SFI FACTSHEET
DEFORESTATION



SFI IS TAKING A FIRM STANCE AGAINST DEFORESTATION, FOREST DEGRADATION, AND FOREST CONVERSION

WHY IT MATTERS

Deforestation is significantly affecting the world's forests. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, over 420 million hectares of forests were lost to deforestation from 1990 to 2020, and more than 90% of that loss took place in tropical areas. Unlike sustainable forest management, deforestation occurs when the trees are removed to make room for agriculture and urbanization. The European Union has identified the United States and Canada as low risk countries for deforestation, and SFI is taking action to further reduce risk in Canada and the United States through our SFI standards.

HOW SFI ADDRESSES DEFORESTATION, FOREST DEGRADATION AND FOREST CONVERSION

The SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard, in place since January 2022 with progressive requirements on climate smart forestry and fire resilience, also prevents deforestation, forest degradation, and does not support forest lands converted to other land uses. To further clarify SFI's requirements, formal definitions and guidance for "deforestation" as well as "forest degradation" were adopted in 2024 that are consistent with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers (CCFM).

LEARN MORE ABOUT SFI'S STANCE ON DEFORESTATION AND FOREST DEGRADATION:
https://forests.org/sfi-on-forest-deforestation/



DEFINITION FOR DEFORESTATION - The conversion of forest land to non-forest land use. *(Source: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change)*

DEFINITION FOR FOREST DEGRADATION - Direct human impacts to forest landscapes, which result in [an enduring reduction in] / [reduced capacity to provide] ecosystem services. (Source: Canadian Council of Forest Ministers definition, subject to change)

SFI'S CUT-OFF POLICY - The SFI Board reconfirmed its commitment to no deforestation and no forest degradation by explicitly prohibiting certification to the SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard on lands that are deforested and on practices that are causing forest degradation after December 31, 2020.

All requirements in the SFI Standard, including Board policies and definitions, are current, implemented, and subject to third-party audit.

THE SFI FOREST MANAGEMENT STANDARD:

Requirements in the SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard ensure a science-based approach to forest conversion.

- First, the SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard does not allow forest lands converted to other land uses (real estate development, agriculture, etc) to be certified to the SFI Standard. (Performance Measure 1.3)
- Second, the SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard has specific constraints when it comes to conversion of one forest cover type to another forest cover type. (Performance Measure 1.2).

SFI's default position is that no conversion should occur. However, the SFI Standard allows for conversion in justified cases, but only when ***all*** of the following indicators are met.

a. *does not convert native forest cover types that are rare, ecologically important, or that put any native forest cover types at risk of becoming rare;* ***and***
b. *does not create significant adverse impacts on Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value, old growth forests, forest critical to threatened and endangered species, or special sites or ecologically important non-forest eco-systems;* ***and***
c. *includes objectives for long-term outcomes that support maintaining native forest cover types and ecological function;* ***and***
d. *is in compliance with relevant national and regional policy and legislation related to land use and forest management.*

It's important to clarify that the intent of this requirement is to allow activities that provide ecological benefits, such as restoring historical forest cover types, addressing forest health concerns, or mitigating current or future environmental risks (e.g., climate change). For instance, the IUCN has listed Longleaf Pine as a declining, red-listed species (all Longleaf Pine subtypes are G2 and are FECVs). In response, SFI collaborated with the Longleaf Alliance and SFI-certified organizations to restore areas by converting Loblolly Pine forests back to Longleaf Pine forests.



CERTIFIED FOREST PRODUCTS FROM THE U.S. AND CANADA POSE EXTREMELY LOW RISK FOR DEFORESTATION

THE EUROPEAN UNION HAS IDENTIFIED THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA AS

LOW RISK

COUNTRIES FOR DEFORESTATION PER THE EUROPEAN UNION DEFORESTATION REGULATION (EUDR).

THE SFI FIBER SOURCING STANDARD

The SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard requires SFI-certified organizations to assess the risk of sourcing forest fiber from controversial sources including *conversion sources originating from regions experiencing forest area decline (Objective 11).*

If an SFI-certified organization determines that it is sourcing from such areas, they must mitigate the associated risk or cease procurement from these sources.

THE SFI CHAIN OF CUSTODY STANDARD

The SFI 2022 Chain of Custody Standard requires SFI-certified organizations to assess the risk of sourcing forest fiber from controversial sources including *conversion sources originating from regions experiencing forest area decline (Part 7).*

If an SFI-certified organization determines that it is sourcing from such areas, they must mitigate the associated risk or cease procurement from these sources.

NO CONVERSION OF NATURAL FORESTS TO FOREST PLANTATIONS.

On May 20, 2025, the SFI Board reaffirmed and clarified its position on forest conversion by prohibiting the conversion of natural forests to forest plantations. This prohibition applies retroactively, with a cut-off date of December 31, 2020.