



Scottish Working Woods

The label for Scottish forest produce has grown from an idea into a solid and reliable scheme, explains Nick Marshall & Toni Dickson.

You will have heard of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) sustainable timber certification, but have you heard of Scottish Working Woods, the label for products that are made in Scotland, from sustainably-sourced Scottish materials? Scottish Working Woods (SWW) was set up almost eight years ago by the Association of Scottish Hardwood Sawmillers (ASHS) and the Scottish Furniture Makers Association (SFMA), with help from the Forestry Commission. It started with wood products: sawn

timber, and manufactured goods including furniture, but has recently been joined by the Scottish Wild Harvests Association (SWHA). SWHA members collect and process fruit, fungi, foliage, nut and other non-timber products from woodlands and other habitats.

SWW might be unique in the way it operates. To keep bureaucracy and costs down, all licensees have to first be a member of a trade association allied to the label. In Scotland, being a small and friendly place, people know each other. These associations know what is going on in their industries and can spot if one of their

members who is an SWW licensee is not following the rules.

For a product to qualify for the label, it has to contain at least 90 per cent Scottish [1] materials (i.e. 90 per cent of the parts that can be made with woodland products). So while a mirror might use glass and plywood backing from elsewhere, the frame would have to be 90 per cent Scottish. On the other hand, a piece of wooden furniture would have to be almost entirely Scottish timber to qualify for the label, although the screws, glue and other small parts might not be Scottish.

Above, left to right: Elm kitchen; Larder unit. Photos: Steve McLean Dovetail and thewoodplace.com



Recognising localness

The SWW label was set up because these groups of small-scale Scottish businesses wanted the recognition of a label to show their localness and environmental values. Several tried FSC but realised that it was too restrictive, costly and bureaucratic. Many small sawmillers get a lot of their timber from farmers and other small woodland managers who cannot afford the costs of FSC certification, but have to manage their woods well in order to qualify for Forestry Commission grants and licenses.

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The businesses know that their customers are coming to them for more than they can get from a standard timber merchant or DIY store. They want wood with character and beauty but they are also interested to know where it comes from, how the tree was managed, who cut and sawed it and made the wood into the product they are buying. This traceability is something that these small businesses are very good at, not least because they themselves are interested in the story of their timber.

These small businesses are important for Scotland's rural economy; a recent

survey by ASHS found that ASHS members contribute over £4million to the Scottish economy and directly employ over 60 people, mostly in rural areas where employment is scarce. While ASHS has 32 members, there may be around 500 small businesses across Scotland producing these types of sustainable Scottish goods and eligible to use the label. The label has grown from an idea into a solid and reliable scheme. We are keen to see it become more widely known and used as a tool for the regeneration of Scotland's rural areas and to strengthen Scotland's economy.

How and why certify

FSC was set up to encourage the use of sustainably-grown timber, in the face of massive deforestation and conversion of old-growth forests to plantations, in tropical and some temperate countries. It has been very successful in reducing destruction of



Growing interest in coppice

The move towards including non-timber forest products (NTFPs) under the label scheme will start with coppice and coppice products being able to qualify to use the label, with the Scottish Wild Harvests Association (SWHA) being the link member organisation. This is in response to a request by the Crannog Centre to be able to use the label for coppice. Reforesting Scotland's StarTree project is currently in conversation with SWHA and coppicers to facilitate drawing up the criteria which will enable growers and harvesters to use the label on their raw material, and people who utilise coppiced material in various ways to use it on their finished products.

Growing interest in the coppice sector and the need for a coppice network was highlighted during a successful coppice conference, the first of its kind in Scotland, held at the Crannog Centre in 2013. This was followed by the Coppice Network Study Report, produced by Reforesting Scotland in 2014 [2]. Through use of the label on the array of coppice products available in Scotland: woodfuel, woven products, hurdles and rustic furniture to name a few, both coppicers and customers will be promoting the local coppice market and supporting sustainable management of Scottish coppice woodlands.

Toni Dickson is researcher for the StarTree project.

old-growth forests and in improving forest management for timber, but is sadly unable to counteract clearance of forests for agriculture and biofuel oil palm plantations.

The UK, having been largely deforested centuries ago, was a latecomer to the forest certification. UK forestry is highly regulated, through the UK Forestry Standard, which sets out minimum requirements for managing forests which must be met before grants and felling licenses are given. FSC classes the UK as a country where all forests are at low risk. Woodland managers can now use the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme, which interprets the additional requirements of FSC and other certifiers as they apply to woodlands in the UK, to help them become certified.

A majority of the UK's forests are now certified, but this masks a problem with the very

many small woodlands, copses and hedgerows which are so important for wildlife. The cost of certification and the time needed to keep precise records of management and timber movements means that very many small woodland owners (and small-scale sawmillers and manufacturers) do not become certified. This is a problem that Scottish Working Woods was set up to address. Join us!

- www.scottishworkingwoods.org.uk
- www.ashs.co.uk
- www.scottishfurnituremakers.org.uk
- www.scottishwildharvests.org.uk
- www.ukwas.org.uk
- www.fsc-uk.org

Notes & further reading:

1. 'Scottish' means locally-sourced from sustainably managed woodlands and made by a small Scottish business.
2. The 2014 Coppice Network Study Report is available at <http://www.reforestingscotland.org/coppice-network-study-report/>

Nick Marshall is coordinator of ASHS. Issue 1 of ASHS' new Journal, The Full Circle, gives more details on the SWW label and is available from ASHS. E: coordinator@ashs.co.uk. If you are a producer and would like to use the label E: mail@scottishworkingwoods.org.uk



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