

Comparison and Studies of Forest Management Certification in Japan

Ayumi Kobata

Key Words: Forest Management Certification, FSC, SGEC, Environmental policy instruments

1. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

Forest certification gathers worldwide attention as an instrument to improve sustainable forest management. In Japan, there are two kinds of schemes for the certification on forest management. One is an international scheme called FSC (the Forest Stewardship Council), and the other is a local scheme called SGEC (the Sustainable Green Ecosystem Council). In this paper, I will discuss as a first topic whether the recognition is accepted that the certification is useful for sustainable forest management. Secondly, I will consider this; which scheme should be spread in Japan in order to implement sustainable forest management, comparing two systems.

2. METHOD

To resolve the first problem, I studied background factors about requirements of forest certification schemes and historical process about the schemes to find out how widely recognition of usefulness of that system is accepted. Then, to the other question, I compared the tendency of the certified number and certified areas considering the difference of constituent members and emerged process. I also examined the evaluation of the two systems which is brought by environmental NGO.

3. RESULTS

Worldwide deforestation and forest degradation started to be regarded as a severe environmental problem in the end of 20th century. In 1992, the concept of “sustainable forest management” was advocated in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and efforts should be needed to accomplish the principle all over the world. At the present moment, however, there is no legally binding document for that. Rather forest certification schemes in private sector have been utilized mainly to promote sustainable forest management in Western countries.

In Japan, situation about the use of timber has changed to respect for the sustainable forest management. To urge Corporate Social Responsibility, some companies started to decide timber procurement guidelines. Also, as Law on Promoting Green Purchasing revised in April, 2006, public sector must purchase products made from legally harvested timber. In these rules, forest certification can be found as an instrument to check whether timber materials are from well-managed forest.

With the need for the forest management certifications increasing, FSC certified area and SGEC certified areas are expanding. Because of the lower cost and the easier process, SGEC is dominant in the number and areas though FSC is a preceding certification. As for the evaluation, NGOs judge the FSC scheme better in the aspects of rigorous standards. SGEC still has enough standards to achieve sustainable forest management. In fact, FSC and SGEC have different purpose. The idea of SGEC is to raise the level of forest management all over Japan while FSC aims to have a strategy to have premium with its priority on strict standards. To make forest management more sustainable all over Japan, SGEC need to be spread more.

4. CONCLUSION

In the first place, I was able to identify the prevalence of the recognition that forest certification is useful as one method to promote sustainable forest management. Under the social circumstance that sustainable forest management means more and more, the move to obtain forest certification is likely to be more popular.

Secondly, SGEC should be introduced more than FSC in Japan at this moment, considering a result of the comparison. As the recognition of importance for certification spreads, improvement of forest management level is expected throughout Japan promoting SGEC certification, which is easier to obtain and to continue.