

The Forest Certification Handbook

Ruth Nussbaum and Markku Simula

Earthscan, London

Second edition 2005, hardback, 288 pages, ISBN 1844071235 / 9781844071234

£35.96 from the Earthscan shop, <http://shop.earthscan.co.uk/?&v=2>

This book is titled a 'handbook' and, as it notes on page 1, 'is not designed to be read from cover to cover, but rather to be used as a reference book that provides information on whichever aspect of certification is of interest to a particular reader at a particular time'. This second edition appeared ten years after the first, marking a decade in which forest certification moved from fringe to mainstream in forest policy, but remains little — if any — less contested.

The handbook remains a valuable sourcebook for those who are considering, or need to engage with, forest certification. In the Australian case, that's now many more than those working in forestry a decade ago, with a total of about 15 certificates issued under the Australian Forestry Standard (AFS) and Forest Stewardship Council schemes, totalling around 5.7 and 0.5 million ha, respectively. More than 100 000 ha of forest are now certified in each jurisdiction other than the ACT, NSW and the NT — illustrating the relevance of forest certification to many Australian forest managers, as well as to forest policy.

The Forest Certification Handbook is in four parts: '1. How forest certification schemes work'; '2. Forest certification in practice'; '3. Existing forest certification schemes'; and '4. Forest certification in context'. Australian readers are likely to find Parts 1, 2 and 4 most useful; Part 3 appears somewhat dated (even allowing for the delay in this review, for which the reviewer is regrettably and apologetically responsible), and doesn't address — for example — the AFS. The authors each have extensive direct certification experience, in businesses built largely around the certification industry, and they do a thorough job of outlining the mechanics, the politics and the potential and limitations of forest certification.

The handbook is probably most valuable for those who are new to forest certification, or those who feel the need for a broader view of the certification arena than can be elicited from more specific scheme-focused information or most academic critiques. The handbook is studiously non-partisan in terms of certification schemes, although strongly pro-certification as a policy instrument. It does, however, recognise and discuss the limitations of certification. The sections discussing 'new applications of forest certification' — to carbon and other environmental services markets — are timely in the Australian context, as elsewhere.

While Parts 1 and 2, in particular, are likely to remain quite durable because of their focus on process; a next edition could usefully shift the Part 3 content to a form that is more easily kept current, such as a website. While the introductory chapter and Part 4 will age somewhat in terms of detail, the overall discussion of policy and operating contexts is constructed in such a way as to remain valuable.

In summary, like many handbooks, *The Forest Certification Handbook* should find a place in the libraries of forest policy and management organisations in both the public and private sectors, and of individuals whose work causes them to engage with forest certification.

Peter Kanowski

The Australian National University, Canberra

Email: peter.kanowski@anu.edu.au

