



Oregon Forest Industries Council

Green building rating systems

Green building rating systems should encourage wood use and recognize internationally accepted forest certification systems.

Overview

OFIC and its members are committed to reducing the environmental impact of buildings by encouraging energy-efficient, environmentally responsible choices during the design and construction process. Wood is a vital part of any green building.

Background

The Green Building Initiative's "Green Globes" standard and the U.S. Green Building Council's "Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design" (LEED) standard are two examples of green building rating systems. Both systems were developed over the last 10 years and have been at the center of debate about how state and local governments should promote energy-efficient buildings. The rating systems are quite complex, but include several key elements for forest management and wood products manufacturers:

- Forest certification programs are one way that Green Globes and LEED assure that wood products originate in sustainably managed forests, although LEED does not accept globally-recognized standards such as the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® program or the American Tree Farm System®. This is counter to a growing number of credible, objective studies comparing certification programs which show that both the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® and the American Tree Farm System® require that forests be sustainably managed.
- Rating systems run the risk of misjudging a product's true cost without objective criteria. Steel may be more durable than wood, but it could be more energy intensive and expensive to produce, while alternative products might be less available in some geographic areas, adding significant transportation costs. True lifecycle analysis often showcases the overall value of wood in green building.
- Transparent, consensus-based processes allow rating systems provide for meaningful participation by affected groups, consider dissenting views and make an appeals procedure available.

Position

In addition to encouraging the use of wood, credible green building rating systems should be science-based, developed in an open, consensus-based process, and recognize all forest certification systems that meet internationally accepted criteria.