

► Project *brief*

Thünen Institute of Forestry

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How can we explain the uneven uptake of forest certification at the global level?

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- **Cross-national quantitative study with longitudinal data.**
- **Institutional quality and level of economic development have a significant impact on the uptake of forest certification.**
- **The share of forest products exports to Europe and the general export orientation of a country's forest-based sector are also important.**
- **Environmental non-governmental organizations also play an important role, with clear differences between FSC and PEFC certification.**

Background and aim

There are currently certificates for more than 10% of the world's forest area that confirm sustainable forest management. However, the uptake of forest certification has been highly uneven worldwide. The vast majority of the world's certified forests are located in Europe and North America (85%). In contrast, the proportion of certified forest areas in Asia (6%), Latin America (4%), Oceania (3%) and Africa (2%) is much lower. To date, there are only very few quantitative studies on the question of which framework conditions can favor or inhibit the adoption of forest certification schemes. The aim of this project is to identify cross-national factors that are associated with the uptake of forest certification. The focus is on the two most widespread systems worldwide, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC).

Methodology and data basis

The study is based on a regression analysis with longitudinal data. The estimation model is used to examine the relationship between forest certification density (measured as the share of certified forest area in total forest area of a country) and appropriate explanatory variables. Data was used for a total of 150 countries for the period from 2002 to 2020. The information on certified areas comes from the FSC and PEFC databases. The other data was taken from the literature or publicly available databases (e.g., FAO, World Bank).

Important results

The results of the regression analysis confirm some of the assumptions widely made in the literature about the causes of the very uneven distribution of forest certification worldwide, but also provide new insights into this topic. The estimates show, among other things, that various aspects of a country's institutional quality and level of economic development are of great importance for the uptake of forest certification. Factors such as more stable political conditions, more comprehensive anti-corruption measures and a higher per capita income are significantly associated with a higher prevalence of forest certification. It also shows that countries that export a larger proportion of their forest products to Europe have a higher certification density. The relationship between the general export orientation of a country's forest-based sector and the prevalence of forest certification is also positive and significant. The study also provides evidence of the important role that environmental non-governmental organizations play in the uptake of forest certification. Here, there are clear differences between FSC and PEFC certification: While there is a positive and significant relationship between the number of environmental non-governmental organizations and the density of FSC certification in a country, the relationship between the number of environmental non-governmental organizations and the density of PEFC certification is negative and significant.

Further information

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