

Practical solutions for retailers to embrace sustainable packaging

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In our first two articles we looked at trends driving developments and preferences for more sustainable packaging options, as well as the role the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®), as the leading responsible forestry certification system, in providing assurance that responsible sourcing and production of forest based products is indeed taking place.

In this, the final part of our sustainable packaging series, we explore how organisations can communicate their commitment to sustainable packaging and procurement through the FSC on-product label identification and other communication tools.

Why is it important to apply the FSC label and specify FSC from suppliers?

Packaging can be labelled as FSC if it is produced and labelled under a valid FSC chain-of-custody certificate. If your supplier is FSC certified and sourcing the FSC-certified materials on your behalf, the FSC label can be applied to your packaging, and

only an FSC-certified organisation can apply this.

To search for and verify FSC certificates you can use the FSC Public Certificate Search database: info.fsc.org

Specifying FSC-certified materials and asking your packaging supplier to apply an FSC label gives your customers an assurance that your business has chosen to source responsibly. It can also enhance your Corporate Social Responsibility policy and increase credibility with stakeholders,

governments, NGOs, and the general public.

An FSC-certified packaging supplier issues an invoice which includes the FSC claim(s) and their FSC certificate code. This is your assurance that you have purchased FSC-certified packaging.

The importance of the FSC Label

FSC-certified paper and board is widely available and most carries either FSC 100%, FSC Mix or the FSC Recycled claim. We will expand upon these



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categories later. Timber products and cellulose may also be sourced with FSC certification for use in packaging applications.

FSC labels can include a range of product types, including 'wood', 'paper', 'board' and 'packaging'. Packaging can carry the FSC label if it is produced using FSC-certified materials under a valid FSC chain-of-custody certificate. The FSC logo, the name Forest Stewardship Council and the acronym FSC are all registered trademarks in South Africa, Namibia and Kenya. It is the responsibility of the FSC-certified company to ensure that the trademarks are used correctly.

An FSC-certified company is granted access to the FSC Trademark Portal where they can download



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FSC labels featuring their own unique licence code, along with the FSC logo for on-product and/or promotional use. If you are creating artwork on behalf of an FSC-certified company, they may provide 'for placement only' graphics to incorporate into your designs.

There is provision within the FSC standards whereby two FSC-certified organisations can enter into an agreement which allows the supplier to label products with the buyer's FSC licence code. The products to be labelled need to be included in the certificate scope of both organisations.

Promoting FSC certified products or products containing FSC-certified packaging

Brands such as retailers who buy finished packaging, labelled as FSC, from an FSC-certified company may apply for a promotional trademark licence to use the FSC trademarks in promotional materials and marketing campaigns.

By signing an FSC promotional licence agreement, companies can create their own unique and powerful point-of-sale materials, signalling their commitment to responsible forest management.

Use of the FSC trademarks via a promotional trademark licence can also help brands to enhance the transparency of their supply chains and communicate their corporate responsibility.

Some brands choose to hold their own FSC chain of custody certification in order that the licence code (within the FSC label applied to their products) links back to themselves rather than their supplier.

The three on-product label categories:



FSC 100%

All the timber or fibre in the product comes from an FSC-certified forest. FSC-certified forests are managed with consideration for people, wildlife and the environment. They are independently audited to meet FSC's Principles and Criteria for Forest Management.

FSC mix

The timber or fibre in an FSC Mix product is a mixture of some or all of the following:



- Virgin timber/fibre from an FSC-certified forest
- Reclaimed/recycled timber/fibre
- Virgin timber/fibre from other controlled sources, i.e Controlled Wood, which is which has been assessed using the relevant FSC standards as being at a low risk in originating from unacceptable sources.

To utilise the FSC on-product label, the product must contain a minimum of 70% FSC-certified wood/fibre and/or recycled input, and the balance must be Controlled Wood.



FSC recycled

There are various systems which may be implemented by organisations. All or a portion of timber or fibre must be pre-consumer or post-consumer reclaimed. To utilise the FSC on-product label, a minimum of 70% of the inputs must be post-consumer reclaimed.

There is no threshold for paper products, but all inputs must be verified as reclaimed.

In order to find out whether you are eligible to hold an FSC promotional trademark licence, please contact Gerard Busse from FSC South Africa, the trademark service provider for South Africa (gbusse@fsc.org)

13 of the 30 (45%) largest retail chains internationally have a Promotional Licence Agreement signed with the Forest Stewardship Council, signalling their commitment to responsible sourcing of forest-based products.

Thank you for taking this journey in looking at practical solutions that retailers can look at embracing sustainably sourced and certified packaging and products from forestry managed forests, and seeing how the Forest Stewardship Council can partner with you to achieve your sustainability objectives. **SR**



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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

