



In addition to offering aesthetics and durability, timber flooring is a simple, straightforward way to achieve an environmentally responsible project. Alun Watkins explains why specifying certified timber is so important.

Promoting SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH CERTIFIED TIMBER

The UK and international marketplace now expects timber and wood-based products to come from reliable, sustainable and legal sources. From commercial building owners and public-sector specifiers to the DIY and residential markets, everybody is now far better informed and knowledgeable about their purchasing decisions and the impact on the environment.

As a result, they're increasingly looking to buy and specify timber products that are labelled as legal and sustainable.

Wood products use considerably less energy in their production than many alternative materials and timber flooring critically locks away CO2 for the lifetime of the product and can eventually be recycled at the end of its usefulness.

The specification of PEFC-certified timber throughout the building trade is growing exponentially and as climate change and environmental concerns are now ever-present, it is viewed as a key way of providing assurances of responsible procurement.

Sustainable demands

The demand for certified forest products is being driven by a wide range of complex factors both nationally and globally. Forests contain some of the most valuable and bio-diverse ecosystems on the planet. Without forests, vital functions would be lost, while many of the species which rely on forests would also be endangered or disappear.

If forests are to continue to deliver the full range of benefits that people and nature are dependent upon and provide a wide range of products for the timber sector, they need to be conserved and managed sustainably.

Forest certification provides assurances of sustainable forest management. However, only around 10% of the world's forests are currently certified. Companies have long recognised that sourcing and using PEFC-certified wood-based products helps safeguard the world's forests, as well as enhancing their corporate sustainability credentials.

Certification provides their customers with assurances such products are made from environmentally-sound, raw materials.

When creating a sustainable procurement policy and sourcing any timber and wood-based products, it is critical to choose from a reliable, sustainable and legal source - it is important to know the origin of the timber you specify.

With timber often at the heart of contemporary design - especially in the commercial and shop-fitting world, it is important to remember that certified timber is a central component of the Ska environmental performance standard.

This tool measures fit-out projects in the context of the higher sustainability concerns across the corporate agenda and consists of 104 individual 'good-practice' measures including certified timber, energy efficiency and CO2 emissions.

Consumer demands

Of course, many products carry endorsements and environmental labels but what do they actually mean? Certification is a two-part process.

First, forest certification assures that forests are managed in line with challenging environmental, social and economic needs and secondly, Chain of Custody covers traceability of the wood from the forest to the final product and end-user. Certification is awarded after a third-party audit verifies that the forestry practices and the Chain of Custody systems are in compliance with PEFC's internationally recognised standards.

Over the past few years, market research has consistently shown ethical consumption is on the rise. PEFC and market measurement specialists GfK Global recently undertook an in-depth survey on certification labels (both PEFC

and FSC) polling 13,000 men and women from 13 different countries and found most global consumers - more than 80% - want companies to use labels on products. With 30% of all consumers saying they actively look for forest certification labels.

Environmental labels allow companies to visibly communicate their commitment to responsible sourcing. This is becoming ever-more important as consumers are increasingly conscious of the impact of their buying decisions.

Consumers trust environmental labels. Labels such as PEFC's are actually the most trusted source of information for consumers, ahead of media reports, consumer reports and corporate sustainability reports.

Certification is vitally important to the future of the planet's forests but should also be key to those supplying products such as timber flooring.

The PEFC label is one of the simplest ways to demonstrate that your flooring comes from responsibly-managed forests. This is your guarantee it'll have been sourced from forests endorsed against PEFC's international Sustainability Benchmarks and tracked through the supply chain via a strict Chain of Custody.

In the UK and internationally, PEFC works hard to take account of the challenges and real-life issues facing the broad range of stakeholders involved in the global forestry and wood-products supply chain.

Developing a forest products procurement policy which specifies certified products helps demonstrate your company's support for the world's forests.

PEFC is committed to protecting global forestry while stimulating a healthy, sustainable forest products supply chain. Providers of timber flooring and those specifying it can do their bit as well to drive this forward further by choosing, stocking and selling certified timber flooring.

For more information on PEFC, forest certification and certification advice visit: www.pefc.co.uk You can also download a special brochure Flooring & PEFC-Certified Timber at: <http://bit.ly/2fqngwy> www.pefc.co.uk

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