

At Forms+Surfaces, we started designing and manufacturing for sustainability long before green became fashionable because we recognized that one of the most environmentally responsible things we could do was design products that last. That is why we use FSC® 100% and FSC® Recycled 100% hardwoods for our outdoor site furniture products. Concerns have been raised about using tropical hardwoods and the role of the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®). In response, following are answers to some of the questions we're asked most frequently about our hardwoods program.

**Q: How long have we been using FSC® wood?**

A: We began using FSC® wood as a standard in 2008 as part of our broader emphasis on managing and improving our environmental impact; and as a way to help our customers meet their own sustainability goals.

**Q: Many suppliers offer FSC® wood by request and at an additional cost. Is this the case with F+S?**

A: No. We use FSC®-certified wood as the standard option and at no extra cost for all of our outdoor site furniture products that incorporate wood.

**Q: Do the tropical hardwoods used for site furniture play a large role in the deforestation of the Amazon?**

A: No. Logging represents only 2-3% of the deforestation in the Amazon and the percentage attributable to site furniture is even smaller. Cattle ranches and agriculture are the largest factors.

Additionally, there is a vast difference between the amount of wood used in a typical bench compared to the wood used in a boardwalk. When it was entirely constructed with wood planks, the 2.4-mile-long Coney Island boardwalk used 18.3 million linear feet boardwalk planks. For comparison, each of our Trio Benches with FSC® 100% Ipé slats uses approximately 60 linear feet of wood. If a Trio Bench was placed every 10 feet along the entire stretch of the Coney Island boardwalk, the total amount of Ipé used in the benches would be less than 60,000 linear feet.

**Q: Can FSC® wood products actually benefit the forests?**

A: Yes. Creating demand for products to responsibly managed forests can help protect forests for future generations.

**Q: Can banning/boycotting products with tropical hardwood have a negative impact on the forests?**

A: Yes. The forests are a source of income for local communities. If there is no demand for products from responsibly managed forests, illegal logging and conversion for other uses is more probable.

**Q: Is FSC® wood recognized as a sustainable material option?**

A: Yes. All of the most common green building standards recognize FSC® wood as a sustainable material option, including Living Building Challenge, LEED, Sustainable SITES, BREEAM, Estidama and Green Globes.

**Q: Is FSC® recognized and supported by environmental groups?**

A: Yes. FSC® has been in existence for over 20 years. As FSC has grown, they have experienced some hiccups with executing their stringent system. However, they are still recognized as the gold standard in sustainable forestry and have the support of the World Wildlife Fund, Greenpeace, Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council, and the National Wildlife Federation.

**Q: How does F+S approach finding sustainable materials and vendors?**

A: We are constantly evaluating new materials and vendors to ensure we are utilizing the most responsible source. Our research is thorough and we are careful not to green wash. We are constantly evolving but are careful not to jump on the latest fad.

**Q: What are the benefits of reclaimed wood?**

A: Reclaimed wood eliminates the need for virgin wood and the environmental impacts associated with extraction. We continue to add reclaimed wood as we find reliable sources of quality wood that will perform well in our products.

**Q: How does product service life factor into the F+S sustainability program?**

A: Because one of the most sustainable things we can do as a company is produce products that last, we design our products and select our materials and finishes with sustainability in mind. As a result, our site furniture offers proven performance and typically has a very long service life.

**Q: Would F+S consider working with modified lumber products?**

A: For large projects, we will consider working with other materials on a case-by-case basis. Please contact us to discuss the details of your project.

**Q: Are there limitations to modified lumber products?**

A: Yes. Modified lumber products have been in use for less than a decade and more data is needed to determine whether they will withstand the test of time.

**Q: Have we taken measures to ensure the integrity of our FSC® hardwood?**

A: Yes. We have carefully selected a vendor with proven performance supplying quality FSC® hardwood. Our partnership ensures consistent and reasonable lead times, guaranteed material quality and proof of the location of extraction.

**Q: What if I have questions or concerns that go beyond the scope of information readily available on your website?**

A: The F+S Sustainability Team regularly assists our customers around the world – simply give them a call at 800-451-0410 or email them at [green@forms-surfaces.com](mailto:green@forms-surfaces.com).

**REFERENCES**

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