided with a copy of the supplier's Chain of Custody certificate or 'CoC' certificate. In some cases, the supplier may only provide the purchaser with their CoC certificate number⁷.

Certificate numbers

- 2.13 CoC numbers follow different formats, depending on the scheme. FSC certificates follow the format XX - COC - XXXX (where the first two letters are the name of the certifying body and the last four are the unique identifying code for that certificate). PEFC formats may vary (because it is an umbrella scheme), but generally follows the format XX[X]-PEFC-XXXX[...], where the first few letters are the name of the certifying body, and the last four or more are the unique identifying code for that certificate.

Third party certificates

- 2.14 Sometimes suppliers provide certificates which have not been issued to their organisation, but rather a third party supplier that they use. Though the certificate itself is considered 'Category A' evidence, additional information must be provided about the supply chain including the supplier's organisation. If the purchase is not made from a CoC holder additional evidence will be required. Please refer to the section on bespoke evidence and the CPET website for further information.

Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT)

- 2.15 Woodfuel sourced from a Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT⁸) partner country will not be automatically deemed as sustainable under the Timber Standard for Heat and Electricity; it will, however, be deemed as legal.

⁷ Please see CPET guidance for the steps to follow when verifying this evidence: <http://www.cpet.org.uk/uk-government-timber-procurement-policy/evidence-of-compliance/category-a-evidence/verifying-evidence>

⁸ The Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Action Plan (FLEGT) is the European Union's response to the problem of illegal logging and trade in associated timber products. A key part of the FLEGT Action Plan is the negotiation of bilateral Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) between the European Union and timber-producing countries. Under the terms of a VPA a country agrees with the EU to implement a timber licensing system. From that country, the EU will only accept licensed products, and unlicensed products will be refused customs clearance with the aim of preventing illegal products from entering the EU market.

Section 3: Bespoke evidence

- 3.1 Evidence that the woodfuel originates from a legal and sustainable source can also be provided in the form of alternative/bespoke documentary evidence that provides sufficient assurance that the source of the wood is legal and sustainable. This is known as 'Category B' evidence under the UK-TPP.
- 3.2 The Timber Standard allows the use of the mass balance approach (MBA) to the chain of custody for wood that uses 'Category B' evidence, as well as allowing its use for wood that is certified by one of the approved schemes.

Information on collecting bespoke evidence for woodfuel

- 3.3 Bespoke evidence is all forms of credible evidence other than the approved certification schemes. Broadly, this evidence will indicate that the forest source meets the Criteria (S1-S10) covering sustainability and the traceability evidence will link the end-use for energy with the original source.
- 3.4 Information and evidence will be required for 2 key areas to demonstrate:
 - a. **supply chain management** which provides traceability from the forest source to the point of supply, and
 - b. **forest management** which meets requirements for legality and sustainability.
- 3.5 Compliance with each criterion for sustainability (S1-S10) will need to be assessed by an independent auditor/assessor (to an ISAE 3000 or an equivalent standard), or, for biomass suppliers on the Biomass Suppliers List (BSL), assessed by the List Manager, as either 'adequate' or 'not adequate'. Compliance must be assessed as 'adequate' for every criterion in order to be acceptable to the auditor/assessor.

Evaluating bespoke evidence for woodfuel

- 3.6 This type of evidence can vary greatly and needs to be judged on a case-by-case basis. A framework has been developed to provide support to both purchasers and suppliers on the provision and assessment of bespoke evidence with respect to the UK-TPP for Government. This Framework includes guidance for assessing evidence, checklists for information collection and practical guides. The Framework documentation is available from the Central Point of Expertise of Timber (CPET) website at www.cpet.org.uk. This framework is in the process of being updated with specific reference to its application to woodfuel.
- 3.7 High quality timber suitable for construction and solid furniture making commands a significant premium which can cover the cost of certification. However, the low quality wood residues suitable for electricity generation are typically procured in high volumes

and at a low cost per tonne. Similarly, much of the wood-fuel used by UK domestic and community heat customers is likely to be sourced from local forests, including small woodlands that would find FSC or PEFC standard certification costly and complex.

Risk-based regional approach

- 3.8 Therefore, it is permitted to take a risk-based regional approach that uses credible information and evidence that addresses the Criteria (S1-S10) at a regional rather than at an individual forest level (or land unit).
- 3.9 In a single 'region' we would expect that the following characteristics should be the same:
- a. legislation covering land ownership, use and harvesting rights;
 - b. legislation covering biodiversity, water, air and soil protection;
 - c. legislation covering basic labour rights and health and safety of forest workers;
 - d. legislation covering waste handling and disease control, and
 - e. legislation covering tree felling licensing and replanting/regeneration requirements.
- 3.10 Examples of a potential 'region' could include (i) the 100km catchment area of a pelleting plant in the same US state or (ii) a particular UK county. In each case an assessment of the overall risks prevalent on that 'region' could be carried out, that considers the scale of operations and the effectiveness of existing controls, including applicable legislation.
- 3.11 Such an approach would include identifying for particular consideration within the 'region' any areas of high conservation or carbon stock value, protected or locally environmentally-sensitive areas, features of exceptional value or interest and areas not disturbed by previous human activity. These areas should receive particular consideration as to how the Criteria will be met.

RHI and self-supplier

- 3.12 In the specific case of the Renewable Heat Incentive, woodfuel will be deemed to be sustainable and legal if it has been grown on the same estate as where the biomass boiler which uses the woodfuel is housed. With the additional provision that the maximum heat generating capacity of the boiler (or the total generating capacity where the estate has more than one biomass boiler) is to be 1MW thermal or below.

Section 4: Using a combination of bespoke and certification evidence

Certification schemes other than the FSC or PEFC Standard

- 4.1 FSC Controlled wood is not 'FSC certification' on its own but a system developed for the timber trade to ensure that the non-certified portion in mixed products do not come from 'controversial sources'. Similarly SFI Fibre Sourcing or the PEFC Avoidance of Controversial Sources are not the full SFI or PEFC standard.
- 4.2 Therefore, neither FSC Controlled wood nor SFI Fibre Sourcing can in itself be accepted as ensuring compliance with the Criteria in full. However these, as with other schemes, can be used as **part** of the total information and evidence provided to demonstrate that the source of the wood is legal and sustainable and the traceability requirements are met. There may be other exceptions not mentioned here, or developed in future, which will need to be taken account.
- 4.3 The use of mass balance means that woodfuel can be sourced from a supplier that mixes woodfuel that is certified, together with woodfuel that uses other credible evidence to demonstrate that it is legal and sustainable. However the totality of the volumes of each recorded as sold must match the combination of woodfuel received by the supplier.

Assessment for partial compliance

- 4.4 To minimise the complexity and cost of collecting robust bespoke evidence the Government intends to include additional sustainable biomass schemes within the 2014 assessment exercise that assesses PEFC and FSC against the UK-TPP definition of Sustainable. In particular this will seek to identify where the additional schemes demonstrate compliance against some of the Criteria (S1-10), but not all of the Criteria⁹.
- 4.5 If the assessment exercise identifies one or more additional schemes that meet some of the 10 principles required, but not all, then the list of partially compliant schemes will be updated. The update will include details of these schemes and the specific Criteria with which they were assessed as being compliant.
- 4.6 This will help reduce the volume and cost of bespoke information and data that needs to be collected where wood is sourced from forests other than those that are certified to the full PEFC and FSC Standard.

⁹ Ofgem intend to commission an assessment exercise for woodfuel similar to the benchmarking exercise for bioliquids completed in 2012. <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/ofgem-publications/58241/text-voluntary-schemes-final.pdf>

Annex A: Further information and guidance

Renewable Heat Incentive – Biomass Suppliers List (BSL)

1. As set out in the February 2013 Government Response to ‘Providing Certainty, Improving Performance’¹⁰, and the December 2013 Non-Domestic RHI Government Response¹¹, non-domestic and domestic RHI participants will be able to demonstrate compliance with the RHI sustainability criteria by sourcing RHI-compliant fuel from a supplier registered on an approved suppliers list. (Alternatively, non-domestic participants will be able to self-report to Ofgem if they so choose). Government expects the Biomass Suppliers List (BSL) to be open for applications from Spring 2014.
2. Upon the introduction of mandatory compliance with land criteria for the RHI, the Government intends for all registered suppliers and new applicants to the list to be audited against the requirements for demonstrating compliance. Suppliers of biomass who wish to register, and suppliers previously registered, on the Biomass Suppliers List will be required to demonstrate to the List Manager that they meet the sustainable forest management criteria for woodfuel set out in this document.
3. We are aware of the need to provide industry with sufficient time to prepare for the introduction of new criteria, and to develop the audit trail required to evidence compliance. RHI participants and suppliers of biomass will be notified of the details for land criteria and associated requirements for application to join the Biomass Suppliers List well in advance of 1 April 2015.

Guidance on the Timber Standard, including use of bespoke evidence

4. Advice on the timber standard will be provided by the Central Point of Expertise on Timber (CPET). Information will be available from the CPET website, which will include
 - (i) Woodfuel Bioenergy & Sustainable Forest Management Advice note
 - (ii) Checklist for Regional Supply Base Evaluation
 - (iii) Mass Balance Guidance for non-certified woodfuel
5. Whilst CPET will provide advice on the timber standard, the operator should note that decisions regarding the administration of the RO scheme (including accreditation, ROC issue, compliance with the sustainability criteria, etc.) remain with Ofgem.

¹⁰ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/128679/Gov_response_to_non_domestic_July_2012_consultation_-_26_02_2013.pdf

¹¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/265856/Non-Domestic_Renewable_Heat_Incentive_-_Improving_Support_Increasing_Uptake_-_PUBLISHED.pdf

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URN 14D/025