

Frequently Asked Questions

Knoll and the FSC® Certified Wood Standard

Q1: What is FSC and why did Knoll choose FSC as its third party certifier?

A1: FSC® (Forest Stewardship Council) is the international standard setting body for defining and measuring a well-managed forest and providing traceability through chain-of-custody certification. It trains and monitors other designated third party certifying auditors, including the Rainforest Alliance, which provide the actual certifications based on exacting FSC criteria. FSC is the only wood certification standard recognized by the U.S. Green Building Council. Knoll has chosen to work with FSC since 1995 because FSC, unlike other wood certifiers, is committed to actively promoting sustainability and upholds the most stringent standards by requiring applicants to meet demanding prerequisites, not just options, to achieve certification. And unlike some others, FSC is proactive in pursuing social equity, along with the environmental and economic dimensions, of sustainability. Working with FSC helps assure that we are at the leading edge of responsible environmental practices. Today, Knoll is the largest contract furniture supplier of FSC-certified wood in North America.

Q2: Which Knoll products contain FSC certified wood as standard?

A2: All Knoll open plan office systems, casegoods and tables are part of the program, including all North American Cherry, Maple, Walnut and Oak veneers. The program excludes KnollStudio products, engineered veneers (Techwood) and five non-domestic veneers (Anigre, Beech, Makore, Sapele and Sycamore) Knoll will attempt to continue to source these veneer species from FSC sources.

Q3: What does the new Knoll FSC certified wood standard mean for the customer?

A3: Our customers understand the implications of continued forest mismanagement for the health of the environment and social equity in endangered places and they want to deal with companies that make a difference. The customer buying Knoll furniture made with FSC certified wood is assured that the product is manufactured using legally harvested wood from forests managed to ensure high conservation values and protect the social equity of people living in the region.

Knoll customers can confidently know that the wood furniture they purchase helps to address global deforestation, a primary factor in climate change, and does not create economic hardship or endanger cultural survival by destroying resources critical to future generations.

Knoll adds this value for all Knoll open plan office systems and tables, with the exception of KnollStudio products, Techwood and five non-domestic veneers (Anigre, Beech, Makore, Sapele and Sycamore)—without special request, without additional cost and without extended lead times. In addition, FSC certified wood in Knoll products help make it possible for our customers to achieve LEED® credits and acquire the FSC certification that is a prerequisite for SMaRT®.

Q4: What processes are required by Knoll in order to offer FSC certified furniture?

A4: To offer FSC certification Knoll must be able to trace the wood in every piece of furniture back to the forest from which it was harvested and comply with the FSC mandated requirement that at least 70% of wood used in the furniture be harvested from FSC-certified forests. And it must comply with the FSC Controlled Wood Policy for all the wood it procures, which means that the 30% balance of the wood used

to create FSC certified furniture must be obtained from forests that meet the FSC Controlled Wood Policy's five core principals: the wood is not illegally harvested; the harvesting does not violate civil rights; the wood is not harvested from forests with high conservation values; the wood is not harvested from areas being converted to plantations; and the wood has not been genetically modified.

Q5: What is the journey between the forest and Knoll FSC-certified furniture?

A5: All FSC-certified furniture solutions must be created from wood harvested from FSC-certified forests. To achieve FSC certification forest owners must comply with the highest environmental standards including more than 60 detailed performance criteria and regular third party audits to ensure that the wood cut from their forests is properly harvested. Chain of custody follows the cut log throughout the complete distribution channel in bills of lading and invoices. All distributors are FSC-certified and are audited. For shipping, the distributor marks each log and FSC also monitors and audits this process. Finally, Knoll manufacturing facilities must comply with stringent FSC guidelines and undergo regular 3rd party audits to verify 100% traceability from the wood purchased to the furniture from which it is made.

Q6: How is traceability ensured?

A6: To ensure 100% traceability, the journey between the forest and the production facility must be certified and the production facility itself must be FSC certified. Knoll has developed and implemented infrastructure throughout the company, from vendor protocols, to purchasing procedures, manufacturing processes, and MIS support to make this possible.

Q7: What is the Rainforest Alliance and what is its relation to the new Knoll FSC certified wood standard?

A7: The Rainforest Alliance (RFA) is one of the largest and most respected environmental groups in the world. Especially active in the world's rain forests, it raises awareness with government and industry leaders of both the commercial and environmental benefits of implementing sustainable business practices. RFA audits and administers Knoll FSC compliance and certification. Knoll works with RFA because of its credibility and demonstrated effectiveness in the rainforest; because it is the largest FSC certification body; and because its extensive exposure throughout South America, Africa and Asia positions it to help us identify certified wood suppliers.

RFA helps us develop our supply chain. It does this by locating new wood sources and bringing existing sources up to standard in sustainable practices. As the first major contract furniture manufacturer to partner with RFA, our association enables us to become an agent of change to raise awareness, improve industry practices and drive demand. For example, The Rainforest Alliance worked closely with Knoll in groundbreaking work with North American particleboard suppliers to develop and implement FSC-certified practices from which all our customers and other industry players will benefit.

Q8: How are the new FSC certified wood standard and ISO 14001 related?

A8: Knoll developed a Sustainable Wood Policy in 2006 that defines our approach and enumerates detailed procedures for sustainable wood procurement, documentation and manufacture. FSC sets guidelines and compliance standards for raw material purchases and chain-of-custody traceability between the forest and our facility. The Knoll Sustainable Wood Policy and FSC certified wood standard are built into the Knoll ISO 14001 program, which provides the framework, monitoring standards, and verification for operating our facilities and fulfilling our stated goals.

Q9: What is the new Lacey legislation and what difference does it make to our customers?

A9: The Lacey Act isn't new. Passed in 1900 to protect tropical songbirds in danger of extinction by hunters seeking plumage for the manufacture of hats, it was a remarkable piece of environmental legislation for its time. In 2008, the U.S. Congress expanded the Act to include a broad range of plants and plant products, including rainforest wood. The Lacey Act makes it unlawful to import, export, transport, sell, receive, acquire, or purchase any plant in violation of the laws of the United States or any foreign law that protects plants. Essentially the goal of the amended Act is to stop the unprecedented chopping down of the rainforest by stemming the flow of illegally harvested woods into the United States.

Q10: How do we ascertain that a nonstandard veneer requested by a customer for a special order meets FSC criteria?

A10: We use the same rigor in reviewing the appropriateness of a special veneer as we do in the acquisition of veneers in our standard palette. Our partnership with the Rainforest Alliance enables us to call on it to source and verify legally harvested veneers. We advise the customer on availability based on RFA's findings.

Q11: What is SMaRT® and how can the new Knoll FSC standard help customers earn a SMaRT credit?

A11: SMaRT® (Sustainable Materials Rating Technology) is a comprehensive, consensus sustainability standard from MTS (Market Transformation to Sustainability) that addresses 80% of the world's products and has been adopted by more entities than any other product certification. Knoll is the only contract furniture manufacturer to date to have its products SMaRT certified, including Generation by Knoll; Life, Chadwick, Moment, Calibre and Template. SMaRT requires that wood products use FSC-certified wood and awards a product credit for its use.

Q12: What type of documentation will Knoll provide to customers about the Knoll FSC certified wood standard?

A12: The following statement will appear on a Knoll invoice and bill of lading:

All the wood furniture except KnollStudio listed on this invoice that is manufactured with the domestic veneers Cherry, Maple, Walnut, Oak, and laminate is FSC Mixed and contains a minimum of 70% FSC material. The FSC furniture is covered by COC [Chain of Custody] numbers SW-COC-004470 and SW-COC-004469.

Note: LEED® documentation and verification letters are available upon request, as applicable.

continued

SFI vs. FSC Facts at a Glance

Compared here are the two dominant forestry certification bodies: the Forest Stewardship Council and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative.

Companies are awarded two basic kinds of certificates by third-party auditors, who confirm that they meet the FSC- and SFI-created standards. Certificates are awarded for Forest Management and Chain of Custody—the latter which theoretically ensures that all wood and fiber sources in a product are known.

How do the two certification bodies compare?

FSC: 112.85 million hectares¹ certified world-wide (over 30 percent in North America) **SFI:** 65 million hectares certified across North America.

FSC: 13,043 Chain of Custody certificates, in 81 countries **SFI:** 527 Chain of Custody certificates, North America only.

FSC: Launched by environmentalists in 1993; democratically-governed, member-based. **SFI:** Launched by U.S. forest industry trade group in early 1990s, now a registered charity.

FSC: A non-government org that accredits national working groups to develop regional standards **SFI:** A single standard (reviewed every five years) applied across all of North America. **FSC:** Third party independent auditors inspect to ensure companies meet FSC standards. **SFI:** Third party independent auditors inspect to ensure companies meet SFI standards.

FSC: Performance-based standards dictate how biological diversity, species at risk, water quality, and forest health should be protected and enhanced. **SFI:** Procedure-based standard does not generally prescribe requirements for managing forests. Companies choose their level of performance in regards to environment, consultation of stakeholders; levels vary from very high to a baseline meeting existing government regulations.

FSC: “Controlled wood” standard dictates that wood products and fiber must not be genetically-modified, illegally harvested (including taken from disputed native land), from important species at risk habitat, or from forest lands converted into mono-culture tree plantations. **SFI:** “Controlled wood” means that forestry products and fiber are not from “illegal” sources

FSC: Strict chain of custody (COC) requirements: consumers can trace where their wood products come from using numbers printed on each FSC COC label. **SFI:** Chain of custody requirements less rigorous.

Compiled by Christopher Pollon for The Tyee, June 2009. Reprinted by permission.

¹ A hectare equals approximately 2.47 acres.