

Timber and Certification

Trade incentives for sustainable development

An assessment for WWF UK produced as a submission to the Commission on Sustainable Development

Nigel Dudley

Preface

In June 1992, the Earth Summit rejected calls for a Global Forest Convention, and instead agreed a set of general and non-binding *Forest Principles*. This failure, judged by many to be the most serious shortcoming of the UNCED process, has meant that initiatives regarding forest conservation have, for several years, shifted away from the international community of the United Nations and other bodies and instead towards national governments, non-governmental organisations and industry.

National governments have been involved in drawing up a series of strategies for sustainable forest management, both individually and in a series of multi-nation initiatives¹. The international community, via the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, is now trying to regain the lead in forest policy by coordinating attempts to merge the various post-UNCED forest initiatives.

At the same time, various NGOs have been working with sympathetic members of the business community to develop independent schemes which address the problems caused by deforestation and forest degradation. One of the most important of these is independent certification of forest products.

Certification marks an important step forward in relations between environmental NGOs and industry. In the past, cooperation has chiefly been in the form of financial support from sympathetic figures in the industry. Certification has taken the process of working together much further, by allowing representatives of the timber industry to work together with environmental NGOs, in order to find practical ways of addressing the UNCED *Forest Principles*.

Indeed, some sections of the timber trade have adopted a more positive attitude towards the challenges laid down at UNCED than have governments and inter-governmental bodies. Far from states imposing environmental controls on industry, governments are now in the position of trying to catch up with the more far-seeing sections of the timber industry with respect to timber certification.

The following report looks at the background to, and development of, timber certification. The report is being presented to the April 1995 meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development, to illustrate the importance that non-governmental initiatives can have in improving environmental conditions, particularly when approaches at governmental level have failed to provide satisfactory solutions.

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Nigel Dudley
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The following report is the second of three forest papers being published by WWF UK as submissions to the Commission on Sustainable Development in April 1995. The other two are *Transnational Companies and Global Forest Resources* and *UNCED Friendliness in Europe: National action regarding the UNCED Forest Principles - a series of case studies*.

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Executive Summary

The following report from WWF UK looks at the ways in which NGOs and industry have cooperated to develop timber certification systems, using the UK as a case study.

- **The need for timber certification.** A crisis in both quantity and quality of global forest resources has been created, at least in part, through the actions of the international timber trade. Responses to this situation have included the promotion and implementation of a variety of bans and boycotts; whilst these have been successful in raising public awareness of the issue, they have several practical limitations. Attempts to address problems of deforestation on an international level, including the International Tropical Timber Organisation, the Tropical Forestry Action Plan and a range of initiatives both before and after the Earth Summit, have also failed to reduce forest loss. Within the forest products industry, responses have included attempts to change forest management and promotion of green labels, but in the vast majority of cases there is no way in which the latter can be verified.
- **The development of timber certification** Timber certification is a system of forest monitoring, timber tracing and wood or pulp product labelling. The key to timber certification is the development of a system which combines auditing forest practices with timber tracing. To avoid confusion, and provide an overall system for monitoring and assessing certification systems, the **Forest Stewardship Council** was established in 1993. The FSC agreed a general set of *Principles and Criteria for Natural Forest Management* in June 1994. The FSC will head up an international accreditation system, and began assessing four independent certification bodies in January 1995. The four have already certified 17 operations around the world, covering over 4 million hectares. A decision about their fitness to become accredited by the FSC will be taken in April 1995, in time for the meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development. In addition, a number of national schemes are being developed outside the auspices of the FSC.
- **Timber certification in the UK.** The role that WWF UK has played in developing timber certification is identified. WWF UK has set 31st December 1995 as the target for all wood and wood products traded in the UK to come from well-managed forests, and has established a **WWF 1995 Group** of companies committed to meeting this target. At present, 41 companies have joined up, and ten more have applied for membership. Members are drawn from both large retailers and specialist firms, and include B&Q, Texas Homecare, Do It All, J Sainsbury, Boots The Chemist, British Rail, MFI, John Dickinson Stationary, Great Mills, Homebase, and Wickes Building Supplies. Together WWF 1995 Group members represent 5 per cent of annual timber purchasing in the UK and serve 20 million customers a week.
- **Discussion and conclusions.** Contrary to received wisdom, official organisation, operating on an international and national level, have not proved the most effective way of addressing forest problems. In this case, more progress has been made since UNCED by NGOs and industry working together than by governments. So far, governments have failed to work together, tending to focus on national self interest rather than global good. Timber certification has developed because of consumer concern about environmental issues, lobbying from environmental and consumer NGOs and a reaction from sympathetic or perceptive industry representatives. Mistakes have been made, but nonetheless progress has been rapid. Time has also been needed for NGOs and industry to learn how to work together.

The report is fully referenced and an appendix lists useful addresses.

1. The Need for Timber Certification

The first part of the report looks at the problems facing global forests, the failure of past attempts to reduce the rate of deforestation and forest degradation and the reasons for developing timber certification systems.

Problems of global forest resources

The world's forests are currently under extreme pressure, and the future survival of natural forests in many countries is now in doubt. Two critical problems have been identified:

- **Loss of quantity:** virtually all tropical and sub-tropical countries are currently undergoing net deforestation. In at least 46 countries, the rate of forest loss accelerated during the 1980s. Research by WWF suggests that in many cases the situation has worsened in the three years following the Earth Summit².
- **Loss of quality:** forest cover in temperate and boreal countries is constant or increasing. However, there is currently a rapid reduction in natural and semi-natural forest, and an increase in plantations or simplified, natural forest³. From many perspectives, loss of quality is almost as important as overall quantity. Quality loss is increasingly affecting countries of the South as well.

Role of the timber trade

Many factors have an impact on forests, including land ownership systems, the spread of farming, poverty, international debt, pollution, population and social conditions within a country. The timber trade plays an important, and in some cases critical, role within the range of influences on forests. Impacts of the timber trade include:

- destroying natural forests in some of the most sensitive ecosystems in the world, through logging for timber and/or clearfelling for plantation establishment;
- opening up forests for future encroachment, by selective logging, construction of logging roads and importing workers into previously unsettled or sparsely settled areas.

The timber trade is the primary source of forest degradation in the temperate and boreal countries, and a major source of deforestation in many tropical and subtropical areas.

Timber bans and boycotts

Over the past ten years, the role of the timber trade has been identified first in tropical forest destruction⁴ and latterly with respect to its impacts on temperate and boreal forests⁵. One response to this has been a call for bans or boycotts on timber coming from unsustainable sources. Such actions have been taken by governments, individual purchasers and NGOs. Examples are given in Table 1. Bans and boycotts played an important role in helping focus attention on forest issues, and in encouraging change in specific cases. However, they ran into a series of implementation problems:

- Some bans were introduced for reasons that had little to do with conservation. For example, a log export ban introduced in Indonesia was aimed principally at promoting a domestic processing industry. Rate of logging in the country continued to increase following the ban.

- Many proposed government bans are now probably illegal under new world trade laws agreed at the Uruguay Round of GATT and enshrined in the World Trade Organisation⁶.
- Boycotts have the problem of what to recommend instead. Alternatives to tropical hardwoods include many North American hardwood species that themselves come from threatened old-growth forests.

Whilst the role of boycotts in raising the pressure for campaigning is acknowledged, their function in promoting long-term improvements in management appears to be less certain⁷.

Table 1: Examples of Timber Bans and Boycotts

Action	Example
Import ban	Proposed ban on all unsustainable tropical timber into the Netherlands from 1995 (now abandoned).
Export ban	Ban on export of 14 endangered timber species from Ghana in the late 1980s. Ban on export of raw logs from Indonesia.
Logging ban	Ban on logging in Thailand introduced in 1988 following severe flooding in logged areas.
Boycott	Boycott of all tropical timber promoted by Friends of the Earth in the mid 1980s. Boycott of Canadian timber promoted by the Womens' Environmental Network and others in protest to the cutting of Clayoquot Sound, 1994

The failure of UNCED and other initiatives aimed at reducing forest loss

For some years, hopes for positive change in forest management were focused on a range of international initiatives, most of which were associated with various arms of the United Nations. However, none of these have, as yet, proved capable of reducing the rate of forest loss. They include:

- **International Tropical Timber Organisation:** ITTO was first established in 1983, after the International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA). A second ITTA was agreed in February 1994. ITTO became the focus for campaigning by many NGOs, including WWF, and made some progress towards taking environment into account in tropical timber production, mainly through development of several sets of guidelines, and by establishing a target of the year 2000 to achieve fully sustainable forest management in the tropics. However, ITTO has failed to introduce sustainable forest management into tropical countries, and the one time it made strong recommendations about changing logging practices, in Sarawak, the state government did not fully implement the recommendations. In a significant failure for environmental groups, Northern members of ITTO blocked proposals to extend the agreement to all timbers in the 1993-4 renegotiations.
- **Tropical Forestry Action Programme (TFAP, originally Tropical Forestry Action Plan):** launched by the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), UN Environment and Development Programme (UNEP) and the Washington-based NGO the World Resources Institute (WRI) in 1987 to provide an international focus to efforts to reduce deforestation in

the tropics. Failure of the TFAP has been described extensively elsewhere⁸. WRI, one of the original sponsors, concluded by 1990 that "the TFAP as currently implemented is not achieving many of the plan's original objectives. Moreover, it seems unlikely that the present TFAP planning process will ever be able to achieve them"⁹ and withdrew from the process. In a policy statement, WWF claimed that: "the conceptual design and operational structure of TFAP have failed to deliver acceptable results"¹⁰.

- **United Nations Conference on Environment and Development:** (UNCED or the Earth Summit) offered several options for improving forest management. The possibility of a Global Forest Convention was rejected. Instead, some general forest objectives were listed in Chapter 11 of *Agenda 21* and *Non-Legally Binding Set of Forest Principles* was drawn up and agreed. The Convention on Biological Diversity also offered some hopes for forest protection, although these were thwarted, or at least delayed, when proposals for a Forest Protocol on the Convention were rejected at a meeting in late 1994. Whilst the *Forest Principles* and the biodiversity convention both offer some options for forest conservation, they have not, as yet, been sufficiently well acted upon by governments¹¹.
- **National government initiatives:** A number of governments have attempted to use national law to reduce the impact of the timber trade on important forest areas. For example, both the Austrian and Dutch governments attempted to introduce national bans on the import of tropical hardwoods from unsustainable sources. These and other attempts have failed, in large part due to the limitations imposed by the new GATT trade regulations and the World Trade Organisation, which has strict controls on national regulations regarding preferential trade.

All these instruments could, in theory, help address forest issues. However, it is clear that international initiatives are not enough *on their own* to solve the problems of forest degradation and loss.

Sustainable forest management

At the same time, it has become increasingly obvious that the original conservation aims of setting up protected areas are not enough, on their own, to maintain biodiversity and prevent environmental collapse. Systems of management on some or all of the global forest estate also need to be changed to allow more room for wildlife and environmental functions. In addition, it was recognised that such changes in forest management could and should also benefit the majority of goods and services that forests provide to humans. Within WWF, a target of sustainable forest management by the year 1995 was agreed¹².

Such approaches are also being taken by key figures in the industry. Development in forest management, generally towards management systems that more closely mimic elements of the natural ecology, has been taking place in the USA, Canada, Scandinavia and elsewhere¹³. As yet, many of these systems remain untested, or only tested to a limited extent.

Greenwash marketing

Rising public disquiet about the impacts of forest loss, and the media focus on green issues towards the end of the 1980s, persuaded many companies selling timber and pulp products that there was a market advantage in distancing themselves from the worst excesses of forest destruction. The result was a rapid proliferation of "green labels", environmental claims and advertising gimmicks. When

WWF commissioned research into some of the claims, it was found that the vast majority could not be verified. Some were untruthful or inaccurate, others correct but irrelevant and misleading, and a third group might have been accurate but there was no way of being certain¹⁴. Common claims included:

- from a sustainable source;
- for every tree cut down we plant four new ones;
- product not made of tropical timber.

These problems led to the conclusion that some fresh perspectives and initiatives were needed to address the forest debate.

2. Development of timber certification

This paper focuses on one particular NGO response to the array of problems and frustration described in Chapter 1, the development of independent timber certification.

The principles of timber certification

Timber certification is a system of forest monitoring, timber tracing and wood or pulp product labelling. It aims to form a bridge between individual producers and consumers, allowing the latter to be reassured about the environmental pedigree of a particular product. Producers can, in turn, increase their market share by attracting additional sales and/or additional product value as a result of having an eco-label¹⁵. Independent timber certification provides a framework for both setting and assessing good standards of forest practice. It involves a series of steps for both certifiers and participating forest managers. Certification bodies set standards. Interested producers approach certifier and sign up for certification; they are then committed to regular inspection by certifiers and, if they pass, can sell products with the relevant certification symbol. Certification can be paid for by anyone in the timber chain, but in the future will be mainly paid for by producers. These stages are outlined in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Stages in Timber Certification



The key to timber certification is the development of a system which combines auditing forest practices with timber tracing, to follow the movement of products from a certified forest and thus prevent other, non-certified, timber being added or substituted later in the trade cycle. In other words:

$$\text{Timber Certification} = \text{Forest Auditing} + \text{Timber Tracing}^{16}$$

Timber certification already exists in both the USA and the UK, with certifiers carrying out systems of auditing forestry and plantation operations. As systems developed, there was a risk of different certifiers using a range of different standards of forest management, certification procedure and labels, thus further confusing the consumer. To avoid this, and to provide an overall system for monitoring and assessing certification systems, the Forest Stewardship Council was established in 1993.

An international framework for certification

The concept of an organisation to monitor wood and wood product certifiers was first proposed by the Woodworker's Alliance for Rainforest Protection (WARP) in 1991. After long negotiations, the **Forest Stewardship Council** was launched at a Founding Assembly in Toronto, Canada, in October 1993, attended by 130 delegates from 25 countries. The FSC was legally constituted as an **independent, non-profit, non-governmental, membership organisation**, and voted in an interim board of directors. The Assembly also voted to divide FSC membership into two chambers. The first consists of social, environmental and indigenous organisations, with 75 per cent of the vote while the second includes individuals and organisations with an economic interest in the timber trade and has 25 per cent of the vote¹⁷. An office has been established in Oaxaca, Mexico, and Executive Director has been appointed.

The FSC agreed a general set of *Principles and Criteria for Natural Forest Management* in June 1994¹⁸. A similar set of principles for plantation management is currently under consideration. The FSC approves and accredits certifying agencies worldwide, and these agencies in turn inspect and certify forest concessions. Therefore although the standards of different certifiers can and do vary in detail, they all have to comply to the overall principles and criteria, as outlined below. Certifiers of forest products will be evaluated by the FSC on the basis of their:

- adherence to the FSC Principles and Criteria;
- adherence to FSC guidelines for certifiers;
- specific operations standards of forest management (ie locally appropriate standards which must be approved by the FSC)¹⁹.

Forest Stewardship Principles

1. **Compliance with FSC Principles:** Forest management operations shall respect all applicable laws of the country in which they occur and international treaties and agreements to which the country is a signatory, and comply with all FSC Principles and Criteria.

2. **Tenure and Land-Use Rights:** Long term tenure and rights to use land and forest resources shall be clearly defined and documented, and legally established.
3. **Indigenous Peoples' Rights:** The legal and customary rights of indigenous peoples to own, use and manage their lands, territories and resources shall be recognised and respected.
4. **Community Rights and Relations:** Forest management operations shall maintain or enhance the long-term social and economic well-being of forest workers and local communities.
5. **Optimising Benefits from the Forest:** Forest management operations shall encourage the optimal and efficient use of the forests' multiple products and services, in order to ensure economic viability and a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits.
6. **Environmental impact:** Forest management operations shall maintain the critical ecological functions of the forest and minimise adverse impacts on biological diversity, water resources, and unique and fragile ecosystems and landscapes.
7. **Management Plan:** A Management Plan, consistent with FSC Principles and appropriate to the scale of the operations shall be written, implemented and kept up-to-date, clearly stating the objectives of management and the means of achieving them.
8. **Monitoring and Assessment:** Regular monitoring should be conducted that assesses the conditions of the forest, yields of forest products, chain of custody, and management operations and their social and environmental impacts.
9. **Relation Between Natural Forests and Plantations:** Natural forests should not be replaced by tree plantations. Plantations should complement natural forests and reduce pressures on them.

The *Guidelines for Certifiers* that all certification bodies will have to adhere to are also reproduced:

Guidelines for Certifiers

1. **Compliance with the FSC:** Certifiers must adhere to FSC *Principles and Criteria of Forest Management*
2. **Independence:** To maintain the credibility of forest certification, certifiers must remain independent from outside influence, and shall insulate the decision process from those vested interests in the outcome of the certification process.
3. **Sound Evaluation Procedures:** Certifiers must maintain rigorous, consistent and independent evaluation procedures.
4. **Transparency:** Certifiers must maintain complete transparency and openness to scrutiny by the FSC.
5. **Reciprocity:** In the absence of exceptional, case-specific, and well-documented circumstances to the contrary, it is expected that certifications issued by an accredited certifier are mutually recognised by other accreditation certifiers.

6. **Public information:** Certifiers should make appropriate information about their activities available to the public.
7. **Verifiable Chain-of-Custody:** Certifiers must document their procedures for verifying the chain-of-custody.
8. **Compliance with Applicable Laws:** Certifiers must apply with all applicable local, national and international laws and agreements.
9. **Equity of Access:** Certifiers must design evaluation procedures so as to maintain a fair and non-discriminatory cost structure for large and small forest management entities, while maintaining analytical credibility.
10. **Maintaining Adequate Documentation:** Certifiers must maintain up-to-date written records of their procedures and actions taken pursuant to those procedures.
11. **Appeal Procedures:** Certifiers must have procedures for consideration of appeals against its decisions.
12. **Integrity of Claims:** Certifiers must maintain proper control over the use of licenses, certifications, logos, certification marks and their name.

The FSC will head up an international accreditation system as illustrated in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Framework of Certification

Current development of timber certification

The FSC began the process of evaluating the four existing certification bodies in January 1995. The four are:

- Smartwood Program of the Rainforest Alliance, USA
- Responsible Forestry programme of the Soil Association, UK
- SGS-Forestry of Societe Generale de Surveillance, UK
- Scientific Certification Systems

The four existing certification bodies have already verified 17 different forest areas around the world, covering a total of over 4 million hectares. Ten of the certified forests are in the tropics, and seven are in temperate regions. A final decision about the applications of the four certification bodies for FSC approval will be taken in mid-April 1995²⁰, about the time of the CSD meeting on forests.

Timber certification outside the FSC

Those supporting the FSC hope that, eventually, all timber labelling schemes will either come under its auspices, or at least have compatible standards. Indeed, most of the companies already committed to buying certified timber products have publicly stated their intention to *only* buy FSC accredited products to avoid further confusion within the market. However, at the present time there are a number of alternative schemes which exist alongside the FSC, including:

- A Canadian ecolabelling scheme, launched by the Canadian Standards Association and aiming to have a target date of June 1995.
- The Malaysian government claims to be establishing a national eco-label signifying that all Malaysian wood is harvested in a sustainable manner²¹.
- An Indonesian Ecolabelling Scheme, supported by the Indonesian government and coordinated by the Lembaga Ecolabelling Institute in Jakarta.
- The Forestry Industry Committee of Great Britain has introduced a *Woodmark* scheme which guarantees that timber has been grown in Britain and felled according to the regulations laid down by the Forestry Authority. This scheme has caused some disquiet because its name, *woodmark*, is the same as that of the previously-announced Soil Association's Responsible Forestry Programme.
- A planned accreditation scheme by the African Timber Organisation²².

3. Timber certification in the UK

Timber certification schemes are currently being developed in a number of countries. In some cases, national standards are being drawn up, while in others certification bodies from abroad are certifying to the same set of standards within a range of countries. It is hoped that eventually most countries and, where necessary regions, will have their own standards. Examples of initiatives in different countries include:

- country case studies have been carried out in a number of countries, including the **UK**, **Switzerland** and **Peru**;
- The **Guyana** Forestry Commission is revising its regulations to bring them closer to the FSC *Principles and Criteria*;
- a workshop on timber labelling, sponsored by the FSC, took place in **Indonesia** in autumn 1994;
- WWF **Brazil** is coordinating a Brazilian FSC initiative;
- National standards are being drafted in **Norway**, **Sweden** and **Finland**;

The following chapter focuses on the various initiatives that have taken place in the UK. Most of these have involved staff at WWF UK, drawing on experience from other WWF national organisations, and the international secretariat.

The WWF 1995 Group

In line with WWF International's target for sustainable forest management by 1995, WWF UK has set 31st December 1995 as the target for all wood and wood products traded in the UK to come from well-managed forests. To help promote this, in 1991 WWF UK established the *WWF 1995 Group of Companies*, which are all committed to phasing out, by the target date, the sale and use of all wood and wood products that do not come from well-managed forests²³.

Requirements for joining the WWF 1995 Group

Requirements for joining the WWF 1995 Group, as revised at a mini-seminar in Nottingham on 17th January 1995, include:

1. Commitment to the FSC as the only currently credible independent certification and labelling system.
2. Commitment to the phasing out of the purchase of wood and wood products which do not come from well-managed forests as verified by independent certifiers accredited by the FSC.
3. The phasing out of the purchase of wood and wood products that do not come from well-managed forests and the phasing in of wood and wood products which can be shown to be from well-managed forests by 31 December 1995. In practice this means:
 - 3a. A proportion of wood and wood products will be certified as coming from well-managed forests as defined by the FSC, by independent certifiers accredited by the FSC. The proportion of wood in this category should be demonstrably increasing.
 - 3b. Remaining wood and wood products will come from known forests which the Group member has demonstrated are "well-managed". The proportion of wood in this category should be demonstrably increasing.
 - 3c. Wood and wood products which cannot be traced to known forests and/or where the quality of management is in doubt will be eliminated.
4. A named senior manager will have responsibility for implementing the above commitment. Progress towards the target will be monitored via six-monthly progress reports.
5. WWF 1995 Group members may use the FSC logo when they are licensed to do so. Other labels denoting well-managed sources will not be used²⁴.

The WWF 1995 group will continue to exist after the target date, and will then include European and international members. Membership of the group after the target date will be dependent on them having already reached the target. In return, WWF provides technical support to members, information, including marketing information, and some promotion.

Membership of the group includes representatives from the retail trade, kitchen manufacturing, door and window manufacturers, garden furniture makers, specialist timber importers and paper

manufacturers. Members range from large companies, such as J Sainsbury plc, to small specialist importers such as Milland Fine Timber. Membership in April 1995 stands at 41, with another 10 applications. The members of the WWF 1995 Group are listed overleaf.

Members of the WWF 1995 Group

Acrimo Ltd	Homebase
B & Q plc	Indian Ocean Trading Company
Bernstein Group plc	Laing Homes Ltd
Boots The Chemists	Magnet Ltd
British Rail	F W Mason and Sons Ltd
Richard Burbidge Ltd	MFI Furniture Group plc
Chindwell Co Ltd	Milland Fine Timber
David Craig	M and N Norman Ltd
Crosby Sarek Ltd	Premium Timber products Ltd
John Dickinson Stationary Ltd	J Sainsbury plc
Do It All Ltd	F R Shadbolt and Sons Ltd
Douglas Kane Hardware	Shireclose Housewares Ltd
Ecological Trading Company	Spur Shelving
Richard Graefe Ltd	Swish Products Ltd
Great Mills (Retail) Ltd	Texas Homecare Ltd
Green Life Marketing	Wickes Building Supplies Ltd
Harrison Drape	Woodlam Products

The impact of the WWF 1995 Group is already starting to become apparent. On 17th January 1995, eight of the Group members - Boots The Chemists, B & Q, Do It All, Great Mills, Homebase, MFI, Texas Homecare and Wickes Building Supplies - signed a position statement setting out their agreed policy on wood procurement. They agreed not to buy products from unknown sources or poorly managed forests after 31 December 1995. The WWF 1995 Group retailers buy over £1,000 million of wood products a year, representing over 5 per cent of the total wood consumption in the UK. More than twenty million customers a week shop in their stores²⁵.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

For many years, the aspirations of much of the environmental movement have been tied in with the potential of governmental and intergovernmental change. Great attention has been focused on the role of the various UN bodies and their affiliates, transnational bodies such as the European Union, and governments. These are certainly all important. However, in the social and economic conditions of the 1990s, these are not the only option or necessarily always the most effective vehicle for change²⁶.

Timber certification is currently under development in many countries, despite disinterest or discouragement from governments, opposition from powerful industrial interests, and suspicion from many NGOs. Analysis suggests that three main pressures have helped create the demand for timber certification around the world:

- consumer concern about environmental issues;
- lobbying from environmental and consumer NGOs;
- reaction from sympathetic or perceptive industry representatives.

The importance of the three varies with time and place, and is often difficult to judge. To some extent, industry has taken a leap of faith that consumers really will back the certification schemes, or

has added the benefits of potential gains to a desire to do business without causing unnecessary environmental damage.

It would be naïve to assume that the process has been straightforward or problem free. Large sections of the industry remain opposed to certification and some appear to have attempted to undermine schemes. For example, the Canadian Forest Industry [check name] announced a certification scheme the day before the General Assembly of the Forest Stewardship Council in Canada. The Forest Industry Committee of Great Britain announced its own Woodmark Scheme shortly before the Soil Association's Responsible Forestry Scheme launched a previously well-publicised scheme of the same name. Industry representatives are known to have lobbied individual companies in their own or neighbouring countries against becoming involved in certification. From the NGO side, better liaison early on in the development of the certification concept might have reduced suspicion and smoothed the process of development.

Nonetheless, although the period of development has often appeared to be lengthy for those taking part, changes have come quite quickly. Over a period of four years the concept of independent timber certification has been developed, an international organisation created, funded and supported, and four certification schemes are already in operation. Many more are in the process of development. It is interesting to speculate whether progress would or could have been so fast if it had been controlled by the bureaucracies of governmental or intergovernmental organisations.

Time has also been needed for NGOs and industry to learn how to work together. Relationships that have previously been mainly antagonistic have had to develop into a position of mutual respect and trust, without either party losing sight of its own priorities. Experience from previous attempts at cooperation between environmental NGOs and industry, most notably certification of organic food, suggests that these relationships will almost inevitably continue to be tentative in some cases, but that if managed sensitively, progress can continue to be made towards the joint goal.

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