



Consumer and Customer Research Reinforces the Power of SFI as a Sign of Responsible Forestry

Customers and end users of wood and paper products want to know that products are produced in line with their environmental expectations and come from responsibly managed forests. The Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) program, backed by third-party certification and strict labeling requirements, achieves this, as a variety of research studies demonstrate.

Forest Certification Empowers Consumers When Making Purchases

In a series of focus groups conducted among women across the U.S.¹, participants consistently indicated that the concept of forest certification was important to them. It demonstrates clear and tangible standards—with reforestation and replenishment of the resource—as well as supporting the fundamental idea of accountability. Perhaps more importantly, respondents felt it helps establish better and easier ways for them to make product choices, and were eager to learn more—including which labels they should look for when making product choices.

Complementing these findings, a survey conducted by Harris/Decima among a sample of women²—the primary shoppers in most American households—found that more than nine in ten agree that buying wood and paper products from certified sustainable forests helps them feel like they are contributing to protecting the environment (91% agree). Such consumer interest and empowerment provides today’s companies with tremendous opportunity. For example, demonstrating the power of product labeling, about four in five also say that if they saw a product was certified as coming from responsibly-managed sustainable forests they would be more likely to buy it. A majority is still likely to buy it even if it costs up to 10% more.

Consumers Are Looking for the SFI Label

In a world filled with environmental claims, consumers want to know labels are credible and legitimate. TerraChoice Environmental Marketing surveyed more

than 2,000 consumer products in North America, and found that 98% committed at least one of what it calls a sin of greenwashing—such as offering no proof or being vague.

In its 2009 Seven Sins of Greenwashing³, TerraChoice lists SFI among 14 credible, legitimate eco-labels that are third-party certified, have a publicly available standard and have a transparent standard development process.

A study conducted by GfK Roper Public Affairs & Media and scholars at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies⁴ found that not only do most U.S. consumers think it is important or essential to have eco-labels that describe the environmental impacts caused by product manufacture, use and disposal, but they are also more likely to be familiar with the SFI label (19%) as compared to the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) label (12%).

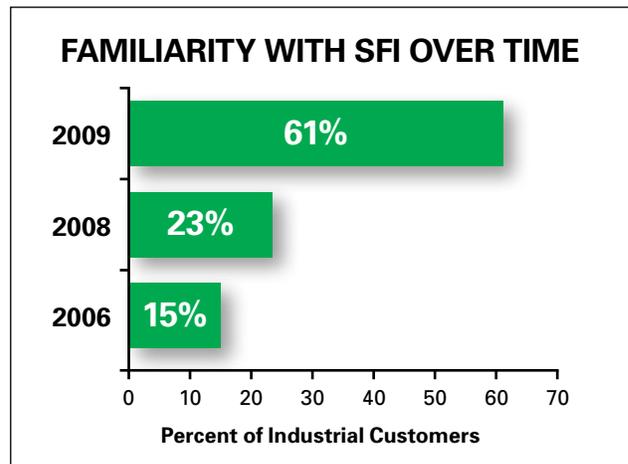


This same study shows that North American consumers find environmental groups as most trustworthy as a sponsor of an eco-label, followed by government agencies and industry groups who are generally equally likely to be seen as trustworthy. As a program that is governed by an independent board reflecting the variety of interests in the forestry community equally—from environmental groups to academics to forest companies—SFI is well-positioned as such a trustworthy sponsor. In fact, a study⁵ conducted by the Artemis Strategy Group found that more than two in three consumers familiar with SFI (69%) believe the Sustainable Forestry Initiative is extremely or very credible for ensuring responsibly-managed forests and responsible sourcing of wood fiber. An even greater proportion of consumers familiar with SFI (81%) reported that SFI is extremely or very important in this way.

Socially Responsible Companies Are Saying ‘Yes’ to SFI

As a recent TerraChoice Environmental Marketing Inc. study revealed⁶, most companies (83%) are expecting to increase their green purchasing over the next two years. This study also reinforces the strong support behind SFI. For example, the SFI label was included among the top ten eco-labels purchasers most used and/or recognize to help them make purchasing decisions.

At the same time, a growing number of today’s leading companies are committing to SFI. One reason is the difference that SFI certification makes on the ground and in the marketplace. Indeed, another recent study conducted by Harris Interactive⁷ finds that a majority of companies familiar with SFI agree that it results in better forest stewardship, establishes a better chain-of-custody and provides reassurance to consumers that wood and paper come from responsibly-managed



forests. This same study finds that most companies (87%) believe that third-party forest certification is important to demonstrate the environmental credentials of their company and its products. And, the study demonstrated the recent significant growth among leading companies when it comes to familiarity with SFI—in fact, according to the data, familiarity with SFI nearly tripled between 2008 and 2009 (from 23% in 2008 to 61% in 2009).

91% Percentage of women who agree that buying wood and paper products from a certified sustainable forest makes them feel like they are contributing to protecting the environment.²

With only 10% of the world’s forests certified, customers know that they are sending a message to their end-users that they support sound forestry by sourcing and labeling SFI-certified products. And, as research validates, consumers are paying attention.

For more information about the SFI program, visit www.sfiprogram.org.

SOURCES:

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2. Harris/Decima, May 2008. *Abundant Forests Alliance Tracking Survey*. Online survey conducted among a national sample of 1,922 women between the ages of 35 and 54 who have at least one child under the age of 19 living at home, completed at least some college and hold a somewhat positive, neutral or slightly negative view towards companies that manufacture wood and paper products.
3. TerraChoice Environmental Marketing Inc., April 2009. *Seven Sins of Greenwashing*. <http://sinsofgreenwashing.org>.
4. GfK Roper Public Affairs & Media and the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, May 2008. *Consumer Attitudes Toward Environmentally-Friendly Products and Eco-labeling*. Telephone survey conducted among a national sample of 2,010 adults.
5. Artemis Strategy Group, August 2008. *The Sustainable Forestry Initiative Label Communication Assessment*. Online survey conducted among 1,013 consumers across the U.S. and Canada, as well as 219 professionals identified as responsible for purchasing paper and wood products or developing environmental policies for their company.
6. TerraChoice Environmental Marketing Inc., September 2009. *EcoMarkets Summary Report*. Survey among 587 procurement professionals in the United States and Canada between April and July 2009.
7. Harris Interactive, November 2009. *Sustainable Forestry Initiative Industrial Buyer Research*. Online and telephone survey conducted among 141 industrial buyers in the U.S.

