

PEFC Forest Certification Week 2017



PEFC gets Smart in Helsinki and looks to the future

‘Making Certification SMART’ was the theme of the 2017 annual PEFC week to explore and discover new and emerging technologies which show promise for supporting forest certification.

“We need a paradigm shift in how society perceives the whole forest/tree value chain,” said Ben Gunneberg, CEO of PEFC International, as he opened the 22nd PEFC General Assembly, in Helsinki, Finland. “Society is at a crossroads and the strategic direction we choose will provide the opportunity for us to demonstrate the real value of sustainable forests and their contribution to society in achieving the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals.”

“Climate change, a growing urban global population, cooperation challenges, are all issues we have to tackle, by demonstrating how forests are an important part of the solution,” Ben highlighted. “For too long, society has perceived forestry as part of the problem rather than the solution. By working interdependently with a positive, can do attitude, sharing knowledge, working together, helping each other and acting at local, national and international level, the PEFC can and will change society’s perception and place forests at the heart of the solutions to these challenges. Interdependent means being mutually reliant on each other. As a global alliance of national forest certification systems, everybody is independent, but by engaging collaboratively, we can leverage the impact of the work we do, and achieve so much more.”

On Monday and Tuesday meetings and workshops were held for PEFC members. As a global organization with members in almost 50 countries around the world, members are rarely all in the same place at once. PEFC Week therefore gives the perfect occasion to update members, provide training and cover some of the critical issues. The annual PEFC General Assembly, held on Wednesday and made up of all the members of PEFC as the highest authority and decision-making body when members voted on the key decisions, such as endorsements, international standards, new members, statutes and budget. On Thursday and Friday the PEFC Stakeholder Dialogue, opened to all who registered, was the best attended multi-stakeholder event ever organised in the 18 year history of PEFC. The event received 250 participants from 57 countries worldwide including delegations from Asian countries (such as Myanmar, Republic of Korea, Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Japan, China, India, Cambodia, Malaysia and Indonesia).

After the event Ben Gunneberg summed up. “With Finland one of the founders of PEFC, it was important for us to recognize the country’s 100 year celebrations. And what better way than to bring the whole PEFC family to Finland with the 2017 PEFC Forest Certification Week.”

“The PEFC week in Finland brought members together to work on developing a new global strategy for PEFC to promote more sustainable forestry and tree management, and on increasing the value of the forests/ tree products supply chain not only to participants, but to society as a whole.”

“During our Stakeholder Dialogue we explored the potential of technology innovation within certification: from remote sensing and mobile apps through to block-chain and crypto currencies. We debated how to approach technology in a meaningful way that could assist in increasing the value of PEFC to forest owners as well as to supply chain actors. The incorporation of smart technology could ensure that the full extent of the sustainable development goals can be better delivered and better communicated than in the past”.

“With the active participation of stakeholders and the levels of enthusiasm and energy achieved, PEFC is now well place to explore and forge new partnerships to ensure an enhanced offer for all striving to promote sustainable livelihoods and land management,” concluded Ben Gunneberg.