



- MEDIA RELEASE -
SENATOR THE HON. ERIC ABETZ
Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation

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Wilderness Society wrong over UK timber procurement

The Wilderness Society is wrong.

Australian forests products do not face a ban in the United Kingdom as claimed by the Wilderness Society today.

On the 30th March the UK merely announced that the PEFC - Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (all PEFC schemes) - are on probation and that reviews into it will continue. A copy of the announcement is attached.

I draw attention to the following line:

“Mr Morley confirmed that in the meantime the UK Government would continue to accept the PEFC scheme as a source of legal and sustainable timber, and that suppliers can continue to offer PEFC timber as legal and sustainable in response to central government demand.”

The Wilderness Society's pedalling of false information for their own political purposes is breathtaking.

They do so in the full knowledge that their activities will harm the employment prospects of thousands of Australians undertaking world class and sustainable forestry activities in this country.

They also do so whilst ignoring the need to address real issues of environmental concern, such as the illegal and unsustainable logging of south east Asian rainforests.

The Australian Government welcomes the opportunity for further discussions with the UK Government to highlight the world-leading and truly sustainable nature of forestry activities in Australia.



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NEWS RELEASE

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PEFC Forest Certification Scheme still on probation as checks reveal outstanding issues

Environment Minister Elliot Morley announced today that a sample check on the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (PEFC) system requirements did not reveal a justification to change its probationary status yet.

The PEFC was put on probation by the Minister in August 2005 after introducing changes to its scheme to meet the Government requirement for evidence that timber and wood products come from legal and sustainable sources. The PEFC was accepted as assurance of this with the proviso that its national organisations adopted the new requirements to the Government's satisfaction.

A sample check recently undertaken for the Government by the Central Point of Expertise on Timber (CPET) indicated that not all the PEFC national schemes are fully adopting the new requirements. Mr Morley has decided these findings should be scrutinised further before the probation status of the PEFC can be resolved.

A review will be conducted later in 2006 of all the forest certification schemes first assessed by CPET in November 2004. The review will take account of any evidence relevant to ensuring that schemes' system requirements meet the CPET criteria for assuring legal and sustainable timber sources.

Mr Morley confirmed that in the meantime the UK Government would continue

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to accept the PEFC scheme as a source of legal and sustainable timber, and that suppliers can continue to offer PEFC timber as legal and sustainable in response to central government demand.

Notes to editors

1. Supplying timber from legal sources is a standard condition of UK government contracts. Supplying timber from sustainable sources is optional but those that offer it are given preference when bids are evaluated, so it is important that the assurance given is credible before any bidder is given a competitive advantage.
2. In November 2004 the government announced that of the five forest certification schemes assessed against government contract requirements only two, the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), gave assurance of legal and sustainable timber sources. The other three - PEFC, SFI and MTCC - passed the test for assuring legal sources. PEFC and SFI made changes to their scheme standards and asked to be re-assessed.
3. The changes made by PEFC that appear not to be fully adopted are concerned with the involvement of environmental and social stakeholders in the decision making process for setting forest management standards.
4. The Government has previously announced that it will undertake regular reviews of all the certification schemes assessed, including reviewing comments from interested parties, and that it will seek to improve its methodology for assessing forest certification schemes and other forms of assurance in the light of experience.

End

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