

The Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) chain of custody certification is required when there is a change of ownership of a product from the forest landscape, specifically when the organisation in the supply chain is involved in producing, transforming or re-labelling a forest sourced product supplied to an end seller or end user. This provides assurance to businesses, retailers and consumers that the product originates from a responsibly managed forest.

To obtain FSC Chain of Custody, the organisation will need to implement a set of procedures. This is relatively simple to do and mostly hinges on their accounting system and stock control system.

The certification system requires an annual audit to be carried by an accredited certification body. To start the process, the interested organisation needs to contact a certification party for a quotation. For contact details of accredited Certification Bodies visit www.asi-assurance.org or contact your local FSC office.

Frequently asked questions about chain of custody certification



Q: I don't handle the products, do I need chain of custody certification?

A: Yes, if you take legal ownership of the products and wish to issue invoices to your customers with an FSC claim.



Q: Do all of our products have to be FSC certified?

A: No, but you must make sure you have implemented systems for segregating FSC-certified and non-FSC-certified products and materials.



Q: Our raw materials are FSC Mix Certified. Do we have to carry out a risk assessment on the supplier's non-FSC sources?

A: No. Any material supplied as FSC Mix or FSC Controlled Wood, and covered by valid certification, can go into your products without further checking.



Q: Do we have to put an FSC label on our products?

A: No, but they must be sold with the correct FSC claim on the sales documents in order for the chain of custody to be upheld. Products such as sawn timber are sometimes not labelled.

Some retailers and other end-users are not FSC certified but instead hold an FSC promotional license. Promotional license holders can only promote the FSC certification of products that are finished, FSC labelled, purchased from an FSC-certified supplier and supplied with the appropriate FSC claim(s). **The FSC label can only be applied by FSC certificate holders.**



Q: A company that is not FSC certified carries out part of one of our processing procedures - do they also need chain of custody certification?

A: If you want another company to carry out part of the process, such as timber treatment or print finishing, then they can be included in the scope of your chain of custody certificate, provided you retain ownership of the products throughout.

The products do not have to come back to you before delivery to the customer. You will need to get in touch with your certification body to include companies within the scope of your certificate.



Q: What's the difference between certification, accreditation and membership?

A: **Certification:** Organisations audited against FSC chain of custody standards are known as FSC certified, they can manufacture and sell FSC-certified products with a claim.

Accreditation: Certification bodies authorised to audit organisations against FSC standards are known as FSC accredited.

Membership: FSC is a democratic organisation, governed by its members. FSC membership is separate to FSC certification and is not mandatory for FSC certified companies or license holders.



Q: Do we have to hold FSC certification in order to buy and sell FSC-certified products?

A: No, you do not need certification to buy and sell FSC-certified and labelled products, as long as you are not using or applying the FSC trademarks yourself.

If you want to use the FSC trademarks to promote your products, you will need to hold either FSC certification or an FSC promotional license. If you want to apply the FSC labels yourself to a product or include FSC claims in your sales documents, you will need to hold FSC certification.



Q: How much does certification cost?

A: Certifications costs vary depending on the size of your company, your turnover of forest products and the certification body you select to conduct your audit. Although FSC-accredited certification bodies pay a set fee to FSC- for each FSC certificate holder they certify, they will also add their own auditing costs to this - as these can vary, it is a good idea to get certification quotes from more than one certification body.

For small businesses there is also the option of a group scheme.

