

## Environmental Leaders Critique SFI

Brands rely on eco-labels to communicate their commitment to social and environmental responsibility, and thanks to a growing green marketplace they also profit from them.

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) misleads consumers who expect a socially and environmentally responsible product when they see the green tree label or hear the word “sustainable.” SFI certifies irresponsible and even illegal logging practices that have a disastrous impact on North American forests:

- **Clearcutting** The average clearcut approved by SFI is the size of 90 football fields. The damage to forests, water quality, and wildlife are often permanent.
- **Toxic Trespass** SFI allows excessive spraying of toxic pesticides, fungicides, and herbicides that poison fresh water, wildlife, and surrounding communities.
- **Endangered Forest Destruction** SFI actually promoted its program to loggers by saying it does not prohibit logging in old-growth forests or roadless wilderness areas.
- **Converting Forests to Plantations** SFI allows turning natural forest into ecologically barren industrial tree farms, including the use of genetically modified trees.
- **Violating Human Rights** SFI labels can be applied to products made from forests cut without consultation of Indigenous People and in violation of legal and international human rights standards.

### Solution: Reject SFI

SFI is a significant threat to the integrity of any brand using or promoting the SFI logos. Companies need to remember that the customer is always right. So far, 31 major US companies including 3M, Office Depot, and AT&T have stood up for healthy forests by distancing their brands from SFI and moving millions of dollars in buying power away from forest destruction.

### These leaders agree:



"The so-called Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) is a classic example of false advertising that misleads both businesses and consumers. Companies that use a lot of pulp and paper for things like packaging need to keep a close eye on their supply chains to make sure they're not complicit in forest destruction." - Dr. Amy Moas, **Greenpeace**



"Any company that associates its brand with SFI is complicit in destroying forests and misleading the public, which the Sierra Club condemns as completely unacceptable." - Michael Brune, **Sierra Club**



"NRDC supports the FSC - the most robust and independent sustainable forest management certification standard available in the market today. Our organization does not consider the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) to be a credible standard – as it allows some of the most ecologically damaging practices to occur on the ground, such as the conversion of highly biodiverse natural forests to lower biodiversity industrial tree plantations. It also fails to ensure adequate protection for the habitats of imperiled, endangered and threatened species, and for special, rare, or disappearing ecosystems." - Debbie Hammel, **Natural Resources Defense Council**



"SFI is little more than a stamp of approval for forestry business as usual. Customers who care about ecological integrity and human rights should look elsewhere." - Bill Barclay, **Rainforest Action Network**



"The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) is a lackluster certification that misleads consumers and companies. It does not protect forests of high biodiversity and disregards the well-being of nearby communities." - Beth Porter, **Green America**



"SFI's offers no requirement or mechanism for logging companies to meet the international standard of securing the free, prior, informed consent (FPIC) of Indigenous Peoples. Companies that respect the rights of North America's indigenous people will commit to avoid supporting SFI." - Pennie Opal Plant, **Idle No More SF Bay**



"The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) is a misleading, corporate-driven marketing program created by big logging companies that fails to protect air, water, biodiversity, and the rights of communities and indigenous people." - TJ Faircloth, **Corporate Accountability International**



"The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) is greenwashing at its finest. It allows for the worst of the worst practices in the woods including logging of endangered forests, conversion of natural forests to plantations, large-scale clearcutting, and widespread use of toxic chemicals in forest management. SFI has done nothing to improve forest practices in the Southern US, it has only give a fake green seal of approval to the same old forest industry." - Scot Quaranda, **Dogwood Alliance**



"The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) is a misleading marketing program created by big logging companies. These companies allow the spraying of pesticides on nearby communities and their drinking water. There have been high-profile cases in Oregon – residents, their pets and their property have been seriously harmed by aerial helicopter spray. What company that cares about its brand would want to be associated with poisoning people?" - Lisa Arkin, **Beyond Toxics**



"For years the "Sustainable" Forestry Initiative has tried to convince the green building community that their bogus standard is equal to the leadership standard of the Forest Stewardship Council, which protects forest ecosystems. The only thing "sustainable" about the "Sustainable" Forestry Initiative is their desire to sustain the profits of their industry backers by destroying forests." - William Buchholz, Emeritus Architect and Construction Specifier, **Sierra Club Forest Certification and Green Building Team**



"I am a life-long forester and helped design the first industrial-scale sustainable timber harvest certification for the 100,000 acre Collins Almanor Forest in Northern California in 1994. Since then, I've witnessed "certification" degrade into calling some of the most plundered forests "sustainable." In my opinion, this is the very reason the Sustainable Forestry Certification was created... to greenwash the logging industry's environmentally and socially irresponsible practices." - Roy Keene, **professional forester**



"The legacy of SFI is a legacy of tragically wounded forest landscapes plagued by mass soil erosion, landslides, extirpated native species, dirty water and vulnerability to fires, insects, disease and climate change. Industrial tree plantations certified by SFI bear no semblance to real forests and should not be considered as such. Federal law prohibits fraudulent marketing of wood from these lands as green or sustainable and we are hopeful that someday soon SFI will be barred from making these assertions or forced to radically rethink their standards." - John Talberth, Ph.D., **Center for Sustainable Economy**



"Like other corporate-led efforts, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative trades on the participation of industry-aligned conservation organizations to lend credibility to a public relations campaign for logging interests." - Robert Galbraith, **Public Accountability Initiative**



"SFI is a farce. SFI allows companies to violate our environmental laws, get fined for it, and remain certified throughout." - Cathy Johnson, **Natural Resources Council of Maine**



“The so-called ‘Sustainable’ Forestry Initiative is ultimately underwritten by massive clearcuts and the environmental damage they cause, just as climate change denial is funded by the extraction of fossil fuels and the greenhouse gas pollution that results.” - Jason Grant, **Sierra Club Forest Certification Team**



“The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) is nothing more than a misleading marketing program created by big logging companies that fails to protect air, water, biodiversity, and the rights of communities and indigenous people.” - Matthew Koehler, **WildWest Institute**



“Many consumers relate to their favorite brands much like they would a spouse or partner, and companies that engage in transgressions like greenwashing may not only risk negative effects on financial performance, but may also put that intimate relationship at risk.” - Professor Fang Wan, Ph.D, **University of Manitoba**



“SFI is a phony forest certification system that was founded and is today governed and funded and has had its standards set by the forest products industry. Not only most of SFI’s forest products not even certified (only their “sourcing” is certified), SFI’s forest standards are meaningless, and permit environmentally harmful industrial forestry. This industry does all it can to lower environmental standards while, at the same time, claim the green mantle. Its environmental claims clearly violate the letter and spirit of Federal Trade Commission green guidelines.” - Peter Goldman, **Washington Forest Law Center**



"The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) is a front for giant timber companies whose irresponsible industrial logging practices are harming forests across the U.S. and Canada. It is designed to confuse the marketplace and dupe consumers who rightfully expect a forest certification scheme that contains the word "sustainable" to actually promote sustainable forestry." - John A. Knox, **Earth Island Institute**



"SFI is the logging and paper industry's PR scheme that tries to convince people that large scale clearcut logging is good for our forests, wildlife, and communities. But SFI impacts ordinary Americans by approving the aerial spraying of toxic chemicals, polluting our drinking water, and harming America's precious fisheries. Unfortunately, some of the most powerful corporations in the world still use SFI to communicate their 'environmental values.' We recommend that big brands commit to avoid promoting SFI." - Lisa Graves, **Center for Media and Democracy**



"The SFI program still doesn't measure up in critical areas, including the protection of biodiversity and at-risk species and habitats, aboriginal rights and the interests of indigenous communities, conversion of natural forests to tree plantations. SFI's auditing and enforcement processes are inadequate and the inclusion of an independent peer-review component in SFI reports is non-existent." - Mitch Friedman, **Conservation Northwest**

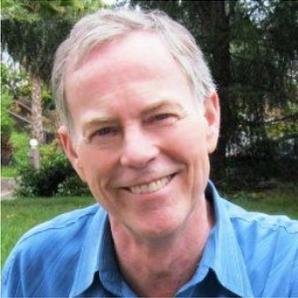


"I've driven hundreds of miles of logging roads and seen with my own eyes what SFI-certified forests look like on the ground: massive clearcuts, landslides, erosion, stream sedimentation. I have no doubt that SFI threatens our forest ecosystems. Companies should not associate

themselves with SFI, and companies that use and promote SFI put their brand at risk.” - Francis Eatherington, **Cascadia Wildlands**



“The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) puts a ‘green’ stamp of approval on the destructive practices of big logging companies despite the cost to the environment and biodiversity, and barely raises the bar above what is legal. Not only is SFI bad for forests, it also hurts small business owners and individuals who rely on SFI’s misleading and deceitful label. SFI should be ashamed of themselves.” Tom Wheeler, **Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC)**.



“Any form of SFI promotion directly contradicts environmental values and a demonstrated commitment to sustainability. To avoid brand risk, we encourage companies to develop a statement that communicates an intention to avoid promoting SFI.” - Michael Marx, **Corporate Ethics International**



“SFI-certified logging pollutes streams - affecting drinking water suppliers and salmon habitat.” - Marlies Wierenga, **Wild Earth Guardians**



“SFI is a bad actor, complicit in the biomass industry's liquidation of our forests and continued perpetuation of the lie that burning biomass is carbon neutral good for the climate, and 'good for forests.' That's simply not true.” - Rachel Smolker, Ph.D., **Biofuelwatch**



“We oppose the greenwash of forest destruction perpetrated by the SFI.” - Ashley Kunath and Paul Robeson Campbell, **Rutgers Students for Environmental Awareness**



“Big buyers of forest products (paper, corrugated, pulp, wood, etc.) can’t depend on SFI to ensure an environmentally or socially responsible supply of raw materials. SFI gives a thumbs up to everyone, regardless of performance. SFI is designed to protect the forest products industry and not consumer-oriented brands. Big companies that associate with SFI put their brand at risk.” - Jim Ford, **Director of Climate for Ideas**



“SFI misleads consumers and hurts forests and wildlife.” - Brian Pasko, **Oregon Sierra Club.**



“The Sustainable Forestry Initiative’s weak standards and lax enforcement is a losing formula that does not add up to good forestry.” Caroline Pufalt, **Sierra Club Forest Certification Team**

### Additional Statements from Leading Organizations:



NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL

“NRDC encourages companies and consumers alike to choose FSC and to avoid SFI. This is because FSC represents real progress on the hallmarks of responsible forest management, including both environmental and social issues. Unfortunately, SFI continues to certify *status quo* logging that fails to protect wildlife and forest ecosystems, and allows conversion of natural forests to plantations or other uses.” -Natural Resources Defense Council

**GREENPEACE**

and



**RAINFOREST  
ACTION NETWORK**

“Greenpeace and the Rainforest Action Network consider the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) to be weak forest certification systems that do not guarantee responsible or sustainable forest management.”<sup>1</sup>



**Environmental Paper Network**

The Environmental Paper Network’s Global Paper Vision<sup>2</sup> calls upon the global paper industry, consumers, retailers, governments, investors and nongovernmental organizations to “eliminate greenwashing, or the practice of misleading consumers with false environmental claims,” and “avoid sourcing from and promoting misleading and environmentally irresponsible forest certification programs.” “Alternative forest certification systems that we do not recommend or support include PEFC, SFI, MTTC, CSA, CERTFOR, CERFLOR.”<sup>3</sup>

**GREENPEACE**

“SFI and PEFC were largely developed by the forestry industry with insufficient stakeholder and NGO involvement and endorsement. They are based on inadequate rules and poor standards and therefore cannot provide assurance that the ecological and social values of forests are being protected. Hence, we believe that any sustainability claims based on these certification schemes is industry ‘greenwash.’”<sup>4</sup>

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**END**

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.greenpeace.org/seasia/Press-Centre/Press-Releases/Greenpeace-RAN-Warn-of-Forest-Certification-Greenwash/>

<sup>2</sup> [http://environmentalpaper.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/EPN\\_Vision\\_FINAL\\_USA\\_JUNE17.pdf](http://environmentalpaper.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/EPN_Vision_FINAL_USA_JUNE17.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://environmentalpaper.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/EPN-Global-Paper-Vision-2014-FAQ.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.greenpeace.org/seasia/Press-Centre/Press-Releases/Greenpeace-RAN-Warn-of-Forest-Certification-Greenwash/>