

Forest Certification

The Australian and Tasmanian governments support the independent certification of forests as a way of demonstrating that Tasmania's forests, including plantations, are being managed sustainably.

The Australian Forestry Standard (AFS) is an Interim Australian Standard endorsed by Standards Australia.

The standard sets out the economic, social, environmental and cultural criteria and requirements necessary to ensure that forests are managed sustainably for wood production. A managed forest must meet all requirements to gain certification, with conformance being audited by an independent, accredited third party (a certifying body). Customers who purchase certified forest products can be assured that the products originate from sustainably managed forests and are produced under internationally recognised standards.

1.45 million hectares of forest on public land in Tasmania has been certified under the Australian Forestry Standard. In addition, 226,000 hectares of native forest and plantations on private land in Tasmania have been certified under the AFS. Both governments will continue to encourage Tasmania's forest managers to work towards increasing the area of certified forest.

The Australian Forestry Standard Ltd, which administers the AFS and complementary standards, does not accredit certifying bodies for evaluation of forests under the AFS. These are accredited under the Joint Accreditation System for Australia and New Zealand (JAS-ANZ), making forest audits for certification a completely independent process to standards development and administration.

Certification of a forest is valid for three years, at which time a full audit is carried out. Certifying bodies also conduct at least one surveillance audit on certified forests each year.

Forest managers are required to keep a complaints register in relation to forest management that is available to certifying bodies. The register includes details of how such complaints have been addressed.

The AFS is internationally recognised, having gained recognition by the Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) schemes in October 2004. PEFC is the largest international certification body and has endorsed 17 national schemes covering 55 million hectares of certified forest.

With PEFC endorsement, the AFS will become a means to achieve and maintain international market access. Further, it will help Australian consumers to distinguish between timber from sustainably managed domestic forests and that sourced from unsustainably harvested or illegally logged forests overseas.