Forestry requirements in Nordic Ecolabelling criteria

Requirements for tree species not permitted to be used in Nordic Swan Ecolabelled products/product lines



Forestry requirement, partial revision - version 2.0 • Consultation document

Nordic Ecolabelling

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Requirement for tree species not permitted to be used in Nordic Swan Ecolabelled products/product lines, 25 February 2019.

Addresses

In 1989, the Nordic Council of Ministers decided to introduce a voluntary official ecolabel, the Nordic Swan Ecolabel. These organisations/companies operate the Nordic Ecolabelling system on behalf of their own country's government. For more information, see the websites:

Denmark
Ecolabelling Denmark
Fonden Dansk Standard
Göteborg Plads 1, DK-2150 Nordhavn
Fischersgade 56, DK-9670 Løgstør
Tel: +45 72 300 450
info@ecolabel.dk
www.ecolabel.dk

Iceland
Ecolabelling Iceland
Norræn Umhverfismerking
á Íslandi
Suðurlandsbraut 24
IS-108 Reykjavik
Tel: +354 591 20 00
ust@ust.is
www.svanurinn.is

Finland
Ecolabelling Finland
Urho Kekkosen katu 4-6 E
FI-00100 Helsingfors
Tel: +358 9 61 22 50 00
joutsen@ecolabel.fi
www.ecolabel.fi

Norway
Ecolabelling Norway
Henrik Ibsens gate 20
NO-0255 Oslo
Tel: +47 24 14 46 00
info@svanemerket.no
www.svanemerket.no

Sweden
Ecolabelling Sweden
Box 38114
SE-100 64 Stockholm
Tel: +46 8 55 55 24 00
info@svanen.se
www.svanen.se

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1 Summary

The first forestry requirements were drawn up by Nordic Ecolabelling in 1998 and have since been revised several times. Nordic Ecolabelling has included forestry requirements in all criteria documents that involve significant quantities of wood raw material since 1998. Today's forestry requirements, generation 3, were approved by the Nordic Ecolabelling Board in November 2015.

The forest requirement consists of two requirements:

1. Requirements for tree species not permitted to use in Nordic Swan Ecolabelled products/product lines (**FOR CONSULTATION**).
2. Requirements for certification and traceability (NOT FOR CONSULTATION):

    - Wood raw materials shall be covered by valid sustainable forest management and chain of custody certificates issued by FSC, PEFC.
    - A minimum of 70% of the wood raw material used in Nordic Swan Ecolabelled products must be certified as sustainably forested under the FSC or PEFC schemes or be recycled material.
    - The remaining percentage of wood raw materials must be FSC Controlled Wood or wood from PEFC Controlled Sources.

This consultation only includes the first requirement: Requirements for tree species not permitted to use in Nordic Swan Ecolabelled products/product lines.

A revision of the requirement in 2018 indicated a need for a new update to the requirement, mainly because the guidelines underlying the selection of tree species on the list are perceived as unclear.

Proposed new requirements for tree species not permitted to use in Nordic Swan Ecolabelled products/products lines:

Tree species found in the list are wood originating from:

- Tree species list CITES[1] Appendices I, II and III.
- IUCN red list[2], categorized as critically endangered (CR), endangered (EN) and vulnerable (VU).
- Regnskogsfondet[3] (Rainforest Foundation Norway) tree list
- Siberian larch (grown outside Europe)

[1] https://www.cites.org/ (visited Jan 2019)
[2] http://www.iucnredlist.org/ (visited Jan 2019)
[3] https://www.regnskog.no/no/hva-du-kan-gjore/unnga-tropisk-tommer/tropiske-treslag (visited Jan 2019)

2 Introduction

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel is the official ecolabel in the Nordic countries. It was established by the Nordic Council of Ministers in 1989. The Nordic Swan Ecolabel is a voluntary scheme for ecolabelling of both products and services. Nordic Ecolabelling develops criteria based on a life cycle perspective. Raw material inputs, use, disposal and recycling are included in the assessment, when drawing up the requirements for an ecolabelled product. It is important to be able to reduce the overall environmental impact. Alongside environmental requirements, the criteria also include requirements for product properties in order to ensure quality and performance. All Nordic Ecolabelling criteria are revised on an ongoing basis

Nordic Ecolabelling sets requirements for wood raw materials in relevant criteria in order to contribute to sustainable forestry (ecologically, economically and socially). From a life cycle perspective, forestry is a key part of the wood product's environmental impact, and it is important that the renewable raw material is grown/used in a sustainable way. Nordic Ecolabelling's forestry requirements focus on sustainable forestry and traceability of the wood raw material. By requiring that the wood raw material come from certified forestry, Nordic Ecolabelling supports the drive towards more sustainable forestry.

Nordic Ecolabelling believes that protecting the world's remaining intact forests[4] is essential to meeting global targets related to biodiversity conservation and climate stability. Only about 20 percent of tropical forests remain intact (depending on the definition used), and those that remain are decreasing rapidly[5]. Tropical forests, despite covering only 6 percent of the earth´s surface, are home to 80 percent of the worlds documented species[6]. Less than half of the earth´s original forest remains, and logging has had a major impact on biodiversity and forest degradation. Efforts to protect intact forest have attempted to either restrict the expansion or reduce the impact of logging, with varying degrees of success.

This consultation document presents suggested new requirement for tree species not permitted to be used in Nordic Swan Ecolabelled products. This consultation gives you the opportunity to put forward your views and comments on the proposal. All submitted comments will be considered and assessed in a published consultation summary. On the basis of this, a revised proposal for a list of tree species not permitted to be used in Nordic Swan Ecolabelled products will be drawn up, and this will be considered by each Nordic board. The Nordic Ecolabelling Board will then decide on the final requirements.

[4] http://www.intactforests.org/ (visited Jan 2019)
[5] 13 Evans T. And Seymour F: Intact tropical forest: Log them or lose them?, Word Resources Institute, June 2018. https://norad.no/contentassets/0d61d104423d448ba11e4f2fc5a6dd9f/intact-tropical-forests-log-them-or-lose-them.pdf
[6] https://wwf.panda.org/our_work/forests/importance_forests/tropical_rainforest/ (visited Jan 2019)

3 Background to the current requirements for tree species not permitted to use in Nordic Swan Ecolabelled products/product lines.

Criteria development process

In the latest revision of the forest requirements in 2015 Nordic Ecolabelling proposed a number of changes, including a new requirement saying that wood raw material originating from countries with high levels of corruption (CPI rating[7] below 40) should not be used in Nordic Swan Ecolabelled products without an additional risk assessment carried out by Nordic Ecolabelling. This proposed requirement were (due to critical consultation comments) replaced by a new requirement; a list of tree species not permitted to use in Nordic Swan Ecolabelled products, which subsequently were presented for and approved by the Nordic Ecolabelling boards. Nordic Ecolabelling has subsequently received criticism for lack of transparency, as it was not possible for all stakeholders to comment on the basis for such a tree list or on the criteria for the tree species found in the Nordic Ecolabelling list.

Criteria content

The requirement for tree species not permitted to be used in Nordic Swan Ecolabelled products were introduced in 2015 in today´s generation 3 forestry requirements. The purpose of the requirement is to exclude the use of endangered tree species and tree species from vulnerable areas Intact Forest Landscapes (IFL). Intact forest and especially tropical intact forest provide greater value than degraded forests with regard to climate change mitigation, biodiversity conservation, preserving imperilled cultures, protecting human health, and regulating watersheds and local climates[8]. Despite providing these benefits, the world's tropical forests are disappearing rapidly, primarily due to logging and agriculture/pasture. Initiatives to protect intact forest have not yet proved sufficient to reverse trends of forest degradation and conversion. The requirement also ensures that Nordic Ecolabelling complies with the Norwegian guidelines[9] for the use of tropical wood in public construction.

The list of prohibited tree species is based on the wood species that are relevant to Nordic Ecolabelling's criteria, i.e., tree species that have the potential to be included in Nordic Swan Ecolabelled products. The criteria for the tree species found in the list are wood originated from:

- CITES Appendices I, II and III,
- IUCN red list, categorized as critically endangered (CR), endangered (EN), vulnerable (VU) and relevant species as Near Threatened (NT).
- Non-sustainable forestry, such as tree from High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF), IFL -areas in countries/regions with high corruption.

[7] Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) - https://www.transparency.org/
8 Watson et al. 2018: "The Critical Importance of Maintaining the Integrity of Intact Forest Ecosystems." Nature Ecology and Evolution.
[9] https://kriterieveiviseren.difi.no/nb/wizard?stage=criteria&group=12-17-19&category=26&group_depth=2&criteria=175_173-183_181-197_192-206_205-212_210-220_218-228_226-234_232 (visited Jan 2019)

Nordic Ecolabelling began a revision of the list of prohibited tree species in 2018. The main objective of this evaluation was to clarify the criteria for the tree species found in the list, and to update the tree species on the list according to e.g. CITES and IUCN red list.

4 Forest certification schemes, FSC and PEFC

Nordic Ecolabelling recognizes both the FSC and PEFC as schemes that provide sufficient guarantees for legal and sustainable forestry.

Timber certification has been promoted for the last two decades as a way to reduce the negative impacts of logging, but due to high costs and limited economic benefits to date, only 6 percent of certified forests are in the tropics[10]. The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standard explicitly takes intact forest landscapes (IFL) into account through the high conservation value (HCV) framework; for example, by requiring set-asides in key areas. Nordic Ecolabelling considers this very positive. FSC´s certification schemes do, however, not guarantee no deforestation in IFL areas as only minimum 80 percent of the IFL areas are protected according to current forest standard and guidelines[11]. Nordic Ecolabelling hopes that FSC (as well as PEFC) will introduce a total ban against deforestation in IFL areas in the next-generation forest management standard.

5 Requirements for tree species not permitted to be used in Nordic Swan Ecolabelled products

This consultation document presents a proposal for new requirement for tree species not permitted to be used in Nordic Swan Ecolabelled products/product lines.

Criteria for tree species found in the list are wood originating from: CITES (Appendices I, II and III), IUCN Red list (classified as CR, EN and VU), Regnskogfondet (Rainforest Foundation Norway) and Siberian larch (grown outside Europe).

Nordic Ecolabelling has considered expanding the criteria for trees species found in the list by including tree species found on FSC´s guide to lesser known timber species[12].

FSC´s list of lesser known timber species is a database of tree species from the tropical regions of the world. The main purpose of the list is to inspire and guide timber and wood users to look for a more diverse selection of timber species as a supplement or alternative to the more well-known ones. The database is very extensive (more than 200 tree species) and therefore goes beyond the proposed list of probibited tree species., in order to secure that no potential tropical wood from tropical Intact Forest Landscapes (IFL) are being used in Nordic Swan Ecolabelled products. Nordic Ecolabelling would appreciate your feedback on

10 MacDicken et al. 2015. “Global Progress toward Sustainable Forest Management.” Forest Ecology and Management 352.
11 FSC: Frequently Asked Questions on the Advice Note for Motion, 65 V1-3, 11 July 2018.
12 https://www.lesserknowntimberspecies.com/species (visited Jan 2019)

whether these tree species should be included in the proposed list of prohibited tree species.

Proposal for new requirement:

O1 Tree species not permitted to be used in Nordic Swan Ecolabelled XXX (write name of product group/-type)

Virgin tree species listed on Nordic Ecolabelling's list of prohibited tree species* are not permitted to be used in Nordic Swan Ecolabelled XXXXX (name of specific product group).

* The list of prohibited tree species is located on the website: www.nordic-ecolabel.org/wood/

✉ Declaration from the applicant/manufacturer/supplier that the requirement to tree species not permitted to be used in Nordic Swan Ecolabelled XXX are met. Annex 1 may be used

Background to requirement O1, tree species not permitted to be used in Nordic Swan Ecolabelled XXX (name of specific product group/-type)

Nordic Ecolabelling requires that a number of tree species be not permitted to be used in Nordic Swan Ecolabelled XXX (write name of product group/-type). The requirement applies only to virgin forest tree species and not tree species defined as recycled material according to ISO 14021.

The list of prohibited tree species is based on the wood species that are relevant to Nordic Ecolabelling's criteria, i.e., tree species that have the potential to be included in Nordic Swan Ecolabelled products. Listed tree species are indicated by the scientific name and the most common trade names. The scientific name/trade name is not always adequate, as there may be more than one scientific name/trade names for the listed tree species than the list indicates. As a precautionary approach, closely related or similar tree species are included in the list.

Proposed criteria for tree species found in the list are wood originating from:

- Tree species list CITES Appendices I, II and III.
- IUCN red list, categorized as critically endangered (CR), endangered (EN) and vulnerable (VU).
- Regnskogsfondet[13] (Rainforest Foundation Norway) tree list
- Siberian larch (grown outside Europe)

CITES[14] is an international convention for the control of trade (across borders) of wild fauna and flora. CITES includes around 5600 animal species and around 28.000 plant species wherein a part is relevant timber tree species (mainly tropical species). The tree species is, dependent on how threatened they are, listed in Appendix I, II or III. Species listed in Appendix I, are highly endangered and trade with these species is totally banned. For the remaining tree species, special permits for import and export is required (Appendices II and III). CITES

[13] https://www.regnskog.no/no/hva-du-kan-gjore/unnga-tropisk-tommer/tropiske-treslag (visited Jan 2019)
[14] https://www.cites.org/ (visited Jan 2019)

is regulated by EU legislation (Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97) and trees with valid CITES permits are considered to be legally harvested under EUTR (EU Timber Regulation). Nordic Ecolabelling's ban on the use of tree species listed in CITES (Appendix I, II or III) goes beyond the EU legislation.

The CITES list has since 2015 been updated - most notably, the entire Dalbergia genus (all true rosewoods) is now in Appendix II. Also, Bubinga is listed in Appendix II.

IUCN Red Lists[15] are the world's most comprehensive inventory of the global conservation status of the planet's biological species, including trees. IUCN Red List has established clear criteria to assess the risk of extinction among thousands of species and subspecies. These criteria cover all countries and all species in the world. Nordic Ecolabelling is aware that the IUCN's red list system only focuses on the extinction risk of species, and therefore is not designed for an overall assessment of whether a tree species can be provided with sustainable origin. However, the list is continually being updated and thereby is an important tool to estimate a specific tree species' conservation status on a global scale. Nordic Ecolabelling wishes to prohibit tree species listed as endangered (categories CR, EN and VU).

The IUCN RED list has since 2015 been updated and Nordic Ecolabelling has therefore added 21 new tree species on tree list not allowed to be used in Nordic Swan Ecolabelled products.

Regnskogfondet[16] (Rainforest Foundation Norway) is an NGO in Norway that works to protect the world's remaining rainforests. Currently, Regnskogsfondet does not see any credible certification schemes working in the tropics, and therefore recommends full stop of buying tropical timber. Regnskogsfondet has developed a list of tropical tree species based on tree species found on the Norwegian market. This list works as a guide to comply with Norwegian guidelines regarding no-use of tropical wood in public construction. By referring to Regnskogfondet's list of tropical tree species, Nordic Ecolabelling hopes to clarify the criteria for the tree species found in the Nordic Ecolabelling list. We consider this a pragmatic approach for handling tropical tree species on the Nordic market.

Nordic Ecolabelling has updated the proposed list for tree species not allowed to be used in Nordic Swan Ecolabelled products according to Regnskogfondet's list. This means that:

- Four new tree species has been added the list. The common tradename on the four new tree species are; Acasia, Eucalyptus, Gmelina and Hevea. Acasia and Eucalyptus grown in pulpwood plantations certified by FSC or PEFC is not part of the list of prohibited tree species. Nordic Ecolabelling believes that responsibly run forest plantations can play a role in preserving natural IFL. Acasia and Eucalyptus pulp plantations are

[15] http://www.iucnredlist.org/ (visited Jan 2019)
[16] https://www.regnskog.no/no/hva-du-kan-gjore/unnga-tropisk-tommer/tropiske-treslag (visited Jan 2019)

widely being used in the pulp industry (also the European and Nordic pulp industry).
- Nine tree species has been removed from the list.
- The list has been updated according to common tradename/scientific name. In some cases, Regnskogfondet goes beyond the IUCN Red List status by referring to all species (spp.) in a given genus. This means that Nordic Ecolabelling also in some cases goes beyond the IUCN Red List status by referring to all species (spp.) in a given genus.
- 24 tree species on the list are only listed Regnskogfondet's tree list.

In addition, Siberian larch (grown outside Europe) is on the tree list. Siberian larch is a coveted tree species in the construction industry due to its high quality. The tree species is widespread in the Eurasian northern boreal climate zone, and particularly the species Larix sibirica, Larix gmelinii, Larix cajanderi and Larix sukaczewii are widespread in the large areas of intact forest landscapes in Russia. Some 60 percent of the Great Northern Forest is in Russia, where it is known as the Taiga. However, in 2013, less than a quarter of the Taiga remained as IFL.[17]

[17] Greenpeace 2017: Eye of the Taiga, published March 2017.