

# Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs

## How to check validity of FSC and PEFC certification of timber and wood products.

The certification schemes Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) have been assessed and found to ensure compliance with the UK government's Legality and Sustainability criteria. FSC and PEFC are thereby accepted as Category A evidence of ensuring compliance with the government's timber procurement policy. The steps below will help you check when you receive FSC and PEFC products that the certification applies and also gives some guidance on common issues and solutions.

	Actions & common problems	Suggested corrective action
<p><b>Step One: Is the Chain of Custody (CoC) certificate listed with a valid status on the appropriate online database?</b></p> <p><i>All CoC certificates are listed online with their status (e.g. valid). Certified suppliers have a unique CoC certificate code/number quoted on their certificate. The CoC number should follow the structure TT-COC-1234, BMT-PEFC-2334 or SGS-COC-12244</i></p>	<p>Search for the CoC certificate record on the appropriate database using either the CoC certificate or licence number:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>FSC</b><sup>1</sup></li> <li>➤ <b>PEFC</b><sup>2</sup></li> </ul> <p>Common problems include typing the number or code incorrectly</p>	<p>If you can't find a record on the online database</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ ask the supplier to email you a hyperlink to the online CoC certificate record</li> </ul>
<p><b>Step Two: Is the certificate in date and valid for the period of supply?</b></p> <p><i>The expiry date is listed online. Certificates are issued for five years and surveillance audits are carried out annually.</i></p>	<p>Problems include certificates expiring before audits are carried out. Suppliers may have an audit scheduled that they have not informed you of.</p>	<p>If the certificate has expired or been suspended:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. check if the supplier has a CoC certification audit booked and if so,</li> <li>2. ask for written confirmation from the certification body carrying out the audit,</li> <li>3. ask for confirmation once the audit has been completed.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Step Three: Is your supplier listed as the certificate holder?</b></p> <p><i>The certificate holder is listed online and should be your contractor, or additional evidence should be provided.</i></p>	<p>Common problems include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Using different punctuation or spelling of company names</li> <li>➤ Category B evidence broken chain, where your contractor doesn't hold a certificate, but their sub-contractors do.</li> <li>➤ Name of supplier is different to the certificate holder, e.g. listed on a 'multi-site CoC Certificate', with the supplier one of multiple production and/or sales units and the certificate holder the central site for administration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ If the name of your supplier doesn't match the certificate holder on the record, ask your supplier why</li> <li>➤ If your supplier claims the product is FSC or PEFC certified, but it is not their name on the certificate the chain of custody may be broken. See the Timber Procurement Advice Note<sup>3</sup> for help.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Step Four: Are the products being supplied listed on the record for the CoC certificate?</b></p> <p><i>Certified suppliers supply certified and non-certified products. Only certified products are covered by the certificate scope.</i></p>	<p>Common problems include incomplete listings or products on the online database record.</p>	<p>If the product you are purchasing is not covered under the certificate record</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ check with the supplier whether there is a mistake on the record. If so,</li> <li>➤ ask for written confirmation from the certification body.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Step Five: Is the product supplied the product promised?</b></p> <p><i>Suppliers may not supply you with the certified product, even when the above steps have been carried out. Procurement records can help check this.</i></p>	<p>Check a sample of invoices and delivery notes to make sure that the certificate number is quoted and that under the product description the product is listed as FSC or PEFC certified.</p>	<p>Products listed as PEFC or FSC certified may include a product claim, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ X% PEFC Certified, PEFC Recycled</li> <li>➤ FSC 100%, FSC Mix X%, FSC Mix Credit, FSC Recycled X%, FSC Recycled Credit</li> </ul> <p>For product percentage claims, the % threshold is a min. of 70%.</p>

**If the contractor cannot satisfy your concerns, agree an action plan to resolve them, or consider buying alternative products.**

<sup>1</sup>FSC <http://info.fsc.org/>

<sup>2</sup>PEFC <http://www.pefc.org/find-certified/certified-certificates/advanced-search>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/timber-procurement-advice-note-tpan-comply-with-tpp>