



Green Building Rating Systems

The American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA) and its members are committed to reducing the environmental impact of buildings by encouraging energy-efficient, environmentally responsible choices during the design and building process. We support scientifically justified systems and standards to reduce environmental impacts. **We believe a credible green building rating system:**

- **Must recognize the environmental benefits provided by the use of wood products.** Wood is among the most energy-efficient and environmentally benign of all building materials. Among other positive environmental characteristics, wood stores huge amounts of carbon. Wood products are a vital component of sound architectural design and facilitate ease of design and construction, while providing inherent energy-saving performance. Wood buildings are readily adapted to reuse or can be deconstructed and individual products used in new construction. Lastly, wood is a renewable resource, a characteristic of unparalleled environmental value.
- **Must recognize all credible sustainable forestry programs in the United States.** Equal credit should be given to all programs that meet a commonly accepted set of objective criteria. Ignoring globally-recognized sustainable forestry programs, such as the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® program or the American Tree Farm System® is counter to a growing number of credible objective studies comparing sustainable forestry programs, all of which show these programs all ensure that forests are well managed.
- **Must include Life Cycle Assessment (LCA).** Without grounding in objective, scientific criteria based on life cycle impacts, a rating system or standard is more likely to reflect the subjective biases of those who have crafted or are implementing the program. Objective criteria, like LCA, help ensure a rating system or standard will not yield inconsistent results, arbitrary thresholds, an emphasis on cost rather than environmental impact measures, a lack of appropriate baselines and measures of improvement, or an inability to compare buildings in different locations on equal terms.
- **Must be developed in a consensus process that meets the spirit of the ANSI guidelines.** Development of a standard in a consensus process provides transparency and ensures the opportunity for meaningful participation by all groups that will be affected. A true consensus process also has procedures to ensure balance, consideration of dissenting views, and appeals procedures. The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) is the coordinator of the U.S. standards process and provides strict objective requirements for accreditation of those processes. A credible rating system must be developed using a process that embodies the elements of consensus as defined by ANSI.
- **Must not limit creative options.** Wood is the world's oldest building material and one which provides architects and designers with incredible structural and aesthetic flexibility. Rating systems and standards that discriminate against wood place severe limits on designers' creative options. Further, arbitrary recognition of only certain sustainable forestry systems leads to a crippling lack of supply of certified wood, limiting the availability and quality of certain species of wood.

Wood is a vital part of any environmentally green building. Government entities should adopt green building policies that are inclusive, based on sound science, including LCA and have been developed in a consensus process. AF&PA and its members will continue to work with all interested parties to create and promote green building rating systems that meet the above criteria.

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