SOURCING SUSTAINABLE TIMBER

Wood Campus Timber Trade Topics are produced in collaboration with the Timber Trade Federation. For further information, visit www.ttf.co.uk

TOPIC CHECKLIST

- Does your customer require sustainable timber?
- What’s available from your supplier?
- Check delivery notes and invoices for your supplier’s certification and registration number, and for percentages of certified raw timber if relevant, so that you can provide evidence to your client
- Look for the label that shows the timber’s from a managed source, or FSC/PEFC certification labels
- Keep documentation
- If the wood or timber product you’re buying is for public sector work, check your supplier can meet certification requirements.

1. Rules for government contracts
The UK Government Timber Procurement Policy (TPP) is mandatory across the government estate, including central government departments, executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies.
It is advisable across semi-autonomous organizations, such as universities and local authorities.
It covers all timber, from perimeter fencing to new scaffolding boards, which must be purchased with evidence of legality and sustainability.
You must hold documentation that shows it comes from Legal and Sustainable sources.
As about 40% of UK timber imports are used in public sector contracts, government policy is a major influence on the sector.

2. How to prove compliance
There are two ways: using Category A evidence (the simplest way) or Category B evidence.

Category A evidence
You will need documentary evidence of full PEFC or FSC Chain of Custody certification.
Or the timber must carry a FLEGT (Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade) Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA).

Sustainable timber
Timber is the most sustainable mainstream building product. It is naturally renewable.
Over 90% of timber used in UK construction comes from Europe, where more trees are grown than harvested (source: TTF Statistical Review 2016).

Softwood and temperate hardwood forests in Scandinavia, Europe, Canada and North America are stable or growing. Growing forests act as carbon sinks; wood products act as carbon stores.
Ask for PEFC or FSC Chain of Custody certification.

See Wood Campus RIBA CPD module Procuring Sustainable Timber for more on timber certification and sustainability and government requirements.
The TTF’s Responsible Purchasing Policy (RPP)
All TTF members comply with the RPP, which helps them minimize the risk of illegal timber entering their supply chains.

The RPP provides guidance and a due diligence toolkit, designed to align with the needs of the EUTR, containing templates and risk assessment and mitigation frameworks. It supports members in promoting good procurement policies to customers, and provides a phased approach to sourcing increasing proportions of timber products from credible and verified legal and sustainable sources.

The RPP is complementary to certification schemes and gives a second layer of confidence. Buying from TTF Members gives assurance that due diligence has been conducted on all their timber products.

European Union Timber Regulation (EUTR)
There is now a legal requirement within the EU obliging all businesses trading in timber or timber-related products to use due diligence systems to ensure they are legally sourced.

If you are a Trader buying or selling timber products in the EU you have to be able to identify who you bought the timber/timber products from, and to keep this information for at least five years for checks, if requested, by the Competent Authority.
6. How available is certified timber?
Supply of certified softwood timber exceeds demand. But supply of certified hardwood and certified hardwood plywood is more limited, particularly if sourced from tropical forests.
Supplies of certified or Verified Progress hardwood will be available from specialist merchants. Ask your supplier about their purchasing policy.

7. What’s this mean for you?
More and more people recognize the need to use certified timber. In many cases, this is a legal requirement. For example, if you work as a contractor or subcontractor on public sector work, (such as NHS, National Trust, UK government or armed forces) you must ensure you comply with the procurement requirements, whether undertaking new build or maintenance work.
It includes the wood used temporarily during construction works as well as wood fixed as a part of a finished structure. This may also apply to local government contracts.

Further information and advice
- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN – Sustainable Forest Management http://www.fao.org/forestry/sfm/en/
- PEFC http://www.pefc.co.uk/
- FSC http://www.fsc-uk.org/en-uk
- WWF Forest Campaign http://www.wwf.org.uk/what-we-do/area-of-work/tackling-forest-loss-and-damage
- Wood for Good Lifecycle database http://woodforgood.com/lifecycle-database/
- American Softwoods, the sustainable choice http://americansoftwoods.com/choice/
Visit www.trada.co.uk for additional technical advice if needed.