

Practical solutions for retailers to embrace sustainable packaging

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In our previous article on sustainable packaging, we explored international sustainability initiatives to strive towards more environmentally friendly packaging options. This was driven by a more discerning and environmentally conscious consumer and responsive retailers which in turn drove decisions by consumer goods manufacturers and their packaging value chains. We also noted the place cardboard, paper and other forestry sourced products in this discussion, and the importance of sourcing from independently verified sustainably managed forestry sources.

Paper and paperboard made with forest-fibres are a popular choice for packaging materials. Paper-based packaging can protect goods, provide product information and be both biodegradable and easily recyclable. Forests can also provide fibre to make cellulose-based plastics and films, as well as cellulose pulp which is an integral part of viscose production. However, forest-based materials such as these can also be the product of deforestation or poor forestry practices: a threat not only to the world's forests but also to business and brand reputation.



Through responsible procurement, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification system can help to secure a long-term source of timber, paper and other forest-based products from

responsibly managed forests. FSC can enable you to demonstrate your commitment to responsible forestry to your customers. As consumers and businesses seek to reduce their impact on the planet, there is growing demand for sustainable products and packaging. FSC can help you meet this demand.

The Forest Stewardship Council has internationally recognised standards promoting the care of the world's forests for future generations. We support this via global forest certification system that awards forest management and chain of custody certificates. In practice, this means that when a product or packaging bears the FSC label, customers are assured that it has been made with forest-based materials from responsible sources. Including the FSC label on packaging is a great way to demonstrate sustainability, alignment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and supply chain integrity which are independently verified.

The FSC forest management standards are developed through multi-stakeholder engagement and sets requirements for responsible forest management based on national and international conventions and guidelines. Responsible forest management, as promoted by FSC, maintains and enhances biodiversity and ecological processes. It aims to protect the rights of workers, communities, and Indigenous peoples while respecting the economic viability of forest management operations. By offering credible, simple ways for more people to make ethical



Finally, The Voice of Reason!

In a recent study, the CSIR has confirmed that a **reusable plastic shopping bag** has the **lowest environmental impact** compared to bags made from alternative materials including paper.

The government regulated 24-micron plastic shopping bag is **undeniably reusable many times over**, reliable, made from certified post-consumer recycled material and recyclable.

Support the local industry



Be Responsible. Reduce. Reuse. Recycle.



1. CSIR:<https://wasteroadmap.co.za/completed-projects/informing-decisions-on-single-use-plastic-carrier-bags/>

Brought by the leaders in SA plastic bag manufacturing:



and proudly supported by:



choices, we are helping societies recognise the value of forests for a sustainable future.

Research tells us that certificate holders and consumers see value in certification

- 82% of certificate holders (88% of retailers and non-manufacturers) agree FSC certification helps to create a positive corporate image.
- 71% of certificate holders (88% of retailers and non-manufacturers) agree that FSC helps them to communicate their Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives.
- 78% of certificate holders say 'meeting the demands of current clients' is one of the most important benefits of certification.
- 7/10 consumers feel that sustainability claims should be independently certified. (Global Consumer Insights 2017, conducted by Globe Scan on behalf of FSC International)

Having established the importance of sustainability certification in the eyes of manufacturers, their supply chains, retailers and consumers, how does FSC carry out its certification?

Forest management certification

Our forest management certification is awarded to organisations that manage their forest operations in socially, environmentally and economically responsible ways. As part of the certification process, an organisation's current management undergoes an in-depth review on an annual basis to verify conformity against the applicable



FSC standards. A certificate holder's compliance is checked by independent FSC-accredited certification bodies.

South Africa has an approved National Forest Stewardship Standard for Plantation Forestry, and a Certification Body Adapted Standard for Natural Forest Management certification. FSC has several supporting standards and procedures which aim to bring value for smallholders and low-intensity managed forests.

Chain of custody certification

Chain of custody certification applies to manufacturers, processors and traders of FSC-certified forest products. It ensures that FSC materials and products have been checked at every stage of processing, so customers purchasing products sold with FSC claims can be confident

that they originate from responsibly managed forests. Any company involved in the processing or transformation of FSC-certified products (e.g. manufacturing, repackaging, pack-splitting, relabelling, cutting to size or adding other forest-based components to the product) must be FSC certified in order to apply an FSC label to their products and/ or sell them with an FSC claim.

It is possible for both a product and its packaging to be FSC certified, for example a wooden hairbrush

packed in a cardboard sleeve. Alternatively, it may be that an FSC product is packed in uncertified packaging or vice versa.

In cases such as these it must be made clear to which element the FSC label refers. FSC labels can include a range of product types, including 'wood', 'paper', 'board' and 'packaging'. Products and packaging can carry the FSC label if it is produced using FSC-certified materials under a valid FSC chain of custody certificate.

Who needs FSC chain of custody certification?

Any change of ownership in the supply chain requires FSC chain of custody certification if the receiving organisation wants to make an FSC claim about their products. Organisations that do not take ownership (legal title) of FSC-certified

products (e.g. transport, sales agent) do not normally need chain of custody certification.

Companies that use FSC-certified packaging produced by a certified company do not normally need to hold their own FSC certification. Fillers or packers of products (e.g. a company that encloses a sandwich within an FSC-labelled sandwich pack), who do not transform or label the FSC packaging product, do not need FSC chain of custody certification, unless they are adding forest-based materials.

If an FSC claim for packaging is required by customers, fillers or packers of products may become FSC certified and establish a product group for packaging in order to pass FSC claims through sales and delivery documents.

An FSC-certified organisation may outsource activities within the scope of its certificate to FSC-certified and/or non-FSC-certified contractors provided that all FSC chain of custody requirements are met. An outsourcing agreement must be held with each contractor and the FSC-certified organisation must maintain legal ownership of all materials during outsourcing.

How is the FSC certification communicated to the marketplace?

The FSC logo, the name Forest Stewardship Council and the acronym FSC are all registered trademarks. It is the responsibility of the relevant FSC-certified entity to ensure that the trademarks are used correctly. Appropriate approval should be sought for all uses of the FSC trademarks.

An FSC-certified company will have access details for the FSC Trademark Portal where they can download labels featuring their own unique licence code, along with the FSC logo for promotional use.

As consumers and businesses seek to reduce their impact on the planet, there is growing demand for sustainable products and packaging. FSC can help you meet this demand.

Should you require assistance with the process outlined or need further details on the application of the Chain of Custody, contact FSC's Southern Africa Manager, Manushka Moodley via email on m.moodley@fsc.org. **SR**



HOW DO COMPANIES BECOME FSC CHAIN-OF-CUSTODY CERTIFIED?

- Step 1:** Contact FSC-accredited certification bodies (and/or small business group schemes if appropriate) to request quotes.
- Step 2:** Submit a certification application to the FSC certification body of your choice.
- Step 3:** Ensure that an appropriate chain of custody management system is in place, in line with the requirements of FSC-STD-40-004.
- Step 4:** Undergo an on-site audit by your chosen certification body.
- Step 5:** Gain certification approval and receive an FSC certification code (XXX-COC-000000) and an FSC trademark licence code (FSC-C000000).



Packaging: Part 3

Keep a lookout for our final article in the series where we will explore how organisations can communicate their commitment to sustainable packaging and procurement through the FSC on-product label and other communication tools.



The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is a global not-for-profit organisation dedicated to promoting environmentally sound, socially beneficial and economically prosperous management of the world's forests. It helps consumers and businesses identify products from well-managed forests and sets standards by which forests are certified, offering credible verification to people who are buying wood and wood products. For more information visit www.fsc.org