

ADVISORY NOTE 2016-1
**ADVICE TO BUYERS REGARDING CLAIMS OF AFS CERTIFICATION MADE
WITHOUT CHAIN OF CUSTODY**

Background

Responsible Wood Ltd has recently been made aware of the practice where some wood processors which do not hold chain of custody certification are making claims that their input materials i.e. the logs used to manufacture products are certified under the responsible wood certification system and claim that their products originate from certified forests. The organisations make no specific claim that they are certified or that they participate in the responsible wood certification scheme however, by making claims to the certified status of round logs procured for processing, implications are indirectly made that products they manufacture are certified.

Responsible Wood has been asked to provide advice on the bona fides of such claims.

Responsible Wood's position

Considering the situation above, Responsible Wood can provide the following advice and guidance.

1. Products originating from organisations that are not certified for chain of custody **cannot be accepted into a PEFC endorsed Chain of Custody System and be recognised as certified**. This breaks the certification chain making the material equivalent to that of uncertified products. Without chain of custody certification, claims of origin cannot be passed down the supply chain and any claim of certification is invalid. Receivers of such materials cannot resell these as products certified or make any claim regarding certified origin.
2. Claims made by suppliers outside of chain of custody systems have not been validated and there is no verification from independent certification bodies that claims are factual. The lack of verification and transparency leads to a situation where misleading claims regarding the origin of material or percent of certified content could potentially be made. **Purchasers should be wary of such unsubstantiated claims.**

3. Such organisations are not permitted to use either the Responsible Wood or PEFC Logos on products, promotional materials or websites. Such misuse of the Logos is viewed as serious and should be reported immediately to Responsible Wood Ltd.

Finally, while Responsible Wood is unable to prevent factual claims relating to the origins of materials being made, the claims outlined above undermine the efforts made by Responsible Wood and the wider Forestry and Wood Products Industry to ensure that forest products originate from and can be traced to sustainably managed forests.

In addition, such claims disadvantage those processors and organisations which have supported and invested in Chain of Custody Management Systems and if false and misleading claims are made, there is potential for the Responsible Wood Certification Scheme to be brought into disrepute.

Wherever possible, such organisations identified above should be encouraged to support their products by credible and recognised Chain of Custody certification.

For further information, please feel free to contact Responsible Wood on (07) 3359 1758 or by email info@responsiblewood.org.au.

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