



Building  
Green  
with  
Wood



MODULE 10

# Forest Practices in Canada

Every year, Canada regenerates close to 700,000 hectares of forest – more than all other countries put together.

## Canada: A World Leader in Sustainable Forestry

Canada's immense forest land base means it has an important role to play in responding to the urgent issue of climate change. Its sustainable forest management policies and practices achieve a balance between the demand for quality products and economic benefits for communities, and the need to conserve forest values and maintain forest health and diversity.

In Canada, the forest industry operates under some of the toughest environmental laws and regulations in the world, backed by multi-faceted compliance and enforcement. Many operations are certified to credible third-party forest certification standards, bringing additional assurance that products are from legal, sustainable sources.

*With 10 per cent of the world's forest cover, Canada accepts the reality that how it manages its forests has global implications.*

## A Snapshot of Canada's Forests

Canada has more than 400 million hectares (988 million acres) of forest and other wooded land. This includes close to one fifth of all of the world's boreal forest, one quarter of all natural forests and one fifth of all temperate forests.

About half of Canada's forests have commercial value, and about half of this land is managed for timber production or other uses (119 million hectares/294 million acres). Forestry is an important part of Canada's economy, yet less than one per cent of the area managed for commercial activities is harvested each year. On average, wildlife and insects affect twice as much forestland annually.

There are more than 30 softwood, or coniferous, species and 100 hardwood species in Canada. Most

commercial lumber and wood products come from softwoods, although Canada's hardwood forests deliver many high-end, value-added products.

In Canada, 97 per cent of the fibre removed from the forest is used for the highest-value products possible. The first choice is lumber and other wood products, however, fibre is also used as chips to make composite products and paper, and as sawdust for bioenergy.<sup>1</sup>

Most of Canada's forest land – 93 per cent – is publicly owned and managed by the federal, provincial or territorial governments. Each province and territory has strict regulations governing forest practices on public land, with regulations and laws that are among the most stringent on earth<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Metafore Paper Fiber Life Cycle Project [www.metafore.org/downloads/fiber\\_cycle\\_communications\\_deck.pdf](http://www.metafore.org/downloads/fiber_cycle_communications_deck.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Forestry Innovation Investment. Comparing British Columbia with the World. 2004 [www.naturallywood.com/uploadedFiles/General/Header/Comparing%20British%20Columbia%20with%20the%20World%20-%202004.pdf](http://www.naturallywood.com/uploadedFiles/General/Header/Comparing%20British%20Columbia%20with%20the%20World%20-%202004.pdf)

## Managing Diverse Forests

Canada's forest laws ensure its rich forest resources are managed in a way that maintains their many values today and for future generations, while providing a wide range of quality products to meet the needs of domestic and international markets.

Companies harvesting public lands must consider and accommodate all forest values – which means environmental values such as wildlife habitat,

biodiversity and water resources, and social values such as scenery and recreation, as well as timber production. They must reforest each site, and remain responsible for it until there is assurance it will grow into a new, healthy forest. Every year, Canada regenerates close to 700,000 hectares (1.7 million acres) of forest – more than all other countries put together.<sup>3</sup>

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Deforestation in developing countries accounts for about 18 per cent of annual global greenhouse gas emissions. Canada has 91 per cent of its original forest cover and its rate of deforestation has been virtually zero for more than 20 years. Very little forest land has been permanently converted to other uses such as agriculture and urban development.

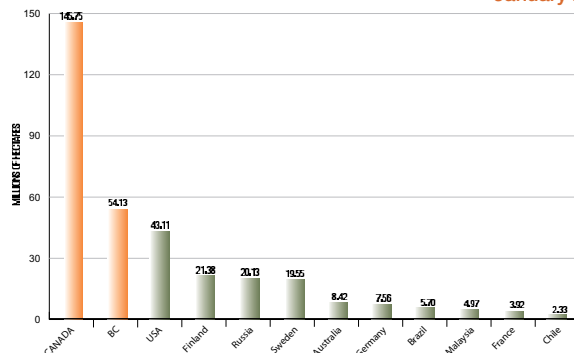
Canada manages its forests to maintain their wide range of natural diversity, so it does not have intensively managed forests that meet the Food and Agriculture Organization's definition of plantation.<sup>4</sup>

3 Source: UN-ECE/FAO Forest Resource Assessment, 2000.

4 FAO defines plantations as either introduced species (all planted stands), or intensively managed stands of indigenous species, which meet all of the following criteria: one or two species at planting, even age class, regular spacing.

## Canadian Certification in the Global Context

January 2009



**Canada has 145.7 million hectares of certified lands – about 40% of all the certified lands in the world.**

## Growing New Forests

A silviculture system covers all management activities related to growing forests – from early planning through harvesting, replanting and tending the new forest. Forest managers consider a variety of factors when choosing a silviculture system, including the tree species, their age and condition, soils, local ecology, and possible impacts on values such as wildlife habitat, water quality and scenery. They also look at economic and social factors, including cost, timber productivity and worker safety.

Canada's diverse forests are generally managed under one or a blend of three silvicultural systems:

- The clearcut system removes most of the trees from an area, with patches of trees and buffers left to protect other values.
- The shelterwood system harvests trees in stages over a short period of time so the new forest grows under the shelter of the existing trees.

- The selection system removes timber as single trees or in small groups at relatively short intervals, repeated indefinitely. This is done carefully to protect the quality and value of the forest area.

Clearcutting is generally the most ecologically appropriate way to harvest and renew many forests, including the boreal, because it most closely resembles the most common natural disturbances, such as fire, wind, floods and insects. Tree species such as black spruce, jack pine, aspen, and birch germinate and grow best in full sunlight, resulting in natural, pure stands of trees of the same age.

The selection system is used to manage uneven-aged stands, which means the forest has trees in various stages of development, including seedling, juvenile and mature trees. It is appropriate for species that thrive in shade such as western red cedar and sugar maple.

## Conserving Forest Values

Forests are among the world's richest, most diverse ecosystems – they purify water, support recreational opportunities, mitigate climate change, provide timber, and much more.

Since Canada created its first park in 1872, it has designated almost 100 million hectares (almost 250 acres) of terrestrial protected areas, which are managed for multiple values, including resource conservation, public education, preservation of culturally significant sites, research, and wildlife and habitat conservation.

Canada has protected more than 40 million hectares (almost 100 million acres) of forest land – by far more

than any other country.<sup>5</sup> In addition, much of the country's forest land base falls under special management where values such as wildlife habitat or recreation take precedence.

In 2006, the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers reported that six per cent of the total land in Canada that supports tree growth was highly protected, and another 19 per cent of the land available for commercial forest activities was under policy constraint from harvesting.<sup>6</sup>

Managing land and resources outside of protected areas is critical to the conservation of biodiversity. Canada's landscape approach to conservation addresses all land use activities, and aims to find the balance between ecosystem integrity and human activities.

5 A Global Overview of Forest Conservation, WCMC, UNEP, CIFOR, 1997 [www.unep-wcmc.org/forest/data/cdrom2/gtabs.htm#Table1](http://www.unep-wcmc.org/forest/data/cdrom2/gtabs.htm#Table1).

6 [www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/publications/habitat/cpa-apc/index\\_e.cfm](http://www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/publications/habitat/cpa-apc/index_e.cfm).



## Third-Party Forest Certification

Independent forest certification is a voluntary process that began in the 1990s in response to concerns about logging practices and forest conversion, especially in tropical regions.

In early 2009, Canada had 145.7 million hectares (360.2 million acres) of certified lands. Canada has almost as much certified land as all other countries put together, which allows it to deliver a stable supply of certified products at a time when only 10 per cent of the world's forests are certified.

Accredited third-party certification bodies issue a certificate to an organization once they determine its planning, procedures, systems and the performance of its on-the-ground operations conform with a predetermined standard. Forest certification can also be complemented with a chain-of-custody certification, which is a mechanism used to track fibre from a certified forest through all production stages to the product on the shelf.

The three certification programs used in Canada – the Canadian Standards Association's Sustainable Forest Management Standard (CSA), the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) – all promote sustainable forest management through principles, criteria and objectives consistent with government processes around the world.

All three are recognized by companies and governments around the world, and the CSA and SFI standards have met the rigorous requirements of the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) schemes, the world's largest forest certification umbrella organization.

In 2008, the Competition Bureau of Canada issued a guide about environmental claims and advertising that said the preferred approach to identify sustainable forest products is to show they have come from a forest is certified to a standard such as CSA, FSC, SFI or PEFC. In the United Kingdom, the Central Point of Expertise on Timber performed a rigorous assessment in 2008, and found that the certification programs used in Canada meet its government's requirements for 'legality' and 'sustainability'.

*Canada is home to responsible producers who:*

- *Harvest legally*
- *Regenerate promptly*
- *Reduce waste and support recovery and recycling*
- *Reduce greenhouse gasses and help fight climate change, and*
- *Welcome independent scrutiny of how forests are managed*



*Each of the three certification standards depend on third-party audits by accredited certification bodies.*