

Gunns aiming at FSC certification

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Forest products company Gunns Limited has approached the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Australia for discussions about attaining the independent, international certification for responsible forestry management.



Credit: CSIRO Publishing

It is unclear at the time of going to press to what extent the certification would apply to its operations, but the news so far is good. Should Gunns be considering committing to company-wide adoption of the scheme's criteria, it would represent a very positive development for its profile given previous, widespread criticisms of the company's forestry practices record.

The motivation may relate to Swedish forestry, pulp and paper corporation Sodra, being an advanced contender for financing of Gunns's Tasmanian pulp mill. Sodra requires FSC certification as one of three core prerequisites for investment in any southern hemisphere pulp mill project. The others are use of 100 per cent plantation feedstock (rather than old-growth or re-growth forests) and TFC, a chlorine-free bleaching process.

In August, Gunns applied to acquire plantation timber company ITC Limited, one of the first Australian companies to achieve FSC forest management certification.

Södra has recently become FSC-certified in Sweden, but is apparently exempt from a chemicals and pesticides standard (6.8.2).

A 'Climate and boreal forests' report in November by Swedish conservation organisation Protect the Forest highlighted the depletion of Swedish and European native forests by industrial forestry and plantation companies – despite FSC certifications – and criticised communication of the Swedish forestry model as best practice.

Secretary Amanda Tas said 'Since there are hardly any more forests to log in Sweden, the Swedish forest industry seeks possibilities to exploit forests in other countries, such as Brazil, Australia and Russia (just to mention a few

countries).’

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