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## **YOU'RE CHAIN-OF-CUSTODY CERTIFIED – NOW WHAT'S THE NEXT STEP?**

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**Congratulations!** After months of preparation, you have your Chain-of-Custody (CoC) certificate(s) in your hands. Now the ensuing question quickly follows, what do I do next? Becoming certified is the first big step towards the support and promotion of responsible forestry. Below are a few suggestions and tools that will help you get a running start and keep you on track.

### **RECORD KEEPING: STARTING THE PROGRAM OFF ON THE RIGHT FOOT**

The records you establish now will be the cornerstone of your CoC practices. They will become the documented evidence that you will provide to your auditor during the annual surveillance (audit). Essentially, all of the records that you prepare now will be reviewed during your annual surveillance and retained as part of your CoC system records.

- Record retention for FSC and PEFC is five (5) years.
- Record retention for SFI is three (3) years.

### **THE FIRST STEP: SUPPLIER VALIDATION**

**(Click here to download the CoC Supplier Verification Template.)**

Verify the following supplier information on an annual basis or as additional suppliers are integrated. You'll be looking for the following information:

- A Chain-of-Custody Certificate.
- Review the certificate information to infer an appropriate 'scope' (\*organization's sites, product groups, and activities).
- Validate that the CoC Certificate is up-to-date.
  - These records will be helpful to the auditor during your annual surveillance.
- **Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)** requires supplier verification, specifically using: [FSC-info.org](http://FSC-info.org). You must go to this site and perform the verification – this must be done often enough (at least annually) to ensure that the certificates are valid.
  - **NOTE:** Requesting a soft or hard copy of the supplier FSC CoC certificate is not necessary.
- **Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) & Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC)** have less specific requirements, but it's considered good practice to perform a similar verification to ensure that your suppliers' certifications are valid.
- **NOTE:** While you're at it, make sure to verify that your company's certification is also referenced.

### **THE SECOND STEP: CERTIFIED PAPER RECEIPT**

"Visual Verification" is necessary to confirm that the incoming certified paper you ordered has arrived to your facility along with the required information and documentation.

- Inspect the product and the shipping documents (packing list/invoice) to ensure the following information is referenced on the accompanying paper work:
  - **NOTE:** Although FSC, SFI and PEFC on-product labels are not required for the paper to be certified; if they are associated with the product, they must be verified.
  - Verify the product, quantity, quality, and supplier identification and certification information.

- **FSC** claim information (material category and the credit or percentage system) must be on both the packing list and the invoice for *each* certified item.
  - FSC Example: “FSC Mixed Credit” or “FSC Mixed 70%”
- The supplier’s FSC CoC certification number must also be referenced.
- **SFI & PEFC** category of origin including percentage of certified raw material if the percentage method is used by the supplier
  - SFI Example: “SFI Fiber Sourcing” or “SFI 100% certified under the volume credit method”.
  - PEFC Example: “PEFC Volume Credit” or PEFC 70%”
- **\*NOTE:** “This information can be documented in the form of, but not limited to, an invoice, bill of lading, shipping document, letter, or other forms of communications between the organization and the customer.” Generally this information will be provided on the shipping documents; but it is not required.  
 \*Source: SFI

### STORAGE OF CERTIFIED PAPER – STOCK CONTROLS

Certified paper must be ‘separable and/or clearly identifiable’ from the non-certified paper while in your possession; this needs to be done during all stages of production or the trading process. Be prepared to demonstrate the safeguards that your company enacted to ensure that certified and non-certified paper *does not* become mixed. An example of proper “stock controls” would be to place an identification sticker on the certified paper instead of using a slip-sheet that could easily be misplaced or drift from its intended location.

### PURCHASES AND SALES OF CERTIFIED PAPERS

The purchase, sales and volume summaries of certified papers will be required as part of your annual surveillance.

- Establish an internal tracking mechanism early on or work with your supplier to request their assistance to provide this information to you prior to your annual surveillance.
- Track the sourcing, sales and procurement of certified paper.

### TRADEMARK AND LOGO USE APPROVALS – SPECIFIC TO RECORD KEEPING

On and off product labels/logos and trademark use are critical components to Chain-of-Custody and to ensure traceability. It can be beneficial to establish a control point by delegating a person-in-charge to ensure the correct application of labels and to submit each trademark or logo use as instructed by the certification body.

**NOTE:** It is extremely important to retain all copies of the logo use approvals in order maintain traceability and complete the audit trail.



SGS-SFI-COC-037  
[www.sfiprogram.org](http://www.sfiprogram.org)



The mark of responsible forestry  
 SGS-COC-003630  
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Programme for the Endorsement of Forest  
 Certification (PEFC)  
 SGS-PEFC/COC-0208 PEFC/29-31-17  
[www.pefc.org](http://www.pefc.org)

*Erin Light is the Chain-of-Custody (CoC) Manager at Unisource Worldwide, Inc. A 14-year veteran in the printing and paper industry, Light has developed extensive knowledge of FSC, SFI and PEFC CoC certification programs. Since November 2006, she has implemented processes to acquire tri-certification for all Unisource, PaperPlus and Websource facilities. Currently, Light develops internal procedures to ensure compliance to certification standards as well as provides CoC resources, tools and information to support Unisource customers.*