

Finnish Forest Owner Promotes Benefits of Certification

Finnish forest owner, Katri Simila, is from Toijala, a small town of 12,000 inhabitants located about 150 kilometres north of Helsinki. Since 1995, Katri and her sister have owned forest holdings of some 100 hectares distributed over about 10 forest areas in the south of Finland.

These forests include pine, spruces and birches. Much of the wood from these forest holdings is sold to saw mills for the pulp and paper industries, with smaller volumes going to the construction sector. Forest residuals – branches, twigs – are sold for bio-energy.



The sisters obtained Sustainable Forest Management certification in 1998. They opted for Group Certification. Because of the relatively small and fragmented nature of their forest holdings, this is a more viable and cost-effective option. Group Certification of forests is especially popular in Finland where many forest holdings are less than 30 hectares. It is encouraged by the government. According to Katri, almost 100% of forest owners in Finland are certified while some 70% of 'forest chains' have obtained Chain-of-Custody certification. Almost all of Katri and her sister's customers are also certified. They choose to sell only to certified operations.

According to Katri, forest certification yields several important benefits. In Finland there is considerable awareness of the importance of sustainable forest management among consumers and the government. As a result, forest certification improves sales prospects. Without certification it becomes more difficult to sell wood and wood-based products. It also helps to secure customer loyalty as purchasers and consumers of wood and wood-based products are given assurances that products are sourced from sustainably-managed forests.

Equally, forest certification, with its stringent standards, contributes to the long-term health and sustainability of forests. In that way, they can continue to yield their considerable benefits for economic, environmental and societal well-being.

Katri Simila works in the paper converting industry. She is currently completing a Masters in Forest Science and the University of Itä-Suomi. She is a board member of the Finnish Forest Management Association of Pirkanmaa and the Central Union of Agricultural producers and Forest owners (MTK), and a member of the Young Farmers Organisation of Finland.