

A case study of retail stores in Kanagawa Prefecture selling wooden products with forest certification logos

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Abstract: The number of Sustainable Green Ecosystem Council (SGEC) forest management certifications has increased of late following the attainment of the mutual recognition of SGEC and Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) in June 2016 in Japan. However, people's awareness and knowledge of forest certification is still low. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to clarify the opportunities for consumers to choose Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), SGEC, PEFC certified products, by surveying products in retail stores. The survey participants consisted of furniture, home center, stationery, and children's stores frequented by consumers in Kanagawa Prefecture, all of which carry several products that are made from forest resources. The target products are made of wood with the exception of price tags or packaging. We were able to identify forest management certification logos on some stationery and do-it-yourself (DIY) products, but most of them were FSC certified. Some products were PEFC certified, but there were no SGEC certified products in the various product categories.

Key-word: forest certification, FSC, PEFC, SGEC, logo

小売店で販売されている森林認証ロゴのある製品の実態

—神奈川県内の店舗を対象として—

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要旨: 近年、特に SGEC 森林管理認証の件数は増加しており、2016 年 6 月には SGEC と PEFC の相互承認が認められている。しかし、森林認証の認知度は高いとはいえない。そこで、本研究の目的は、小売店の店頭にある製品に着目し、FSC、SGEC、PEFC 認証ロゴのある製品を把握し、一般消費者が認証ロゴ商品を選択できる機会を明らかにすることである。調査対象は、木質資源の製品を多く扱う神奈川県内の一般消費者が利用できる家具店、ホームセンター、文具店、子ども用品店とした。対象製品は、それ自身がロゴの対象となっている木質資源由来のものとし、値札や包装に対するロゴは除外した。その結果、文具の一部の紙製品と DIY 用の板で森林認証ロゴを見ることができたが、その多くは FSC 認証のものであった。PEFC 認証ロゴのものは一部確認できたが、SGEC 認証ロゴの製品は確認できなかった。

キーワード: 森林認証制度, FSC, PEFC, SGEC, ロゴマーク

I Introduction

Forest certification leads to sustainable forest management and identifies products as being sourced from forests. Forest certification logos help consumers in identifying and choosing environmentally friendly products. While the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified area of Japan has remained constant, the Sustainable Green Ecosystem Council (SGEC) certified area has been expanding (2). The SGEC has been granted mutual recognition with the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) in 2016. However,

most forestry enterprises were of the opinion that using certified materials was not particularly valued by many people (3), and the certified area remained small compared with western countries (2).

Additionally, Japanese consumers are less aware of the meaning of forest certification and do not easily recognize associated logos (2). According to Sugiura and Oki (7), forest management certification was obtained to implement "sustainable forest management" and realize "profit increase." Some forestry entities canceled their forest management

certifications because there were no economic merits and certification maintenance was expensive (6). This shows that their effect and influence on the market are important factors for forest certification schemes (4). As such, it is important to grasp the actual status of products with forest certification logos in the market. This study thus focuses on certified wood-derived products.

Some previous studies investigated products with FSC logos, based on Sugiura et al.'s (8) method, in retail stores in Yokohama City, Kanagawa Prefecture (8) and Morioka City, Iwate Prefecture (J). However, these studies were conducted before the recognition of SGEC and PEFC. Therefore, we focused on PEFC and SGEC products in addition to FSC as our study was conducted after the recognition of SGEC and PEFC. The purpose of our research is to determine the number of certified logos found on products in retail stores and clarify the opportunities for consumers to choose such products.

II Research subject and methods

The study considered four stores; stationary, furniture, home center, and children's stores in Kanagawa Prefecture as shown in Table 1. These stores were chosen because they represent the wide variety of wood and paper products that consumers buy directly. These stores represent large-scale companies with sales of 10 billion JPY or more (sales of children's shop was not publicized).

This research uses the same as the one used by Sugiura et al (8). Products surveyed included the number of FSC, PEFC, and SGEC certified products in the store. The logo could be confirmed without having to purchasing the product, and the product itself a certified product. Therefore, price tags and packages were excluded. When counting the types of products, ones with different sizes and colors were counted as different products. As shown in Table 1, the survey was conducted during 2017.

Table 1 Research stores and survey date

| Store name | Location | Store types | Survey date |
|------------|----------|------------------|----------------------|
| N | Fujisawa | Furniture | 29-31 Oct. 2017 |
| T | Fujisawa | Children's store | 14 Nov. 2017 |
| S | Yokohama | Home center | 4 Dec. 2017 |
| Y | Yokohama | Stationery | 23 Jun.-26 Sep. 2017 |

III Results

We surveyed 685 large items, such as chairs, tables, desks, and counters at the furniture store (Table 2); we found no

product with certification logos.

One hundred and seventy-nine wood-derived products such as diapers and wipes were analyzed at the children's store (Table 3). There were three different size disposable diapers with the FSC certification logo which also had a description of the logo. Similar to the furniture store, large-sized products did not have logos.

At the home center store, 1868 items were investigated (Table 4), and 93 items had logos. Many products with logos were actually timber for do-it-yourself (DIY) projects. Among them, 88 products were from three manufacturers, which are Kodaisangyo in Japan, Ngoclam Phuoc Tan Company in Vietnam, and Weyerhaeuser in the USA. Forest certification logos were displayed for diapers and other products. The diapers were the same as the children's store, but of different size.

We investigated 5438 items at the stationery shop and

Table 2 Number of products with forest certification logos in furniture store

| Item name | Number of items | Number of items with certification logo |
|-------------------|-----------------|---|
| Desks and others | 381 | 0 |
| Tables and others | 141 | 0 |
| Chairs | 86 | 0 |
| Counters | 8 | 0 |
| Dressers | 8 | 0 |
| Beds (frame) | 51 | 0 |
| Others | 10 | 0 |
| Total | 685 | 0 |

Table 3 Number of products with forest certification logos in children's store

| Item name | Number of items | Number of items with certification logo |
|-------------|-----------------|---|
| Diapers | 136 | 3 |
| Wet tissue | 31 | 0 |
| Gate | 3 | 0 |
| Baby chairs | 9 | 0 |
| Total | 179 | 3 |

Table 4 Number of products with forest certification logo in home center store

| Item name | Number of items | Number of items with certification logo |
|------------------------------|-----------------|---|
| Woods for DIY | 1541 | 89 |
| Wooden play parts | 30 | 0 |
| Craft play equipment | 44 | 0 |
| Shrine | 25 | 0 |
| Slotted floor, stands, boxes | 56 | 0 |
| Diapers | 100 | 4 |
| Toilet paper | 25 | 0 |
| Tissue paper | 22 | 0 |
| Wet tissue | 25 | 0 |
| Total | 1868 | 93 |

identified 115 items with logos (Table 5). Many of the products with logos in the store were copy papers. Of the 308 types of copy paper, 74 had logos. On the contrary, only two items of the 629 notebooks analyzed had logos. Although there were no logos, Kokuyo’s 90 types of notebooks were marked with the statement “Forest certified paper is used in the middle paper.” However, these were not included in the survey result because they did not have a logo. Pencils with logos were from two manufacturers—Caran d’Ache in Switzerland and Staedtler in Germany. There were no pencils made in Japan with certification logos. The only five products with the PEFC logo in this survey were notepads, specifically, Rhodia’s block memo from France. Other products with a logo were paper products, such as postcards, filler paper, and envelopes.

Overall, from the investigation of 8170 items at four stores, 211 items were confirmed to display logos with a forest certification logo display rate of 2.6% (Table 6). The FSC logo was displayed on 206 items out of the 211 products and the PEFC logo was displayed on 5 items. No product had the SGEC logo displayed. Approximately 3.8% of products (115 items had certification logo, and 90 types of notebooks only had the inscription “Forest certified paper is used in the middle paper”) can be considered as certified. Since the logo display rate is only 2.6%, consumers may not be able to identify most certified products, and the awareness of forest certifications will likely not increase.

Many products with logos were paper products as shown in

Table 5. According to Sakamoto and Shiba (5), the expansion of CoC (Chain of Custody) certification in Japan spread to

Table 5 Number of products with forest certification logos in stationery store

| Item name | Number of items | Number of items with certification logo |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|---|
| Postcards | 1319 | 17 |
| Letters and others | 1231 | 0 |
| Filler paper | 130 | 4 |
| Envelopes | 419 | 8 |
| Report paper and others | 95 | 0 |
| Flashcards | 53 | 0 |
| Origami | 122 | 0 |
| Notepads | 86 | 5 |
| Notebooks | 595 | 2 |
| Notebooks (5 packs) | 11 | 0 |
| Notebooks (Binder) | 23 | 0 |
| Pencil (1 piece) | 601 | 0 |
| Pencil (Pack) | 114 | 5 |
| Refill sheets | 19 | 0 |
| Half paper | 86 | 0 |
| Slip and others | 128 | 0 |
| Copy paper | 254 | 74 |
| Copy paper (Japanese paper) | 54 | 0 |
| Cash delivery books and others | 98 | 0 |
| Total | 5438 | 115 |

Table 6 Analyzed store data

| Store name | Store types | Number of items | Number of items with certification logo | % |
|------------|------------------|-----------------|---|-----|
| N | Furniture | 685 | 0 | 0 |
| T | Children's store | 179 | 3 | 1.7 |
| S | Home center | 1868 | 93 | 5 |
| Y | Stationery | 5438 | 115 | 2.1 |
| Total | | 8170 | 211 | 2.6 |

Table 7 Analyzed products data

| Store type | Store name | Manufacturer | Product name | Types of certification logo | Licence code | Country | Number of types |
|------------------|------------|--------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Children's store | T | O | Diapars | FSC | C018118 | Japan | 3 |
| Home center | S | O | Diapars | FSC | C018118 | Japan | 4 |
| Stationery | Y | SA | Post and greeting cards | FSC | C021552 | Hong Kong | 3 |
| Stationery | Y | T | Post and greeting cards | FSC | C019126 | Israel | 14 |
| Stationery | Y | MM | Notebooks and filler paper | FSC | C011510 | Japan | 6 |
| Stationery | Y | R | Notepads | PEFC | 10-31-714 | France | 5 |
| Stationery | Y | ST | Pencil | FSC | C007132 | Germany | 4 |
| Stationery | Y | C | Pencil | FSC | C005365 | Switzerland | 1 |
| Stationery | Y | MA | Envelops | FSC | C007204 | Japan | 8 |
| Stationery | Y | KK | Copy paper | FSC | C004748 | Japan | 7 |
| Stationery | Y | I | Copy paper | FSC | C043994 | Japan | 36 |
| Stationery | Y | H | Copy paper | FSC | C005497 | Japan | 31 |
| Home center | S | KD | Laminated wood | FSC | C014816 | Japan | 25 |
| Home center | S | N | Laminated wood | FSC | C134435 | Vietnam | 62 |
| Home center | S | W | Laminated wood | FSC | C106544 | USA | 1 |
| Home center | S | P | Plywood | FSC | C001650 | Indonesia | 1 |
| | | | | | | | 211 |

Abbreviation O: Oji Nepia Co., Ltd., SA: Safe Power Printing & Box Mfg. Co. Ltd., T: TURNOWSKY LTD, MM: Maruman Corporation, R: RHODIA, ST: STAEDTLER Mars GmbH & Co. KG, C: Caran d'Ache Suisse, MA: Maruai Co., Ltd., KK: KOKUYO Co., Ltd., I: Itoya TimeValue Ltd., H: Hokuetsu Corporation, KD: KODAISANGYO CO., LTD., N: NGOC LAM PHUOC TAN COMPANY, W: Weyerhaeuser NR Company, P: PT Surya Satrya Timur

affiliated companies due to its introduction by a leading paper company, rather than demand from consumers (5). Additionally, major stationery and paper manufacturers supplying products to various parts of Japan have acquired CoC certification (1).

Examining the license code for country of origin shows that diapers and copy paper were from Japanese manufacturers (Table 7). However, most other products were from foreign manufacturers.

IV Discussion

Only 2.6% of the products surveyed had the certification logo. Certification logos are often attached to price tags and product packages. However, certification logos are not often displayed on wooden products. Manufacturers may not want to display a certification logo for aesthetic reasons. Therefore, it is necessary to explain to consumers the issue of certification in an easy-to-understand manner. Moreover, there is a possibility that certified materials are also used for assembled products and other products since a number of timber products for DIY have been confirmed as certified. If the certified product is not given the certification logo, it deprives the consumer of the choice of eco-friendly products.

Since the expansion of CoC certification in Japan to affiliated companies following its introduction by a leading paper company, most stationery and paper manufacturers have probably acquired CoC certification. The lack of a logo on certified products prevents consumers from selecting environment friendly products. Therefore, certified products should have logos to increase choices and enable informed purchase. Regarding forest certification in Japan, we could not identify any products with a logo despite the increase in SGEC certification; thus, it is necessary to consider incentives for companies to display logos.

IV Conclusions

The results of this study are similar to those of previous research (1, 8). In other words, products with FSC logos are relatively limited. Although SGEC forest management certified areas have increased and PEFC is now recognized, the PEFC logo was only seen on Rhodia's products while no product had SGEC logos. As pointed out by Nagaïke (4), the forest certification system has to be expanded to pass on the price premium to distributors and raise awareness.

Some forestry enterprises have stopped maintaining their certifications because they could not find any merit to

certification acquisition (6). Because most consumers place emphasis on the function and quality of products, paying price premiums for certified products will be of low importance when the awareness of forest certification is low. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the recognition of forest certifications.

As Izumi (1) also pointed out, further study is required to analyze the motivation (such as sales) behind companies acquiring CoC certifications. In addition, it is necessary to investigate products of local dealers in the forestry area.

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