

## PEFC CERTIFICATION IN ITALY, STATE OF ART AND CONSUMERS RECOGNITION

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PEFC is the most extensive Sustainable Forest Management certification scheme in Italy and in the world; in Italy has been present since 2001. As of 31 December 2014 PEFC forest certification in Italy was covering 821,933.69 hectares (9,38% of national forest surface), including 3,717 hectares of certified poplar plantation. Enterprises with PEFC chain of custody certification number 921, from wood and paper sectors, including non-wood forest product. Forest certification demonstrate itself to be an important communication tool of the forestry sector towards civil society, probably for its simple comprehension (correct management of forest resources) of complex planning and management activities.

Among its major objectives is the improvement of the image of forestry practitioners and forest product users; PEFC certification can be considered therefore a tool that provides assurances on the legal and sustainable origin of certified forest based products.

To analyze how the PEFC is internationally perceived and which role labeling is playing in the daily life of consumers, a consumer survey on benefits of forest certification was conducted with a sample of a total of 13,000 people in 13 countries, 1,000 men and women aged 16+ years per country, in Australia, Austria, Brazil, China, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain, Sweden, UK and USA. The survey shows that PEFC is the most trusted global forest certification label, slightly ahead of FSC, the Forest Stewardship Council.

Internationally, 40% of consumers know a global forest certification label; the label recognition of PEFC, in World and Italian market, is at 21%.

*Keywords:* PEFC, Sustainable Forest Management, forest certification, consumer survey, forest based products.

*Parole chiave:* Gestione Forestale Sostenibile, certificazione forestale, indagine consumatori, prodotti di origine forestale.

### 1. About PEFC in Italy and in the world

PEFC, the Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes, is the most extensive forest certification system in the world and has been present since 1999. It was founded in Paris as an action of European small and family forest owners to demonstrate excellence in sustainable forest management.

This international system enables the certification of forests and plantations that are managed according to exacting economical, ecological and social sustainability standards. Furthermore, through PEFC Chain of Custody certification, it is possible to trace products from the forests to the final consumers. In the end of 2014, there are 264 million ha of forest area and around 750,000 forest owners certified and additionally more than 15,800 companies showing traceability as certified company in the chain of custody.

In Italy, as of 31 December 2014 PEFC forest certification in Italy covers over 821,933.69 hectares (with 3,717.65 hectares of PEFC certified poplar plantation) mostly in north-east Italy (the Friuli Venezia Giulia, Trentino Alto Adige, and Veneto regions), but certified forests can be found in other Administrative

Regions, such as Abruzzo, Lombardia, Piemonte, Sardegna and Toscana.

There are 921 enterprises with PEFC Chain of Custody certification from the wood and paper sectors and this number is growing fast (the annual percentage increment is around 20%).

Among PEFC's major objectives is improving the image of forestry practitioners and forest product users. PEFC certification can be considered as a tool that provides the buyers of forest-based products with assurances on the origin of these products (wood, paper, non-wood forest products, etc.).

This is a role that has been recognized by the EU Timber Regulation 995/2010 and EU 607/2012 (forest certification may be used in the risk assessment procedure). Forest certification has demonstrated that it is an important tool for the forestry sector to communicate with civil society, thanks in particular to its simple depiction (the correct management of forest resources) of complex planning and management activities. This can be clearly seen through several private and public forest properties accepting the idea to invest in planning their forest management, in order to achieve forest certification.

## 2. Global Consumer Survey on forest certification

To analyze how the PEFC is internationally perceived and which role labelling is playing in the daily life of consumers a survey was conducted. It was the first PEFC Global Consumer Survey in general and was undertaken by German-based GfK on behalf of PEFC International with a sample of a total of 13,000 people in 13 countries, 1,000 men and women aged 16+ years per country, in Australia, Austria, Brazil, China, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain, Sweden, UK and USA.

## 3. Results

The survey shows that more than 80% of consumers globally want companies sourcing certified material from sustainably-managed forests to use certification labels. Certification labels, such as the PEFC label, are the most trusted means of giving confidence to consumers that wood-based products are sustainably sourced. Consumers globally believe that it is important to make ethical choices, with 60% of all those surveyed agreeing that their shopping choice for a labelled product can make a positive difference to the world's forest.

Only a small minority, 10%, felt that their choice for a sustainably sourced product would not make a difference. Moreover, nearly 30% of all consumers responded that they actively look for forest certification labels.

The research shows that over half of all consumers (54%) consider certification labels as the most reassuring proof that environmental and sustainable development considerations have been taken into account.

Other means of proof include country of origin (30%), brand (24%) and recommendations by family/friends and media (17% and 16% respectively).

The overwhelming majority of consumers globally - more than 80% - want companies to use labels on products to communicate their responsible sourcing practices to them. Only 4% disagreed that companies should use labels.

Internationally, 40% of consumers know a global forest certification label; the label recognition of PEFC, in World and Italian market, is at 21%. Regarding consumers trust on certification labels, PEFC resulted to be a trusted global forest certification label, as much as FSC, the Forest Stewardship Council.



Figure 1. PEFC certified forests in Italy.



Figure 2. PEFC certified forests distribution in Italy.

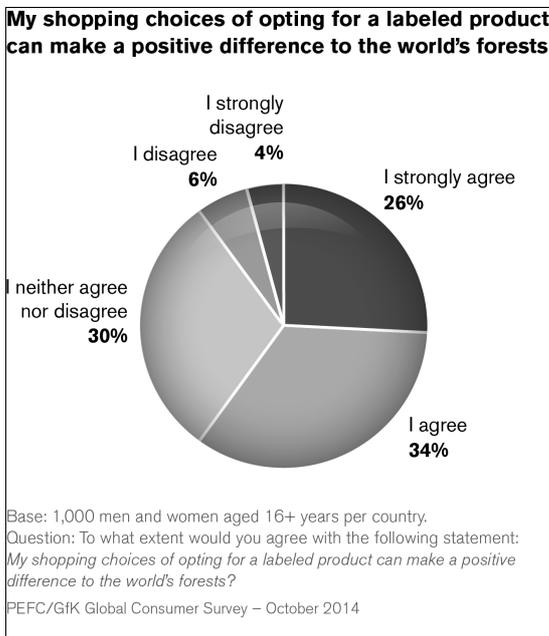


Figure 3. Result of survey about the important of forest certification for the future of world's forests.

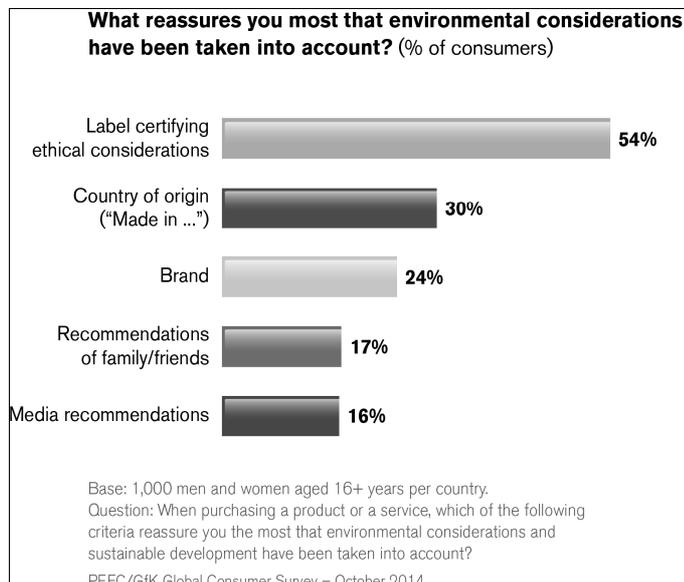


Figure 4. Result of survey about which message is most trusted in offering environmental information about a product.

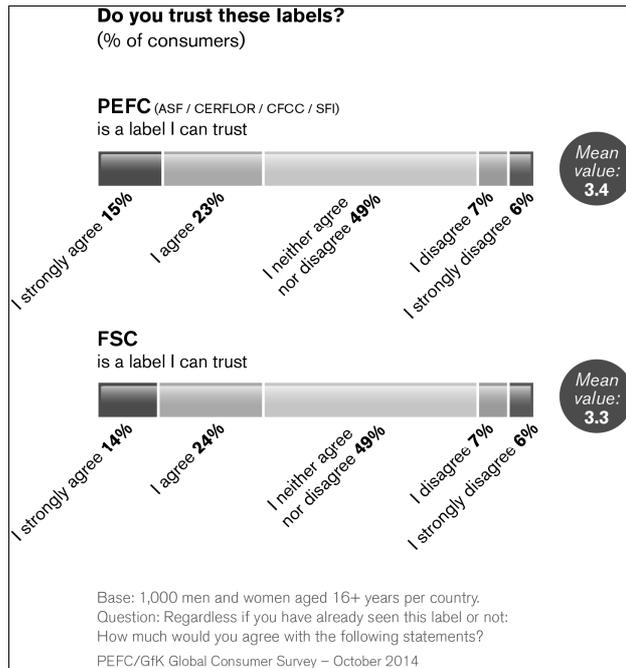


Figure 5. Result of survey about which certification scheme is trusted the most among consumers.

## SUMMARY

### Certificazione PEFC in Italia, stato dell'arte e riconoscibilità tra i consumatori

Il PEFC è il più diffuso schema di certificazione forestale nel mondo e in Italia. Al 31 dicembre 2014 in Italia la certificazione della gestione forestale sostenibile interessava 821.933,69 ettari (9,38% della superficie nazionale a bosco), compreso 3.717 ettari di pioppeti. Interessa regioni come il Friuli Venezia Giulia, il Veneto e il Trentino Alto Adige ma è presente anche in Abruzzo, Lombardia, Piemonte, Sardegna e Toscana. Le aziende con certificazione di catena di custodia erano 921, di tutti i settori del legno e carta, comprendendo i prodotti forestali non legnosi. Da un punto di vista pratico, la certificazione forestale rappresenta uno strumento di marketing a disposizione del settore forestale, perché permette ai suoi operatori

di comunicare con la società civile e con il pubblico sulle modalità stesse della gestione delle risorse forestali, in termini semplici e comprensibili.

Per analizzare quanto la certificazione sia percepita dal mercato internazionale e che ruolo giochi nella vita quotidiana dei consumatori, è stata effettuata una indagine internazionale sul valore della certificazione forestale e 1.000 persone, di età superiore ai 16 anni, sono state intervistate in ognuno dei 13 stati selezionati, cioè Australia, Austria, Brasile, Cina, Finlandia, Francia, Germania, Giappone, Gran Bretagna, Italia, Spagna, Svezia e USA.

Il PEFC è risultato essere il marchio di certificazione forestale globale più affidabile, leggermente più di FSC, Forest Stewardship Council. A livello internazionale, il 40% dei consumatori conosce un marchio di certificazione forestale globale; il riconoscimento del marchio PEFC, nel mercato italiano e mondiale, è al 21%.