

Why the timber industry must use certified wood

True Temper Taking a Lead:

True Temper, the Cork based garden tool manufacturers, was the first company in Europe to supply a range of garden tools with Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified handles. The customer was B&Q, the leading U.K. DIY multiple with up to 300 DIY stores. They recently opened a warehouse in Dublin.



In 1993 B&Q led a major initiative in the U.K. by insisting that all its suppliers of products with a wood content were required to satisfy B&Q that they knew the exact forest locations of their wood sources and that they could demonstrate that they were "well managed and sustainable". The deadline was 1995 and True Temper satisfied B&Q's conditions. Then B&Q set a deadline of 2000 for all wood in products supplied to them to have the independent certification of the FSC.

In the early nineties B&Q had experienced the concern of consumers about the implications for the world's natural forests of the indiscriminate destruction of natural forests to procure mahogany and other exotic woods for commercial gain. They decided to actively promote independent certification by the FSC. They decided that it was essential to avoid ambiguity and confusion in the consumers' minds by having only one reputable and readily identifiable mark.

While True Temper had been sourcing its ash from well managed and sustainable sources in Germany and Pennsylvania, pragmatic business needs brought True Temper into the independent certification drive. We had to have FSC certification to retain the B&Q business but the education we received in the process was both illuminating and alarming. We learned that 95% of the world's forests were at risk and our enthusiasm for the movement to independent certification grew as a result of our exposure to information about the condition of the world's forests but also we recognised that our company could earn consumer

confidence and support for our products by receiving FSC certification.

In pursuit of our objectives I visited Brazil and Pennsylvania to see what was happening at first hand. I saw some destroyed rain forest terrain near the mouth of the Amazon but I also witnessed an innovative and fascinating forest regenerative programme in Brazil and the natural regeneration in Pennsylvania.

It was from Kane Hardwoods in Pennsylvania that we sourced our first consignment of FSC certified ash in 1998 well ahead of B&Q's deadline of 2000. True Temper's saw mill in Union City, PA, was certified by Smartwood in August 1997 and SGS awarded True Temper in Cork FSC certification for the products supplied to B&Q in June 1998, the chain of custody from growing ash tree to finished garden tool having been established.

The amount of FSC certified ash available is limited and to date we have been restrained by the limitations on supply as we have just enough certified ash to supply B&Q's requirements. But the situation is improving.

The Home Depot, the world's largest DIY retailer, and Lowes in the U.S. have recently announced their commitment to certification so the demand is also growing!

In conjunction with other Irish manufacturers, importers, Just Forests, and Duncan Stewart (the renowned architect and TV broadcaster) we have launched an Irish buyers' group - "The Irish Sustainable Forestry & Timber Initiative" (ISFTI) - dedicated to the promotion of sourcing of independently certified timber by Irish timber importers, and Irish manufacturing, retail, and construction companies, with particular emphasis on FSC certification. The ISFTI is affiliated to the Global Forest & Trade Network which is coordinated by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

True Temper at Cork is proud to be the first company in the world to have received FSC certification for a range of garden tools. We are fully committed to providing all our products in the long term in FSC certified wood. We are anxious to promote the practice throughout the Irish timber and wood product manufacturing trade.

Forest Conservation

By Duncan Stewart, B.Arch, FRIAI, Dip.Arb Law. Member RIAI.

not just by policy but also by design!

"Soil-erosion leading to desertification will increase on the African continent. Freshwater sources will dry up. Species-rich forest habitats containing medicinal plants with huge potential for cures to society's present-day ills will disappear. Increased instability and unsurity in local, regional and global weather patters will occur."



In my work as an architect and television presenter I have a clear responsibility to be better informed about sustainable development to highlight these important issues to my clients and television audiences, for us and for the benefit of future generations.

Today we are all very much aware of the importance of the world's forests to society. Yet as architects, engineers, quantity surveyors and construction industry workers in Ireland we turn a blind eye and condone destructive logging practices in many tropical regions. The result is an unacceptably high loss of animal and plant life leading to extinction and the annihilation of indigenous peoples cultures. Soil-erosion leading to desertification will increase on the African continent. Freshwater sources will dry up. Species-rich forest habitats containing medicinal plants with huge potential for cures to society's present-day ills will disappear. Increased instability and unsurity in local, regional and global weather patters will occur. In many countries the extraction of commercial timber by transnational logging companies has led to the general degradation of the forest resource base. Once this base has been eroded there follows environmental and social decline resulting in economic misery for many, particularly in developing countries. Locals are often denied access to their own timber resource for building, with the result they end up with poor quality housing.

A Timber Specification Policy

All across Europe our counterparts in France, Germany, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom are influencing how the world's forests will be managed by specifying FSC-certified timber.

Architects, engineers and quantity surveyors urgently need to build responsible timber sourcing into every specification they write regarding wood products. This publication points the way. On page 40 you will see that a number of Irish sawmilling companies now provide FSC-certified timber and wood products including oriented strand board (OSB). Coillte-the Irish Forestry Board also have made great progress by achieving

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Ireland has an insatiable appetite for tropical timber, which is used for a wide range of applications from windows and doors to boardwalks, pier work and cladding. We are the largest per-capita consumers of *Iroko* in the EU. An estimated 50 acres of African forests are chopped down every day to meet the tropical timber needs of the Irish construction industry. A recent report by Global Witness has shown that in excess of 60% of all tropical timber logged in Africa is the result of illegal logging carried out by European logging companies.

As architects we are one of the most powerful influences in Ireland when it comes to specifying timber for construction work and associated trades. We have an important role to play in reversing forest degradation. We urgently need to start to specify timber and wood based products from independently certified forests under the auspices of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Without immediate change in the way timber is extracted from forests, our legacy will be the destruction of the world's richest source of biodiversity. We will have assisted in squandering their unique genetic information and lose their subtle, intricate and irreplaceable beauty. Unless we make changes in our timber specification clause in favour of independently certified timber, we run the risk of compromising our precious air and water resources, which in turn will not only effect us but will devastate the lives of even more people who live in forest-dependant communities around the world.

FSC certification for their forests in 2001. Regrettably, Irish timber importers have not grasped the opportunity to support best forest practice and continue to source their tropical timber stocks from questionable sources. Your insistence on FSC-certified timber in your specifications will help them change. Let's make sure that the legacy we pass on to our children, and future generations, includes a chapter written by our decisions to support responsible forestry. By encouraging and rewarding better forest management practices by our choices of timber, we are helping to nurture the survival of all life forms.