

Sappi secures PEFC Group Scheme Certification for small growers

Five small timber growers in KwaZulu-Natal have achieved a historic milestone by becoming the inaugural participants in the Sappi Khulisa programme to receive the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) within the Sappi Group Scheme for small growers.



Source: www.unsplash.com

The five timber growers, with a total 8,143 hectares of timber area, have been successfully audited and awarded a PEFC Group Scheme certificate. The recipients of this significant award and founding members of the Sappi PEFC Group Scheme are the iMfume Cluster, consisting of more than 20 individual small growers from the Mfume district near Scottburgh, Sobengwe Trading from Ixopo, MG Farming from Richmond, Mclean M from Underberg, and Braecroft Timbers from Underberg.

Community projects

The Sappi Khulisa Programme is a tree-farming scheme. Established in 1983, it initially focused on subsistence farmers who had between one and 20 hectares of land on which to grow trees for commercial use. Today, the programme has expanded to include community forestry projects as well as supplementary agro-forestry enterprises such as beekeeping and vegetable farming.



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The certification follows years of intensive efforts by Sappi, working together with other players in the forestry industry to address the barriers of entry for small growers to achieve certification. This international certification provides the crucial assurance to end-use consumers.

Forest certification is used as a tool to ensure that responsible forest management practices are implemented in the forest, and that wood from certified forests can be identified throughout the supply chain. Certification systems establish specific

forest management, woodfibre sourcing, Chain of Custody tracking and marketing requirements for certified organisations; provide a framework for third-party auditing; and govern the use of promotional and product claims.

Assurance

Certification enables conscious consumers to choose responsibly sourced wood-based products. It gives consumers the assurance that the woodfibre used to manufacture the products they are buying has been legally harvested in accordance with sound environmental practices, and that social aspects, such as indigenous rights, have been taken into account. Forest certification and other voluntary codes of conduct are key tools for promoting sustainable consumption and production, and for combating deforestation, forest degradation and illegal logging by providing proof of legality and responsible management, harvesting and manufacturing practices.

In 2021, Sappi announced that it had achieved the first PEFC endorsed SAFAS (Sustainable African Forest Assurance Scheme) certification in South Africa, after starting with the process in 2015 - a journey which entailed participation in the development of a Forest Management Standard for South Africa, the development of mechanisms to support certification requirements and, in 2018, the endorsement of the standard and certification procedures. A certification tool was developed by the team to assess plantations, based on several factors including environmental, social and economic conditions specific to South Africa.

"After years of collaboration and dedicated commitment to developing a forest certification standard for South Africa, this achievement marks a historical moment in our long journey to support and make forest certification more accessible to the small landowners that participate in our supplier programmes," commented Duane Roothman, Vice President of Sappi Forests.

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