

**WhatTheyThink?** [WhatTheyThink.com](#) [Blogs](#) [Print CEO](#) [PrintPlanet](#)

## WhatTheyThink Blogs

### [Going Green](#)



## A Resource for Today's Green Business

[Going Green Home](#) → [2010](#) → [June](#) → [FSC Makes Group Certification More Accessible to Printers](#)

### [FSC Makes Group Certification More Accessible to Printers](#)

By [Peter Nowack](#) on June 30th, 2010

The **Forest Stewardship Council** (FSC) has revised its guidelines for group Chain of Custody (CoC) certification, making the COC more accessible to a greater number of printing facilities and other smaller enterprises.



In a presentation during the Green Forest University College of Paper and Printing held Tuesday, June 29 near Portland Oregon, FSC's Director of Development, Ian Hanna, announced that FSC has raised the top-end cut-off for group certification from US\$1 million in total sales to US\$5 million in sales of forest products (making the sales target more specific to paper), and has eliminated any limit on the number of employees in a company applying for group certification.

The group certification provision is designed to make FSC CoC certification accessible to a broader group of small businesses that would otherwise find the cost of individual certification prohibitive. According to Hanna, the new thresholds are based on research and an analysis of real-world operating constraints.

**Printing Industries of America** and independent entities have lobbied FSC for some time to revise its group CoC policies in light of North American market realities. The revised policy reflects the responsiveness of FSC-US staff, board members, and other stakeholders.

Details of the management of group certification for printers under the new parameters are yet to be worked out, but group management under the auspices of regional trade associations is one of the concepts under consideration.

## 1. **4 Responses to “FSC Makes Group Certification More Accessible to Printers”**

2. By **Pat Berger** on [Jun 30, 2010](#) | [Reply](#)

As a general rule of thumb FSC gets less than 15% of the certification process charges. The biggest portion of the cost goes to the 3rd party certifiers.

The carbon footprint of the certifiers and the certifying process is nonrecoverable and in most cases completely negates any positive carbon footprint that might have occurred. Unless you are using at least a few hundred tons a year of FSC certified paper FSC and the process to become certified are carbon footprint additions instead of reductions.

If the FSC pool of smaller printers is large enough, accompanied by a virtually carbon free certifying process it could have a positive results.

Doing the certifying for such a large group using a very very low carbon count procedure is extremely difficult if not impossible.

Constantly keep this in your mind that the existence of any certifying entity has a huge carbon footprint just to stay in business and for it to have any eco meaning the carbon footprint that it reduces must exceed the carbon footprint of its own operations and employees.

Being green for the sake of green is meaningless without the associated carbon footprint reductions.

3. By **Peter** on [Jun 30, 2010](#) | [Reply](#)

Pat – You have a point there — However, I think that carbon footprint is only one of the many factors to be considered regarding forest certification and the related chain-of-custody certifications in the value chain.

Let’s hear what our other readers have to say.

4. By **Paul Edwards** on [Jul 1, 2010](#) | [Reply](#)

Peter,

I think the bigger question is whether the FSC program has any remaining credibility after everyone learned that the “mill” may be using a % of FSC pulp, but the actual paper you receive may have zero % FSC pulp. (As reported in WTT and elsewhere)

The second question is who is willing to bear the cost of the program. Customers in today’s economy will pay zero premium, in fact, they will not even pay full price right now for most print orders due to massive excess capacity.

We are urging all of our customers to order responsibly and strongly consider POD print and environmentally friendly digital print options to significantly reduce waste, storage and capital requirements.

Lastly, the mills are planting more trees every month than they harvest every year, so...why FSC at all if we have millions and millions of more trees now that 5-10-15 years ago?

We are all for ‘Green’ but we have invested our resources in non-FSC areas that provide higher quality to our customers and more efficiencies to our operations.

5. By [Peter Nowack](#) on [Jul 1, 2010](#) | [Reply](#)

Paul – there are three ways that a manufacturer can process FSC material – the “Transfer” system (FSC in, FSC out), “Percentage based” (in which all of the FSC-labeled product output has a specified percentage of FSC material in it), and the “Credit” system, in which a manufacture can use the FSC label on a percentage of its annual output equal to the amount of FSC fiber it purchases annually.

Credit approaches are used in other industries as well. When a company claims it uses 100% Wind power, it is not claiming that it has “wind-generated-electrons” flowing through its circuits, but rather that it has caused the Wind-generation of an amount of electricity somewhere on the grid equal to the amount of electricity it consumes. (Yes, there are naysayers to this credit system, too.)

Regarding tree planting: I think we need to stop thinking that the North American paper industry operates in isolation. Even if we can agree that forestry in the US is pretty darn good, such is not the case the world over, and the pulp market is a global market. Pulp from areas with not-so-pretty-darn-good forest practices can and does flow into the North American market, as market pulp, finished paper, or printed products (such as children’s books).

All that said, I think it is great that you and others are encouraging customers to embrace techniques and technologies that cut waste and are environmentally beneficial.

## Post a Comment

Name (required)

E-mail (will not be published) (required)

Website



## • Recent Posts

- [PP Wall Graphic Film: Green Alternative to PVC](#)
- [Life Box: The Seedy Side of Packaging](#)
- [No-Vinyl Binders and Bubble Wrap That Isn't](#)
- [IMHO: Green Stuff I Just Don't Get](#)
- [ThePaperLifeCycle.org – Encyclopedic? Yes. Exhaustive? No.](#)

## • About Going Green

Going Green contains stories, reports, commentary, and interviews that highlight how a company can reduce its environmental footprint and become more sustainable.

Managing Editor, [Peter Nowack](#), is a veteran strategist, marketer and writer. His consultancy, **PrintLeadership**, offers sustainability issues guidance and environmental marketing to the graphic communications industry.

## • Recent Discussion

- Peter on [No-Vinyl Binders and Bubble Wrap That Isn't](#)
- [rob tossberg](#) on [No-Vinyl Binders and Bubble Wrap That Isn't](#)
- [Lindsay Gray](#) on [The FSC/SFI Sham ... or Is It?](#)
- [Peter Nowack](#) on [New FSC Labels: Less is Definitely More](#)
- Tom Stodola on [New FSC Labels: Less is Definitely More](#)

## • Going Green Digest



[Read the latest Digest here.](#)

## • Coming Events

- [Visit the Going Green Events Page](#)
- [Sustainable Packaging Forum, 14-16 September, 2010](#)
- [2010 SFI Annual Conference  
September 21-23, 2010](#)
- [Green Manufacturing Expo  
September 28-29, 2010](#)
- [The Green Marketing Conference  
October 6-7, 2010](#)

## • Reading List

[Visit the Going Green Reading List  
Recommended Reading \(7/3/10 - New Book Added\)](#)

## • Green Links

- [Business Green](#)
- [Environmental Leader](#)
- [Green Biz](#)
- [Green Options](#)
- [Green Print Marketing](#)
- [Greentech Media](#)
- [HotCards Green Blog](#)
- [Inside Sustainable Packaging](#)
- [Inspired Economist](#)
- [MIT Sloan: Beyond Green](#)
- [Paper Planet](#)
- [PaperSpecs](#)
- [Sustainable Industries](#)
- [Triple Pundit – People, Planet, Profit](#)

© Copyright 2010 [WhatTheyThink](#). For reprint information, [please contact us](#).