

FOREST CERTIFICATION

FFH 13

Forest certification systems came about following the search for a balance in forest management between the productive, social and environmental functions of the forest and the desire to promote wood material. In Belgium, there are two internationally recognised certification systems: PEFC (Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes) and FSC (Forest Stewardship Council). Only the first one is used in Wallonia.

A voluntary approach to progress

PEFC¹ certification is a voluntary tool for continuous improvement. By signing a charter¹, forest managers and forest owners commit themselves to progress towards sustainable forest management standards. These are based on the 6 criteria defined at the Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe², which result in 34 indicators and 44 management recommendations.

Nearly 298,000 ha of certified forests

In 2015, PEFC-certified forests covered almost 298,000 ha, or 53.5% of the total Walloon forest area. More than 90% of the certified forest area was owned by public owners. All of the forested areas belonging to Wallonia and 98% of the areas belonging to the municipalities were certified. Private forests accounted for only 9% of the total certified forest area in 2015, or 26,753 ha, a 15% decrease compared to 2009.

Internal and external audits

Internal and external audits are conducted annually on a sample of certified properties. The audit reports carried out since 2003 generally point to shortcomings that do not jeopardize sustainable forest management but limit its effectiveness: only serious shortcomings can result in the

withdrawal of certification. A non-compliance as regards the implementation of forest management plans was recorded in 2016³. Strengths are also noted: e.g. the development of mixed and irregularly structured stands, increased efforts to raise public awareness, the introduction of innovative and low-cost forestry methods, etc.

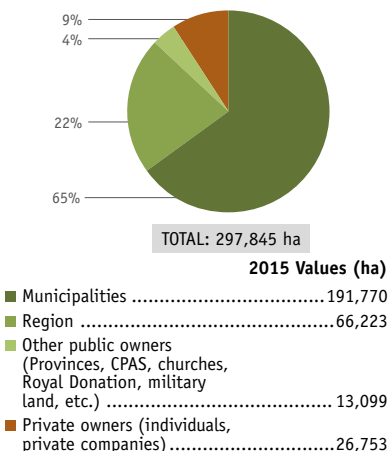
Downstream, a chain of control has been set up to monitor the flow of certified original wood through the entire chain (logging, processing and selling of wood). Each PEFC-certified company is audited annually by independent auditors.

Pursuing the sustainable management of our forests

In Wallonia, a new Progress Plan for Forest Management (*Plan de progrès pour la gestion forestière*)⁴ was drawn up for the period 2013-2018. It comprises 12 objectives broken down into 31 actions to be undertaken at regional level. The implementation of this Plan is assessed annually by an external auditor. Regional sustainable forest management policies are defined on the basis of these various tools.

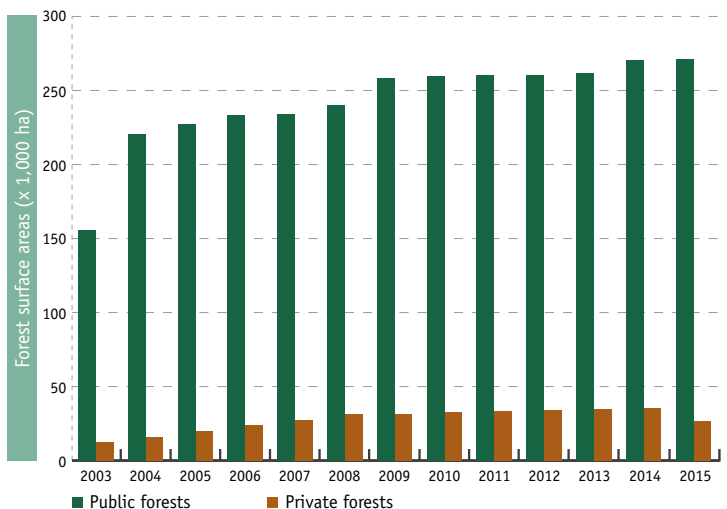
[¹] More information at <http://www.pefc.be> | [²] Forest Europe, 1998 | [³] → FFH 14 | [⁴] PEFC, 2016

Fig. FFH 13-1 Distribution of PEFC* certified forest surface areas in Wallonia, by type of owner (2015)



SOERW 2017 – Sources: SPW - DG03 - DNF; SRFB

Fig. FFH 13-2 Evolution of PEFC* certified forest surface areas in Wallonia



SOERW 2017 – Sources: SPW - DG03 - DNF; SRFB