A NEW APPROACH TO
SUSTAINABLE HARDWOOD CERTIFICATION

AMERICAN HARDWOOD EXPORT COUNCIL

1) What forest certification schemes are typically used to assess the sustainability of timber products?

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) are the most well known.

2) These schemes work well when timber is traded in large commercial volumes, but are less effective where forest management units and supply chains are more fragmented? Why?

Reasons include the absence of economies of scale, the need to communicate and co-ordinate with millions of landowners, weak incentives for those who harvest only once in a generation, and the inevitable mixing of wood from numerous individual smallholders.

3) Do currently available certifications adequately address the issue or carbon storage through sustainable forest management?

No. They focus on only one life cycle stage, the forestry stage, and even here do not explicitly require monitoring of forest carbon impacts. Beyond that, certification schemes do not currently assess carbon impacts at other stages of the life cycle which are significantly influenced by efficient processing and use and the durability of products.

4) How does the emerging approach to hardwood certification differ to the established assessment frameworks?

It allows sustainable forest certification at scale in regions with fragmented forest ownership. Instead of requiring the owners or managers of small or low intensity managed US hardwood forests to seek certification, sustainable forestry claims for these operations are based on independent expert state-wide risk assessments.

5) What effect is this new approach expected to have on the cost of certification?

By delivering a much larger flow of certified sustainable logs to hardwood mills, they are expected to reduce the unit costs of chain of custody certification and on-product labelling throughout the supply chain.

6) By when are the first products carry the new certification expected to be commercially available?

By the end of 2024.

Competency Codes: PC 24, PC 28, PC 31 - Performance Criteria For Project Initiation And Conceptual Design