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<http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/forests/canada/sustainable-forest-management/13183>

Sustainable forest management in Canada

Canada's commitment to sustainable forest management ensures that the country's forests remain healthy now and for generations to come.

Sustainable forest management in Canada is supported by laws, regulations and policies; a rigorous forest management planning process; and a science-based approach to decision-making, assessment and planning. Independent third-party certification of sustainable forest practices in Canada's forests is further evidence of our success in meeting internationally accepted standards for sustainable forest management.

What is sustainable forest management?

Sustainable forest management is a way of using and caring for forests so as to maintain their environmental, social and economic values and benefits over time.

In Canada, sustainable forest management decisions and activities are based on scientific research, rigorous planning processes and public consultation. To uphold these decisions and activities, Canada has developed laws, regulations and policies to enforce sustainable management standards and practices across the country.

Why Canada is so committed to sustainably managed forests

Canada's federal, provincial and territorial governments have long recognized that forests and their many resources are essential in so many ways to the long-term well-being of Canada's environment, communities and economy.

Managing forests sustainably is therefore critical for Canada, not only to balance competing uses in the short term, but to ensure we can enjoy forests' benefits for generations to come. Managing our forests sustainably is also critical from a global perspective. Canada has 10% of the world's forests, which means that keeping them healthy contributes to global ecosystem health.

In 1992, Canada acted on these responsibilities when the [Canadian Council of Forest Ministers](#) and Canada's forest sector endorsed national adoption of sustainable forest management principles. Now, more than two decades later, Canada is a world leader in sustainable forest management, applying it across the country's publicly owned forests – meaning about 94% of all Canada's forest land.

This is an important commitment to provide assurance to the international marketplace that all forest products, including those from Canada, are sourced from forests that are managed sustainably.

Laws, regulations and policies back up Canada's commitment

An extensive framework of federal, provincial and territorial laws, regulations and policies enforces and guides sustainable forest management practices in Canada. These are important tools given that 94% of the country's forests are on publicly land – that owned and managed by the provincial, territorial and federal governments.

Laws and policies are made in an open and collaborative government process in Canada, with extensive public participation and consultation. Canadians expect to be involved in decision-making and to see a balance achieved among competing interests for forest resources and benefits.

Laws, regulations, policies and enforcement are in place to:

- set aside protected areas
- protect wildlife
- respect Aboriginal and treaty rights
- specify harvesting and regeneration practices
- prevent illegal logging in Canada and the import of illegal timber products into Canada

[Learn more about forestry laws in Canada.](#)

Forest management planning underpins sustainable forest management

Forest companies wanting to harvest on public lands must develop forest management plans that comply with forest laws and are consistent with sustainable forest management principles. Companies must also consult the public, industry and experts to ensure that the plans include steps to maintain ecosystem health and to create economic opportunities for communities.

A great strength of forest management planning as a tool for achieving sustainability objectives is that it can be adapted to respond to ever-evolving situations. Scientific advances, changing public expectations and new market circumstances constantly shape the alternatives considered and the decisions made. In this way, regulators and forest managers are able to apply adaptive forest management to both long-term planning and day-to-day decision-making activities.

[Read more about forest management planning in Canada.](#)

Science-based indicators help track sustainability progress

Canada has played a leadership role in collaborating with other countries to develop a framework of [criteria and indicators](#) for monitoring and reporting on progress in sustainable forest management.

Criteria describe a set of basic social, economic and environmental values that Canadians want to sustain or conserve in forests. Indicators for each criterion are objective scientific measures that are tracked over time and used to assess change.

Canada's criteria and indicators help:

- demonstrate clearly Canada's environmental credentials
- clarify issues related to the environment and trade
- provide a common understanding of sustainable forest management
- inform the public and decision-makers about all aspects of Canada's forests
- identify where forest management policies and practices can be improved

Canada, as a founding member of the [Montreal Process](#), has worked with other organizations and nations to promote the development of criteria and indicators, which are now used around the world.

[See the criteria used to monitor Canada's forests](#) and learn more about the [science-based indicators](#) used to measure them.

Indicators are reported on annually

[The State of Canada's Forests report](#) provides the most recent information for selected indicators of sustainable forest management, showing how Canada's forests are doing in each area. The report has been published annually since 1990.

By making the current report and [previous editions](#) openly available, Canada can demonstrate to Canadians and to the world that our forest practices are responsible and transparent.

Certification attests to the strength of forest management practices

Forest certification by independent third parties provides the added assurance that a forest company is operating legally and is complying with internationally accepted standards for sustainable forest management. As of 2014, Canada had the largest area of third-party-certified forests in the world: 161 million hectares of independently certified forest land.