



Joint Statement on EU Ecolabel for Wooden Furniture and improvements needed in the requirements for sources of wood

Environmental and Consumers NGOs welcome the development of an EU Ecolabel for wooden furniture. In particular, we support the proposal to define a specific requirement on minimum inputs of certified wood originating from sustainable managed forests.

However we are very concerned that the current criteria will be irrelevant as they will lag behind national procurement policies currently applied in countries such as the UK, France, Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany. These existing national procurement policies include requirements for all wood to come from legal and sustainable sources.

The criteria of the final draft proposal of the EU Ecolabel for Wooden Furniture (December 2007) states that, to be considered eligible for an EU Ecolabel, 70% of solid wood used (ref. 2.2.1.1.b) and 40% of wood-based materials (ref.2.2.2.1.b) should come from sustainable sources. The 70% threshold is in line with what is accepted by most forest certification schemes including the FSC and the PEFC and is therefore acceptable. The current national procurement policies are setting demands that also require that a minimum of 70% of the wood comes from sustainably managed forests. The 40% threshold falls very short of this requirement and should be brought in line with already existing policies and hence be put at 70%. We consider that this differentiation is not justified and would make the EU Ecolabel for wooden furniture irrelevant, as it would be lower in its criteria than what would be required by national governments across the EU.

Furthermore, the EU Ecolabel is meant to represent the best in the respective sectors. Hence concerning wood products, the aim of the Ecolabel should be to require all products to be fully certified. Aiming to work towards only 100% certified wood is justified through data and facts provided in the *Forest Product Annual Market Review 2005/2006* (UNECE, 2006), which reflects that 50% of the EU 25 forests are certified. This report also shows that the current potential supply of certified forest products exceeds actual demand in many markets: *downstream industries do not usually ask for commodity products to be certified, hence potential supply of CFPs (certified forest products) exceeds actual demand in many markets, especially of PEFC-certified CFPs. An additional constraint impeding awareness of CFPs among the public is that most companies did not communicate that their products were certified* (UNECE 2006: p. 103).

It is of great importance to us that what qualifies as certified products, are products certified by strict, qualified forest certification schemes such as the Forest Stewardship Council or equivalent. The current proposal for proof of certification of solid wood from virgin forests is too weak (ref. 2.2.1.1.i and 2.2.2.1. i) and hence not acceptable. The current criterion only requires that manufacturers provide “evidence of commitment” to a credible certificate of chain of custody. All existing national procurement policies across the EU require a valid certificate of a chain of custody issued by a credible forest certification scheme, as well as a certificate of timber coming from well managed forests. Again, to ensure that the EU Ecolabel does not become irrelevant, it should require

certification of the forest management unit that is the source of the forest product as well as certification of the chain of custody by a qualified certification scheme such as the FSC or equivalent.

Environmental and consumer NGOs therefore call upon the Commission and Member States to ensure that the EU Ecolabel establishes criteria that are as least as stringent as the criteria adopted by various Member States in their timber procurement policies. The EU Ecolabel must in no way undermine these policies by allowing the label to be awarded to products that do not even meet the national requirements.

Environmental and consumer NGOs call for the EU Ecolabel to ensure that at least 70% of wood comes from sustainably managed forests both for solid wood and for wood-based materials. Additionally the criteria should ensure that only credible and independent forest certification schemes will be allowed to validate the certification of the forest management unit and of the chain of custody system. This is needed to ensure that the timber originates from legal and sustainable sources.

For further information, please contact:

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