

PRESS INFORMATION**Certified forest area hits 10 million hectares**

London - New figures released at a conference today by WWF show that more than 10 million hectares of forests worldwide (an area roughly half the size of the UK) have been independently certified under the auspices of the FSC - meeting WWF's Forests for Life Campaign target six months ahead of time.

At the meeting in London Dr. Lennart Ahlgren, President and CEO of AssiDomän, and Claude Martin, Director-General of WWF International, also announced a new partnership. Over the next three years AssiDomän and WWF will work together, setting out to promote increased global production of FSC endorsed certified timber products and the adoption of sustainable forestry methods.

More than 115 forests in 25 countries have now been independently certified by the FSC certification and labelling scheme - the only credible, independent guarantee that timber comes from well-managed forests. These forests, in countries spanning every continent, range from small-scale community forests in the Solomon Islands to much larger government-owned forests in the USA.

"It is very encouraging to see how the market is reacting positively to the FSC", said Dr. Timothy Synnott, FSC's Executive Director. "The area of certified forest doubled in the first half of 1998, and we are confident that rising world demand for timber from well-managed forests will ensure that the FSC has an increasing role to play encouraging forest protection worldwide."

The largest area of forest certified under the FSC is in Sweden, and is owned by AssiDomän (one of the world's large private forest owners) who have just completed the certification of 3.3 million hectares of forests - an area equivalent to the size of Belgium.

"When the FSC principles were established, that was an excellent opportunity for us to communicate to our customers that we strive for environmentally sound forestry. True corporate responsibility is about having a balance sheet between high financial return and low environmental cost", explained Lennart Ahlgren, President and CEO of AssiDomän.

Other companies which have embraced forest certification recognise the market access which certification affords whilst ensuring that good forestry practice is guaranteed. Cristobal Roda, Director of the Roda Group - the first private forestry industry to achieve FSC endorsed certification in Bolivia: "As a result of forest certification our harvests are carefully planned and controlled using minimum-impact techniques, and the timber is in great demand from a new market which is seeking certified wood products."

There are now over 2,000 certified wood products available around the world and demand continues to grow.

"Forest owners, timber producers and consumers have been the driving force behind this global initiative for certification, and over 100 forests around the world are now being well-managed - for the benefit of wildlife and people", said Dr. Claude Martin, Director-General of WWF International.

WWF's Forests for Life Campaign has announced a new certification target - to promote the independent certification of 25 million hectares by the year 2001. To ensure that this is achieved, WWF will work with partners (such as the World Bank) to focus on key producer and consumer countries around the world.

Notes to Editors

1. **The FSC** (Forest Stewardship Council) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation founded in 1993. The FSC supports environmentally friendly, socially beneficial and economically viable management of the world's forests. Its main activity is to accredit organisations which certify the quality of forest management. Forest products derived from forests certified within the FSC framework are allowed to carry the FSC trademark.
2. **Countries with forests certified under the auspices of FSC:** Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Honduras, Italy, Malaysia, Mexico, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Panama, Paraguay, Poland, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, Zambia, Zimbabwe.
3. **FSC-accredited certifiers:** The Soil Association (UK), SGS Qualiflor (UK), Rainforest Alliance (USA), SCS (USA), SKAL (Netherlands).
4. **Materials available** (from WWF) for journalists:
B-roll footage: showing Swedish and Bolivian forests, plus interview with Dr. Lennart Ahlgren, AssiDomän Sweden, Dr. Claude Martin, WWF International and Dr. Alan Knight, B&Q, UK.
35 mm colour transparencies. AssiDomän photos available at: www.asdo.se
Colour maps: certified sites around the world.
5. WWF's Forests for Life Campaign has two challenging targets for the next three years:
 - to promote the independent certification of 25 million hectares of forests by the year 2001
 - to establish an ecologically representative network of protected areas covering at least 10% of the world's forests by the year 2000
6. **AssiDomän** has a turnover of about US\$ 3 billion and supplies FSC-endorsed certified sawn timber to UK retailers, including Sainsbury's Homebase.
7. **The Roda Group** exports timber worldwide and supplies timber to B&Q in the UK.

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