

# Producing Certified Wood

by Jeff Stringer



Woodland certification is gaining significant momentum, and woodland owners stand to reap benefits from having their woodlands certified. Certification can provide a number of monetary and tangible benefits to woodland owners. While these benefits include access to carbon markets and payments for other ecosystem services that may become available, sale of sustainably produced biomass, and increased technical assistance, one of the primary benefits of certification is preferential treatment in the sale of certified timber. Certified woodlands are the source of timber and pulpwood for the production of certified wood and wood products. Forest industries with the goal of marketing certified wood products must have a sustainable source of certified wood. They are willing to provide preferential treatment to woodland owners growing certified wood. The accompanying diagram shows each step along the path of wood movement from the certified woodlands to final market.

## Markets Drive Industry Interest in Certified Wood

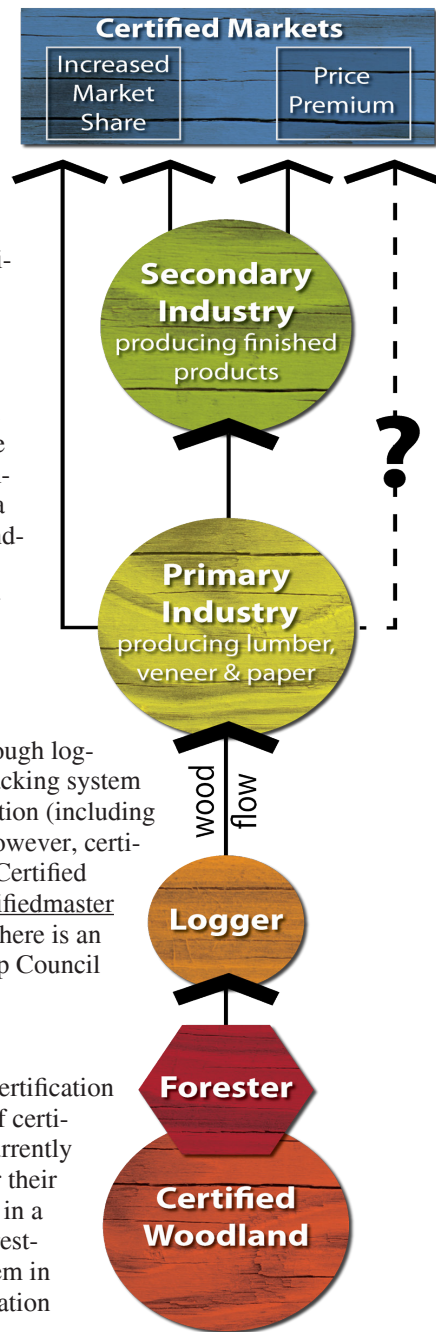
The diagram indicates that interest and the monetary support for certified woodlands and the benefit to woodland owners selling certified timber and pulpwood is ultimately driven by the strength of the markets for certified lumber, paper, and finished wood products. These markets include new customers who want certified products, which results in increased market share for the forest industry and a potential price premium. The price premium is currently weak and generally only available to secondary industries that make finished forest products (cabinets, furniture, etc.). Typically, primary forest industries producing lumber have seen only increased customers, not increased prices. Forest industries are responding to consumer demand. Their interest in buying certified timber that includes the specific type of certified system their clientele requires is based on this demand.

## Loggers' Involvement in Certified Timber

The flow of certified timber and pulpwood from woodlands to forest industries generally comes through loggers. Any forest industry that is interested in procuring certified timber or pulpwood must have a tracking system that provides evidence of where each log or load of pulpwood sticks came from. Any logging operation (including landowners wishing to cut their own timber) can harvest timber growing in a certified woodland. However, certified loggers can ease the burden of tracking certified timber from the stump to the saw or pulpmill. Certified loggers, such as logging firms that are members of the Certified Master Logger Program ([www.certifiedmasterlogger.com](http://www.certifiedmasterlogger.com)), can make it easier for forest industries to obtain certified timber and pulpwood. Also, there is an effort to reduce the amount of work required of landowners who want to become Forest Stewardship Council certified if they use certified loggers.

## Woodland Owners and Foresters

From a woodland owners' perspective, the decision to certify woodlands and choosing the type of certification to pursue would be based on the interest of the forest industry in purchasing timber and what type of certified timber the industry wants (American Tree Farm, FSC, Green Tag, etc.). Forest industries are currently making these decisions based on market opportunities. Professional foresters are also gearing up for their involvement with certified forest management by increasing their understanding of what is required in a management plan for the different certification systems. Ultimately, woodland owners rely upon foresters to assist them with the development of an acceptable management plan for the certification system in which they are interested. Foresters can also help woodland owners with determining which certification system is best for them and help them develop a means of selling their certified timber.



### About the Author:

Jeff Stringer, Ph.D., is a hardwood extension specialist at the University of Kentucky and is responsible for continuing education and research in hardwood silviculture and forest operations. He is also an editor of the Kentucky Woodlands Magazine.

Cooperative Extension Service, Department of Forestry, University of Kentucky, 201 Thomas Poe Cooper Building, Lexington, KY 40546-0073; Phone: 859.257.5994; Fax: 859.323.1031; E-mail: [stringer@uky.edu](mailto:stringer@uky.edu)